

Dianne Boisvert

From: newburyprt@aol.com
Sent: Monday, January 10, 2022 4:29 PM
To: Dianne Boisvert
Subject: [Ext]22-24 Olive Street

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Thank you for forwarding this to the ZBA for tomorrow night's meeting.

Dear ZBA committee members,

I am writing in reference to John Sarkis's letter to the ZBA of 12/30/2021.

As a resident of Newburyport for 35 years (30+ of which on Olive street) I have been and continue to be one of the biggest boosters of our little city. I am always glad to meet people who have 'found' it too and welcome the new families and folks, who like me, find this place so alluring.

It's great to see retirees moving to town to take advantage of a walkable city, and I believe the lifeblood of this city is the young families moving to the area to enjoy the character, history, livability and the 'vibe' of Newburyport. That Mr. Sarkis chose to move here last year and rent an apartment is not a surprise. But what is a surprise, is that upon living here for several months he refers to "Our City" in resolute terms as though he knows exactly what the city needs based on his time living here. I'm not saying I have the answer but what I do know is that I, like others, rely on the ZBA to interpret the facts and come up with the best decision for our neighborhood and our city.

As has been stated over and over, no one in opposition to this development is 'opposed to change', looking to "freeze the neighborhood in time" or make it a "living museum". We all understand the need to update, renovate and make changes, and all over town there are examples of tastefully done improvements.

From his original plan until now, they have made some cosmetic changes and scaled it back slightly based on the historical committee's recommendations but it has largely stayed the same. He states they worked to find a 'fitting addition' to the original home but in fact is just adding a whole new house. None of the redesigns have included an addition to the back of the house, where the current one now stands, even slightly larger that would yield some more modern space to compliment this historic home.

He refers to open space in his letter and I am at a loss. The house, with the current addition in place, offers a nice sized backyard to divide into yards for two units in the current house. Filling in that space with a whole new (2-story) house and connector leaves very little actual green space other than the front yard.

I am wondering this:

— where in the plans will these homes have outdoor living space, how will that work without fences? Surely a 3,000+ square foot home will want a patio, yard, outdoor area with some privacy.

— what stops the new owners from putting up fences and locking in that corner (as it will be the only significant green space left)?

There is also a reference to 'ample parking', which I know has also been discussed at length previously. I believe anyone who lives in the downtown area (north end or south end) knows that even with parking spaces, people will park on the street. Olive street is no different and already at maximum capacity.

The resistance to the idea that restoring the original house to a one family that 'only a super wealthy person' could afford isn't ideal but not all that unusual in this town that is now selling two million dollar houses. Newburyport truly could use some more affordable housing but even upon completion, these proposed homes will be neither modest or affordable. They'll be two, million+ dollar homes.

I agree with Mr. Sarkis that there are still many older homes in Newburyport that will benefit from renovations, and that is what concerns me the most. If we don't identify mistakes from the past of previous developments and this current trend of infill, we are doomed to a future/town of exactly what he is proposing.....buildings in every piece of open space that are inconsistent with the scale of the neighborhood and town. We're talking about a backyard here, not an acre a of land. And again, just because it 'can' be done, doesn't mean it should be done.

Lastly, I believe what the folks in opposition to this development have offered is far more than the "noise" you were told to ignore. I believe this is what constitutes people participating in the process of government and community. Not all decisions can be made in a vacuum that doesn't include the bigger picture. We all feel the gravity of being included in the conversation about this proposal and how it affects our quality of life. We appreciate your efforts to listen, discuss and make a decision based on all of the information that is available.

Respectfully submitted,

Amy Badger
21 Olive Street
NBPT