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NEW LEBANON  
PLANNING/ZONING CLERK

August 12, 2025

To Elizabeth Brutsch, Planning Board Chair, Planning Board Members: Jim Carroll, Michael Crosby, Greg Hanna, Steve Muse, Josh Young, Becky Segal and Planning Board Member Alternates: David McGinness and Jeffrey Zimmerman

Please accept this letter as my public comment on the Affordable Housing Project.

I know that within our community, people are divided on their support for or opposition to the "Affordable Housing" project. Then there may be others like me who were a bit on the fence. However, since watching the recording of the previous Planning Meeting, it became crystal clear which side of the fence I am on. And my side of the fence does not include a 41-apartment low-income housing project.

When we, as a community, were informed about this project, we were told it would be a 28-unit building, providing affordable housing for seniors, and although there was some percentage that could be occupied by non-seniors, the majority of the apartments were supposed to be for the seniors of New Lebanon.

The premise was that seniors in the community could sell their homes and move into senior housing, which would then make their homes available for younger families to purchase. Under this idea, I will use myself as an example. This housing would allow me the opportunity to sell my house and move into the new senior housing. My son, who is an EMT for one of our local communities, could buy my house, he and his girlfriend could get married, and start a family. We as a community would benefit by keeping younger people in our town. Sounds good, right? After the last Planning Board meeting, I was enlightened to the fact that none of that can or will happen. If I sell my house, the assets from the sale of my home would disqualify me from getting an apartment in this new project. And even if it didn't, now, New Lebanon residents don't get priority on the apartments. Anyone will be able to apply and move into this low-income housing, provided their income doesn't exceed the thresholds. The apartments could go to any low-income person or family that applies, meets the criteria, and is willing to relocate. Where is the benefit to our community and, more specifically, to the seniors in our community?

Maybe some of the businesses will see a benefit if the residents of the project go to those businesses. Surely the store on the lower level will benefit. But we can't overlook the costs. The group speaking for the projected project stated at the last meeting that they would negotiate what they would pay in property and school taxes, and it was very clear they don't expect to pay their fair share. Additional children added to the already maxed-out school budget, and the amount paid by the project in taxes won't cover those increases in educational costs. So, the very people who supposedly were going to benefit from this project will be the people who are in jeopardy of losing their homes when the taxes become unaffordable. Having lost my husband just over 3 years ago, and surviving on one income is not easy, I could be one of those people.

*Raymona Griffin*

But we don't matter. The contributions we have made over the years are nothing. No respect, no consideration, we will just be shoved out of the way in the name of progress. We will be stuck with something we didn't ask for, we won't benefit from, and as taxpayers, we can't afford.

I hope that when this comes before the zoning board to approve the variance on the lack of the required space deemed acceptable for the size of this project, these important concerns will be addressed, and the committee will not approve the variance. The attorney representing this group of investors admitted at the most recent meeting that they don't have enough space. I know this will be disputed, so I want to share how I came to that conclusion. When Mr. McGinness asked about the apartments being pet-friendly, and it was confirmed they were, he then asked if there would be a fenced-in area for the dogs to run and play. The response from the attorney was, "There is only just so much space back there". Not that it was unnecessary, or not within the scope of the project, but that the project lacked the space. What else is going to change about this project? What else will they not have enough space for? I don't know, and honestly, I hope not to find out.

There are so many other issues like the building only having one elevator, the lack of adequate and appropriate emergency services, the water and septic, the increase in traffic, the safety of people crossing Route 20, and the lack of adequate parking. There are just too many to go into specific detail about each issue, but I think most people get it and can understand my concerns.

Thank you for your time and your thoughtful consideration.

Respectfully,

Raymona Griffin