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May 3, 2022

Town of Concord ZBA
141 Keyes Road, 1st Floor
Concord, MA 01742
Attn: Elizabeth Hughes, Town Planner

Dear ZBA members:

It was unfortunate that my connection to the public hearing for 57 Grove Street was not working properly allowing me to comment at the hearing. As a result, I would offer the following comments and ask for clarification.

The Board has to make a difficult finding and decision either way. However, I believe strongly that the decision should be based upon findings of fact resulting in a "level playing field".

GFA Comparisons

The assertions made by both the applicant and the petition by Mr. Siebert's petition regarding square footage seem to be a bit of an "apples and oranges" comparison. Apparently the formula for determining the GFA by the building inspector includes the garage but in Mr. Siebert's petition the comparisons do not include garages or barns (and their second floor usable areas). As an example, if you add the 750 square foot one and one half story garage to the 68 Grove Street comparison the square footage becomes 4,550 sf not the 3,800 sf used as a basis for comparison. Additionally, the formula excludes basements. It is unclear why finished basements are not included in the calculation as livable space in the GFA calculation. Per the assessors records, 68 Grove Street has an additional 1352 sf of finished basement. While applying certain inclusions and/or exclusions to the various compared properties included in both Mr. Siebert's petition and the applicant's narrative, it is confusing at least and more likely misleading from either side. I believe it would be most helpful for the Building Inspector (as the zoning enforcement officer) to provide clarification on what is included or excluded and the basis for that opinion.

Solar and Shadow Impact

Regarding the potential for solar impact, an assertion was made that the building height would cast a shadow on the neighbor's house across the street, I believe that is not true. At the time of the winter solstice, the mid day solar angle for this location (N42.46754 Lat: -71.38972 Lon) is 24.356 degrees from the horizon. A trigonometric calculation based upon a height of 35' and the tangent of 24.325 degrees results in a shadow length of 76 feet. Given a building minimum front yard setback of 20', the ridge line is set back approximately 34 feet from the front property line, and with the layout of Grove Street being 50 feet, the shadow cast by the building would not reach the house in question (setback approximately 25 feet), and would not extend into that property.

Historic Significance and Architectural Context

Assertions were made regarding the neighborhood being eligible for the Register of Historic Places. In 1988 there was a survey of the homes of Riverside Park (Grove Street, Assabet Avenue and a portion of Barretts Mill Road) properties were inventoried and assessed as to their historic and architectural significance. As part of this West Concord Historic Resources Survey Plan the area was listed as Priority Two Survey Resources. "Riverside Park is potentially eligible and to be considered for State and National Register Designation and should be locally designated". Since that inventory thirty-four years ago there has been no effort that I am aware of that seeks to include this neighborhood or any of the properties in a Historic District zoning designation. I believe that expressions of aesthetic design control should be part of an Historic District review and control. If the most recently built residences are characterized by one of the neighbors, as the "new blotches" in the neighborhood, then there are other older "blotches" from other residential buildings from other times. If this property was within a Historic District I believe the design should and would be controlled with respect to the historic and architectural context that the district seeks to preserve.

Unfortunately I will not be available for the continuation of the hearing. I hope these comments are helpful to you in understanding some of the issues that have been raised regarding this application. It is unfortunate that the builder did not reach out for a dialogue with the neighbors regarding his proposal in advance of the hearing. While there may not have been full support regarding the plan for the property I believe a consensus of issues would have lead the builder to a better plan from the neighbor's perspective and avoided certain rather caustic comparison commentary regarding the plan presented at the hearing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be a stylized name, possibly "John" or "James", written in a cursive script.