

March 17, 2021

Planning Board of Newburyport
C/O Ms. Bonnie Sontag, Chair
Via Email

RE: 93 State Street proposed addition by the Institute for Savings

Dear Members of the Planning Board,

My name is Tara Cederholm and I reside at 20 Fruit Street in Newburyport. For a third time I am writing to the Planning Board to urge you to decline the application by the Institution for Savings for a Special Permit to construction the proposed addition at the rear of their lot at 93 State Street. For over 14 months the Planning Board has engaged in a very thoughtful, iterative and deliberative process with the Institute for Savings. As stated in my previous letter of February 17, 2021 “during that time the Newburyport Historic Commission has issued no fewer than four reports on the proposed project the most recent of which states ‘the commission finds that the proposed design does not conform to the Secretary’s Standards, and therefore cannot recommend that a Special Permit be granted.’ The challenges presented by the site, the onsite parking requirements for the city, and its location in a dense and historic neighborhood and within the Downtown Overlay District (DOD)- requiring compliance with the United States Secretary of the Interior Standards - have proved simply insurmountable with the size and scale of the building the Institute for Savings wishes to build.” Nothing has changed in with the recent revised plans submitted by the applicant that changes this assessment of the proposed project.

Over the course of the past year the members of the planning board have repeatedly requested that the applicant reduce the size and scale of the building including at the most recent meeting. During that process the applicant has only made minor cosmetic changes to the exterior of the building and has yet to address any of the concerns around the size and scale of the building. These concerns have been raised not only by the neighbors- who will be affected by this on a daily basis- but by the Historic District Commission and the Planning Board.

After more than a year of lengthy and thoughtful discussions on this topic it is reasonable for the Planning Board to now decline this application for a Special Permit. The Historic District has made it clear that none of the various proposals even comes close to conforming to the Secretary’s Standards. It is a difficult decision that you are now faced with, but one that you must make. You simply cannot continue to delay a vote on this application keeping the neighbors and the applicant in suspended animation. The application does not conform to the Secretary’s Standards and you have no choice but to deny it. I urge you to decline this application.

Sincerely,

Tara Cederholm

Dianne Boisvert

From: Melinda Cheston <mkcheston@gmail.com>
Sent: March 17, 2021 12:02 PM
To: Dianne Boisvert; Katelyn E. Sullivan; Andrew Port; Dianne Boisvert
Cc: Claire Papanastasiou; Colleen Turner Secino
Subject: [Ext]Institution for Savings

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Bonnie Sontag
Planning Board Chair
c/o planning@cityofnewburyport.com

Andrew Port
Planning Director
c/o aport@cityofnewburyport.com

Reference: Public Hearing for Special Permit(s) made by the Institution for Savings in Newburyport for property located at 93 State Street/ Assessor's Map and parcel 14-40. 1. Site Plan Review (2020-SPR-02), 2. ITIF Special Permit (2020-SP-01), 3. DOD Special Permit (2020-SP-09)

Dear Ms. Sontag, Mr. Port, and members of the Newburyport Planning Board,

I write again to ask that you listen to the recommendation of the Newburyport Historical Commission and vote to deny the special permit request made by the Institution for Savings.

In the latest plan revision, the bank has made several cosmetic changes but no reduction in size. Again, much good work has been done in review of numerous draft proposals from the bank over the past nearly 14 months. Your office and the Newburyport Historical Commission have offered constructive feedback and thoughtful suggestions to help make the proposed expansion fit in the back lot at Prospect Street and Otis Place. Yet, the problems of adverse impact on a historic neighborhood, massing/size, and the inability to meet the Secretary of the Interior's standards remain. The proposed structure just does not work in this location.

I respectfully request that you bring this matter to a conclusion and hold a vote at the March 17 meeting.

Please confirm receipt of this message and its addition to the public record.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Melinda K. Cheston
10 Fruit Street
Newburyport, MA 01950

Dianne Boisvert

From: tim wacker <tiwack@comcast.net>
Sent: March 17, 2021 1:23 PM
To: Dianne Boisvert
Subject: [Ext]IFS Expansion plan

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Dear Planning Board Members,

The day before the Nov. 4 Planning Board public hearing over the Institution for Saving's expansion plans, I submitted a letter accusing the board of capitulating and not deliberating in its review of the project. The board's actions since have shown my letter to be a least half wrong and I wish now to thank the members for a wonderful job on a very difficult issue. Yet I am still concerned about a much trickier aspect of the board's deliberations which I raised again at the Feb. 17 meeting: Why the bank insists on this highly contentious plan and location when it has at least a dozen other properties to choose from. Judging by the board's muted response to my question I assume it does not deem it irrelevant to its deliberations. And, as IFS representative and former Newburyport Mayor Lisa Mead has noted throughout, the legality of the project is the issue here, less so the community detriment. Said another way: If the proposed project is legal, IFS can do with the property what it wants. I've only lived in Newburyport since 2003, but I've come to love its long history of not tolerating such myopic views of right and wrong. So, perhaps if I reframe my question it might seem more relevant to the board's deliberations: What exactly is IFS' proposed expansion to be used for, and might that need be better met elsewhere? How else can the board assess the short-term and, more important, long terms impacts to our historic neighborhood. Isn't that within the scope of the special permits being sought? Is it IFS' plan just to add administrative office space, ultimately helping downtown businesses with minimal traffic impacts to our severely congested streets? If it is, then why not put the proposed office space fronting State Street? If it's the bank's plan to expand increasingly obsolete in-person retail services without the benefit of a real traffic study, then why not move the project to a more accessible location? The board's own attorney made clear it has wide discretion here. So, in the interests of the community you have been serving so well so far, can someone please ask the applicant what exactly is the addition going to be used for and why can't that need be filled elsewhere at less cost to the community?

Warmest regards,

Tim Wacker

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