

Town of Belmont Planning Board
Homer Municipal Building
19 Moore Street
Belmont, MA 02478

May 30th, 2024

SBJ: Application for special permit and design at 25 Hawthorne Street, Belmont, MA

Members of the Planning Board:

We write to strongly oppose this application, especially as the construction is currently proposed.

We have been happily and peacefully living at 29 Hawthorne Street, unit 2 – abutting 25 Hawthorne St. – for over twelve years. We chose Belmont and our neighborhood because it was home to people who grew up here or came here to raise their families. Definitely, we do not welcome speculators under false pretenses. Even more importantly, we chose this neighborhood because it did not look like other neighborhoods in Cambridge or Somerville.

It is important to mention that because of this choice, we have accepted extremely high property taxes, and accordingly we respectfully request this board to protect our interests.

My wife and I travel frequently. After returning from overseas last January, I found that the property at hand, which had gorgeous age-old oaks and other trees (see figure 1) was completely cleared (see figure 2) exposing our home to wind gusts, noise from Trapelo road, and especially the junk yard and noise from the business behind it. Nobody had asked our permission before doing such a thing.

Over the years we have spent thousands of dollars and much labor to clean and repair our property as a consequence of these big trees on the property line. We did so, without asking anything in return, because they were germane, not only to our quality of life, but most importantly to the market appeal and value of our property. The crux of the matter is not who legally owned the trees, but the responsibility of this board to protect our investment.

In other words, 25 Hawthorne Street might have owned the trees, but their use belonged to the whole neighborhood, and in addition, we – 29 Hawthorne Street unit 2 – not only have paid for maintenance and tree services for years, but most importantly we paid for the initial cost of our property because of the conditions of neighborhood it was in.

Even before we get to the volume and the placement of the new dwelling at 25 Hawthorne Street, we respectfully request that this board imposes new trees, back on the property line as it was, and recedes the prospective dwelling accordingly. Lastly, the manner these unscrupulous newcomers are shoving their housing plans down our throats are completely out of place and touch with our neighborhood.

Coming to the proposed design, we have the following remarks and requests:

- First, a rhetorical question: if the newcomers wanted a two-family home why didn't they buy a multifamily, which is certainly available and zoned for somewhere else in town? Why are they coming to do real-estate speculations in our neighborhood? Our neighborhood is not home for box-looking dwellings sitting awkwardly sideways on a lot not suited for it! We respectfully

request that the new construction will be a single family, as it is currently, and properly positioned facing the street.

- Furthermore, two units with thousands of square feet each, call for big families with present or future kids who will grow and drive. This begs the question of where the prospective cars are going to be parked. The neighborhood is already suffering from past abuse. We already have monster homes without enough space for parking, whose cars end up all the times in front of somebody else's entrance. Homes need to support self-contained living. This board cannot continue to approve homes that need somebody else's space to function. We respectfully request that the approved square footage of the dwelling be drastically reduced from the current asking, and that driveways and outside spaces be sized accordingly for self-contained living.
- The dwelling needs to have enough relief on the sides to accommodate run-off water and most importantly snow in the winter. Given the displacement of the current design, it does not seem that there is enough space to accommodate snow piles in the winter. Again, planning for self-contained living is a must, and the best remedy for future problems. Most definitely we do not want snow pushing against our expensive fence or extra snow from the other side.
- Height and span of the dwelling; our home is already blocked on the left side by a three-story building, which should have never been approved. This blocks daylight, view, and compromises privacy, since someone can easily look into our windows. Having another one on the other side would be absolutely beyond the pale. We respectfully request that the new construction will be set back, sized and positioned, so that it would not compromise our sunlight and privacy.
- The zoning approval and building permits, the applicants are asking for, require your approval because your function is to prevent a defective construction that could harm in anyway the applicants themselves, future owners, or anybody else. Unfortunately, because of lack of proper bylaws this has already escaped your control. The applicants have cut down an age-old tree – see figure 3 – on the property line that had a root system spanning the size of its giant umbrella. From what I was told, the applicants claimed they did it out of concern for their prospective foundations.

Unfortunately, they have showed no regards for our existing foundations or driveway. By the rationale of above, they have already committed a violation, even before they had a permit to start building. I was also told that they have refused to remedy the damage, which calls for the excavation of the extensive root system under our driveway in order to prevent its looming collapse, and for an assessment of how much those roots are reaching under our hundred-and-twenty-year-old foundations.

We respectfully request that any building permit should be issued only after the applicants have fully repaired all of the damages and cleared possible structural harm they might have already caused to our property.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Simone B. Bortolami

Dr. Roberta Pozzan

29 Hawthorne Street – unit 2



Figure 1 – 25 Hawthorne Street – top view – neighboring 29 Hawthorne Street as it used to be



Figure 2 – 25 Hawthorne back (left) and front (right) as it is now from 29 Hawthorne Street



Figure 3 – Age-old oak with major roots under 29 Hawthorne Street's driveway