

Subject: In reference to special permit application (PB288) from Leggat McCall

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From: David de Swaan Arons

To: dmaher@cambridgema.gov, Council@cambridgema.gov, citymanager@cambridgema.gov, Bmurphy@cambridgema.gov, marjorie.decker@gmail.com

CC: lpaden@cambridgema.gov

Priority: High

Dear Mayor, Council Members, Planning Board Members, City Manager, State Rep. Decker, and Mr. Murphy

I write to urge that the special permit application (PB288) from Leggat McCall be denied.

Cambridge is in a unique position to finally right a decennia long wrong by addressing this state-owned, sick building. Despite a few meaningless, condescending presentations, the State has shown no tangible interest in ensuring the best solution for Cambridge in this matter. Instead the State want the highest bid for the property as long as the bid meets general building regulations. As a result the leading bidder, Leggat McCall, has in affect been forced to design the future building with minimal cost and maximum future revenue so as to be able to recoup its investment. However in this process, the design and the implications of the development, there has been MINIMAL to ZERO regard for Cambridge in general and East Cambridge in particular. Why is the City of Cambridge standing by idly in this matter and not playing a more significant role in ensuring that its inhabitants/tax payers are properly represented?

I reside about 300 feet from the Sullivan Courthouse (and within earshot of the rants, raves, and cat-calls of the prisoners), and have myself invested significantly in renovating our family home (recognized by an award from the Cambridge Historical Society) and being part of this upcoming and blooming community. I've seen our neighborhood change in many positive ways and love living and raising my family here.

The courthouse is the only exception to this being a truly great neighborhood. No one thinks this was anything but a mistake to begin with, and this includes all the developers who have presented design concepts to the city and state. Even Leggat McCall acknowledges that this building is out of scale and out of place in this neighborhood of low-rise homes and businesses. It is incomprehensible that lack of proper leadership now would allow this awful situation to persist and in fact get significantly worse.

Our hope was that the redevelopment of this sick property would be better than what currently exists. I am all in favor of this building becoming a thriving residential, retail and business center, but despite their valiant efforts, Leggat McCall is working with a fundamentally flawed building and can only make it less ugly, not fundamentally a better building for this neighborhood. At this size it will always be too big and out of scale with the fabric of the neighborhood.

My primary concerns with this project are as follows:

Size: It is out of scale with the neighborhood and always will be. Everyone knows this. Why let this mistake continue? Now is the time to make this right for the neighborhood. I am not asking for it to be reduced to a 4-story building, but reducing the scale of this will help address all the other concerns that follow.

Light Pollution A 22-story glass tower will emit a tremendous amount of additional light into an already bright city neighborhood. There has been nothing presented to date as to how this will be addressed, only the promise of a study.

Wind: The wind is, and always will be, an issue with this building. I have seen nothing or heard nothing from the developer that indicates how they will address this issue except the promise of a study. And with the possibility of cafes and retail stores at ground level, the additional concern of litter blowing up into our neighborhood is another issue we will have to contend with if the wind issue is not corrected.

Traffic & Parking: The goal of 2,000+ workers commuting to and from of this location every day will make for intolerable traffic conditions, especially along 3rd Street which is already clogged every morning and evening. And with only ~425 total parking spaces allotted to the building, the scarce parking in the neighborhood will become a nightmare for those who are not fortunate to have off street parking.

For all these reasons I do not think this project should move forward until the state presents a financial option to the developer that would make it feasible for them to reduce the height of this building and have it be a profitable venture.

Sincerely,

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