

February 24, 2014

To: Richard Bourre, MEPA

Dear Mr. Bourre,

Leggat-McCall's waiver of MEPA review should be categorically denied. If anything, this project should be subject to every bit of scrutiny the law allows, and then some.

As you no doubt know, the Sullivan Courthouse site in East Cambridge is a truly extraordinary fiasco. It's remembered as an infamous example of corruption and mismanagement. Originally slated to cost \$14m, the actual costs soared more than five times that amount. Less than 25 years after it was occupied, it was abandoned amid a flurry of lawsuits over asbestos, failed infrastructure and estimates that it would cost over \$130m to repair. I have attached two images to jog your memory. In the black-and-white picture there was a plan to build a huge horizontal space that included an immense parking facility. This would have wiped out all of the historic 19th century buildings on the site. The only reason it didn't was the project fell far short of funding due to graft. It was a failure from start to finish.

Instead of cleaning up this mess, the Commonwealth auctioned it to the highest bidder in disregard of any urban plan or neighborhood consideration. It was a flawed process. Leggat-McCall won the bid and proposed to re-skin the building in glass and fill it with thousands of corporate commuters, leasing every available cubic inch to maximize their revenue. Such a development would be shattering to the integrity of what is essentially a quiet, historic, residential neighborhood zoned (if you can believe it) to just 35' on most of the sides of the tower.

Among other things, the proposed use calls for about two thousand occupants in a single block, roughly 5,000 trips per day and that alone forces a full Environmental Impact Review by MEPA. But add to that 45 tons of asbestos, the inevitable noise and light pollution from a glass beehive filled with thousands of commuters and the constant service and delivery trucks, the pathetic and corrupt history, and the extreme controversy surrounding this matter (see: <http://40thorndike.org>), and I think you can understand why the right thing to do is subject this proposal to the strictest possible scrutiny.

Please deny Leggat-McCall's request for a MEPA waiver. And if you have other instruments that can be brought to bear on this case, I encourage you to do so.

Michael Hawley
101 Third Street
Cambridge, MA 02141



