



February 6, 2014

Mr. Hugh Russell, Chair
City of Cambridge Planning Board
344 Broadway
Cambridge, MA 02139

RE: PB #288, Edward J. Sullivan Courthouse

Dear Mr. Russell and Members of the Board:

Last evening approximately 30 members of the East Cambridge Planning Team met in the Police Department Community Room to discuss with Rob Dickey of Leggat McCall and his colleagues for the final time their plans for the re-purposing of the courthouse building. It has loomed over the three- and four-story residences in East Cambridge for years, and although many of us would like it replaced with a park, we realize that this is just a fantasy. Since we must live with it, our goal is to insure that the project will be successful both for its tenants and for our East Cambridge neighborhood. However, that so many people were willing to come out on such a cold, snowy night is indicative of the depth of concern there is about this project.

Some of our concern stems from the fact that studies we deem very important have not been completed: (a) sun glare from the outer surface of the tower, (b) light pollution from inside the building during hours of darkness, and (c) wind tunnel effects around the base of the building. Although you should have them by Feb 18, this is too late for public input of much value. The traffic study has been completed, but we are skeptical of the results, as it seems naïve to think that there will be *no* deleterious effect on existing traffic. As a point of safety, we ask that the Planning Board request the Traffic and Parking Department to consider reversing the one-way directions on Thorndike and Spring Streets, as visibility would be greatly improved for those crossing Third Street.

Noise abatement is of particular concern, since at street level East Cambridge already measures above the maximum decibel level deemed acceptable by the City day or night, and we want to insure that the most efficient equipment available is used to muffle sound. The rooftop mechanicals should be completely surrounded with sound-deadening housing. In addition, there are raptors nesting on the roof. They need to be relocated during the construction phase, but we would like them to be returned to their present location as soon as it is safe for them.

In order to become an asset for the East Cambridge community, the building should have a room for community use on the first floor and the ability to use a planned function room on the 22nd floor on occasion to enjoy the view. Entrepreneurial space at lower rates should be made available on the lower floors in the office tower, preferably with right of first refusal offered to East Cambridge residents. The developer should be required to rent the first floor retail spaces at rates which will enable start-up businesses to afford them, regardless of "market rate." As former Councilor Reeves taught us "Ground floor could be free. You make your money upstairs."

We would prefer to see some housing along the Spring Street side rather than the open space planned for it. Townhouses with enough space for families would be very compatible with the surrounding neighborhood. Approaches to the building along the diagonal from the corners of Second and Third Streets and straight from Lopez Avenue could be landscaped open space as planned.

Another addition to the neighborhood and this building would be to put all wiring underground on all the streets around the perimeter of the building and along Third Street coming up from Kendall where not already completed. In addition, although there should be no pile driving, a structural engineer should inspect abutter's homes before and after construction is completed, at developer's expense. In addition, work hours and parking for construction crews need to be determined. Once the building is occupied, hours during which delivery vans, trucks, and trash

East End House, 105 Spring Street, Cambridge, MA 02141

collectors can serve the building need to be established.

Although we have been assured that Leggat McCall will work with the neighborhood and respond to these concerns, we would also like to see them included in the language of the Special Permit. To date, Mr. Dickey has heard but responded that he cannot commit to specific requests.

To comply with the parking space requirement, the developer plans to lease 435 spaces in the First Street Garage. This will have to be approved by the City Council, and an RFP issued. Leggat McCall has proposed that a market be opened in the long- vacant restaurant on First Street in this building, and ECPT members are enthusiastic about this idea. Should it be approved, we would ask that this market be open for business before a Certificate of Occupancy for the courthouse is issued.

Mr. Dickey and his colleagues have an ambitious plan for the re-purposing of the courthouse, and we look forward to working cooperatively with them. However, we remain unanimous in our dislike of the height and bulk of the building, and as you see, still have serious reservations about the project. We hope the Planning Board will contribute their expertise in refining and improving the design, and approving a very detailed Special Permit.

With all good wishes,

Barbara Broussard, President
East Cambridge Planning Team