

**From:** Robin Roraback <robinroraback@sbcglobal.net>

**Sent:** Sunday, January 7, 2024 2:52 PM

**To:** Land Use <landuse@salisburyct.us>; Abby Conroy <aconroy@salisburyct.us>

**Subject:** Affordable Housing on Grove St Meeting

Planning and Zoning Commission  
Town Hall  
Salisbury, CT 06068

Members of the Planning and Zoning Commission,

I am writing as a resident of Grove St and of Salisbury to say I am against the proposed plan to build two houses on the Grove Street School Yard.

I understand the need for affordable housing. I am lucky to have a house in Salisbury.

I've written many letters and I am hoping you all took the time to read them.

I'll summarize my thoughts here:

1. The proposal was abandoned in 2008 after many meetings with the housing committees and selectmen. When the parcel was remeasured, it was found to be too small when considering a driveway and parking. It was discovered that there was not enough clearance, and the snow and salt would land on the properties of the houses already there. I believe there was not enough clearance all around with things too close to existing houses.

What has changed to cause this site to be considered again? Has the parcel gotten bigger? I've asked several times, with no answer. It is because you can now change zoning regulations to suit this proposal? There was some question about what it could be used for also.

I 'd like to see records of the meetings from 2008. (Selectmen, Affordable Housing and P and Z records.) I searched but the websites only go back until 2021.

My sister just listened to the November 16th housing commission meeting. In it some members voice concern about communicating with those of us on Grove St and letting us know about the plan. In the recording Jennifer Kronholm Clark answers, "We are not working with them, we are informing them." I may have paraphrased that, but you could listen for yourselves. The comment comes about 39 minutes, give or take.

**I believe that shows prejudice against us from the beginning.**

2. How close will these houses be to Holly Leibrock's house and Mrs. Stevens' house? They seem very close on the map and sketches John Harney sent. In fact, they will be

in their back yards, quite literally. I think everyone imagines this space to be bigger than it actually is.)

3. Are you considering the privacy of all? It seems that the people in the new houses will have the least privacy of all.

4. I don't think all the landscaping they show in the plans will really screen that much from the houses. I also have trouble with not enough light in my house and dampness so that is a concern for me.

5. I don't think there is room for all that landscaping. You seem to think there is more room in this parcel than there is in reality.

6. I've invited the commission members and anyone else who is interested to come and stand with me in my backyard and visualize just how close this all will be. I hope that planning and zoning committee members will also come to the site. **It is really important to visit the site and see how things will fit. John Harney said markers would be laid out to show dimensions and placement. I understood, perhaps mistakenly, that this would occur before the town and planning and zoning meetings so that everyone would get a real idea of what would happen and how things would look.** One of my emails had a mock up that a friend did with photoshop to show how houses might look there, but I don't think anyone looked at it.

7. **In my opinion, it is not fair to have the meetings and votes before the above is done.**

8. The housing commissions and others involved in the plan will not have to deal with it permanently. We who are residents here will have to. They get to leave after they finish getting this through the process and built. Then they are done. We must live with it for ever.

9. This is a life changing plan for all in the neighborhood. We deserve to have our opinions known and considered without being rushed through the process.

10. This is a historic part of town. It was the site of the old school (my mother and her brothers went to school there), has the three-hundred-year-old oak tree survivors from the iron ore era and the Parson's house (now Holly Leibrock's) is said to be one of the oldest in town.

11. We counted 15 cars in the section where the White Hart employees park on January 5th. Sometimes there are more than that, sometimes less. The car park calls for ten spaces. At the housing meeting on January 4<sup>th</sup>, it was stated there'd be six spaces. What is the correct number? John Harney said that there'd be no paving under the old trees. I don't see how that can be with the plan we were shown. Maybe someone can explain that.

12. With Sarum Village being enlarged and the buildings there looking to be more crowded together, we need more open space for people. Of course, maybe some consider the cemetery as open space. Many do walk in it, including me. Others might prefer to walk where there aren't grave stones.

13. We do need open space in the town. People come here for the beauty of Salisbury. Overcrowded spaces are not attractive.

14. People in Salisbury, even those who need affordable housing, don't want to be crowded into spaces and not have privacy or yards. It is not fair to crowd more into our working-class neighborhood just because we are working-class.

15. I have often walked (I did more walking before the car accident I was in. I now walk with a cane but still enjoy walking in the parcel which I call a park as we were told it was in 2008) through the parcel when walking my dogs or walking to town. Can I still walk through if houses are built? It is a short cut.

16. In my opinion again, it is not quite fair for a selectperson to state her opinion in a letter to the editor before the meetings and votes. This can sway public opinion and not let people decide about the issue themselves.

17. This is a life changing event for the neighborhood. We have to deal with more noise, less privacy, more car traffic and noise, more people, and their animals, etc. It is already a densely populated area and **the park acts as a buffer for noise and privacy**. Its loss will be a big one for our neighborhood. It is not something that should be rushed so that a deadline for funding can be met, and a quota of houses can be also.

18. I am skeptical that real estate values of houses on Grove St will not be affected as John Harney says they will not be. I know I'd rather buy a house near a little park than by more houses.

19. Taking this space will also affect wildlife in the area. We have hawks, ravens, bears, foxes (who use the space a lot), fisher cats, coyotes, and deer. This is something that needs to be considered with habitats growing smaller due to humans taking up more space.

20. In this age of climate change, open spaces are increasingly rare and increasingly important. Important to bees, caterpillars, and insects too. (See *Nature's Best Hope* by Doug Tallamy.)

21. I believe we, as residents of Salisbury, **particularly residents like Lorraine Stevens and Maria McCabe who have lived on Grove Street longer than anyone else, deserve the respect of the affordable housing committees, as well as the planning and zoning committees, and the selectmen, to make known their views and have them considered before any decisions are made**. Mrs. Stevens and Mrs. McCabe do not email. The rest of us also deserve the respect and time to also make our opinions known.

22. This all seems to be rushed and we are not getting the time we deserve. I refer to John Harney's letter of December 12,

2023:

Our sense of urgency on this is that we believe there may be an opportunity, working with the Litchfield County Center for Housing Opportunity, to get gap funding from the Connecticut Department of housing for the homes at Perry Street and at Grove Street if they are ready to go as soon as this funding becomes available (hopefully in the Spring).

23 How many on the housing commissions and the board of selectman and planning and zoning commission would welcome this plan into their backyards? How many would offer their land to affordable housing? That is what everyone should ask themselves. (I know, Mr. Dresser has done this, but who else would? He also sold the land it would be near) This is not technically our land but it is very important to the neighborhood for all the reasons I've mentioned. It is not just a vacant lot to us.

I have not expressed this well and do not intend to offend anyone. I have spent a lot of time writing letters since my first letter was sent on October 8<sup>th</sup> when I first heard of this plan when a friend saw the display in the Academy Building during the fall festival. If not for this friend alerting me, I would not have known about it. I spent this time, when I should have been doing work, on this matter because it is a very important one to me and my neighbors.

The letters to the editor on January 3<sup>rd</sup> mentioned the people needed to work and keep the town running so I'll mention I worked 20 years at Housatonic Child Care and I was an EMT in SVAS, so I have been part of those workers.

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