

25 February 2014

Dear Members of the Planning Board,

I am writing in opposition to the petition #288 submitted by Leggat McCall who have been tentatively designated as the redeveloper of the abandoned Sullivan Courthouse.

This piece of property could and should be viewed only as it was originally intended – as a city/community/public space for city/community/public benefits.

At a time when commercial and private development are awash in Cambridge creating more unaffordability, clogged streets, greater congestion, and diminishing the human and open space face of the city, we have been told that private developers can do what they want and the public only can get certain concessions for a little of what the public needs.

Well, that may be true for private buildings. But this building is different which makes it a very valuable possibility. It began as a public building, it is supposed to continue in that way.

I urge the planning board to exert the power it has to reject the authorization for Leggat McCall to move forward and legitimate their control over an otherwise non-conforming building which is too tall, too toxic, and will meet none of the community's priorities as outlined in the proposal.

We urge that you support the termination of the current disposition process and request that the State take responsibility for the removal of this toxic site and return this site to the City of Cambridge for community purposes. The possibility for meeting community needs for smaller, environmentally sensitive, affordable housing, community-based commercial needs is here. Let's not squander it.

The non-conforming status of the building should be terminated so as to return this site to a renewed public purpose or a development that is in conformance with the zoning ordinance. The Board should deny any request for a waiver of project review under the Massachusetts Environmental Protection Act.

Thank you.

Cathy Hoffman
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