

Leonard Street Re-Zoning

To All Residents:

I would like to clear up a lot of misinformation concerning the proposed re-zoning of Houghton's Farm on Leonard Street.

Background

The Houghton's Farm land has been designated a Priority Development Area (PDA) and its future use has been discussed at Selectmen's meetings for at least 3 years. The location at the Route 495 interchange is ideal for commercial/industrial development. Commercial/industrial development at this location will provide the greatest benefit to the Town as a whole with limited traffic congestion due to the immediate highway access. The estimated annual property tax revenue to the Town of Norton, after build out, will be approximately \$800,000.

The land recently became available for purchase. The Town had the opportunity through right of first refusal to purchase the land. The Town determined that it was unable to meet the \$3.6M sale price to maintain the open space. It should be noted that in the Town of Norton there are 4,385 acres of permanently protected open space land. This is 23.40% of the Town. After the Town waived its right to purchase the land, The Estate signed a Purchase and Sale Agreement with Condyne Construct Inc. for \$3.6M.

Infrastructure and Access

The site will not be developed until all infrastructure improvements are in place. All costs associated with necessary infrastructure improvements will be the responsibility of the developer to implement; necessary infrastructure improvements will not be at a cost to the Town of Norton. These improvements will include sewage, water lines, road improvements, sidewalks and traffic signals at the intersection of Route 123 and Leonard St.

MassDOT is proposing improvements to Route 123 in the near future, meaning, any infrastructure improvements required for development of Houghton's Farm would need to be completed before the work begins by the State on the roadway. Once the State completes work on Route 123, there is a 7-year moratorium on roadway digging. The State will be funding and begin construction in 2018 of road improvements and sidewalks on East Main Street from Pine Street to Interstate 495. This will also include traffic signalization at the off ramps.

The only access to the site will be from Leonard Street and East Main Street. ***There will be no access from Burt Street, Janet Street, Downing Drive or Carlton Drive.***

Leonard Street, from Plain Street to the proposed development will be posted "NO TRUCKS". All trucks will have to exit back to Route 123.

Environmental

The uses of the property are regulated by the fact that the land falls within a Zone II Water Resource Protection District. There are limitations on development of projects such as gas stations when located in a Water Resource Protection District. There will be **no "chemical plants"**.

A large portion of the land will remain open space as a result of the existence of wetlands, flood plain and river front area. A large area where the driving range is presently located, will remain

as open space to be used by the Town as a park and will also provide recreational access to the Canoe River.

Proposed Development

The proposed development consists of two (2) buildings along East Main Street with retail and office space, three (3) commercial/industrial buildings constructed on the west side of Leonard Street and three (3) commercial/industrial buildings on the east side of Leonard Street. The proposed development on the east side will be in the area that is currently hay fields. The remaining land is protected wetland.

We are fortunate that we have a developer who we have worked with in the past. Condyne has always worked cooperatively with the Town and are always willing to mitigate impacts. Visit the Norton Commerce Center off of South Washington Street to see their quality work and the types of buildings that may be constructed.

The largest concern here is to the neighbors abutting the two buildings on the east side of the development. ***Approval of the zoning change does not mean that development is good to go. Each building will have to go through a Planning Board site plan and special permit review process and Conservation Commission hearing.*** During the site plan review process there will be an emphasis on lessening the impacts to the neighbors. The developer has already indicated that buildings will be set back a minimum of 150 feet from the neighbors and an 8-foot berm with trees will be constructed. As with all development there are impacts to the immediate neighbors. These impacts need to be addressed and mitigated as best they can without eliminating the benefits to be gained by the Town as a whole from the development.

The ultimate fact is that the owners of the land want to sell the property. They have a buyer willing to offer \$3.6M. The land is going to be developed in a manner that justifies a purchase price of \$3.6M. Commercial/industrial development is the best option for the Town of Norton. We are trying to prevent what happened at 274 East Main Street. We do not need another 40B! The parcel abutting the neighbors to the east will support the development of 14 apartment buildings with 420 units.

The Norton Commerce Center has only 2 sites available for development. The Town needs this rezoning in order to grow the tax base so that residents receive the services they deserve. Please support this article at Town Meeting.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at myunits@nortonmaus.com or by phone (508) 285-0212.

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