

February 25, 2021

To the Zoning Board of Adjustment Chairman and Members,

I am writing to the board at this time to have my thoughts about Ben's Sugar Shack project heard. After sitting in on most of the meetings, I would like to express my thanks as an abutter and taxpayer to the board for being thorough in the application process for Ben's special exception. The board seems ready to vote at the next meeting and I wanted to add my two cents.

First of all, I noticed in the minutes of the last meeting on 2/2/21 it states who was in attendance – Attorney Hanna for the applicant and Attorney Little for the abutters. This is the first issue! Attorney Little is representing a group of non-abutters. The actual abutters are OK with the project. I would hope the board would amend the minutes to reflect that.

This leads me into the next concern. Do non-abutters take precedent over abutters in the zoning process? If so, why have abutters at all? Maybe just vote on projects at town meeting.

Next, I clearly stated to Ben that I would support the project 100% if done correctly. This has been the most thorough project I have ever seen in town. There really are not that many special exception projects. And Ben has covered every bit of Temple's zoning laws with his team. In the past, I have sat both on the planning board and as an alternate on the ZBA – this project is clearly the most comprehensive in Temple history.

So now we are at the property value issue. I don't believe the applicant can ever prove effects to property values; nor can the opposition. This tactic was used in 1994 on my project for the shop. Since then, I'm positive that the immediate area has seen massive valuation increases in their real estate. I will also add that there was a home built behind my shop inside of the 500' setback and went up in value to be sold to the recent owner. After professional testimony on Ben's behalf that stated there will most likely be no negative impact on values, I believe them after seeing it firsthand.

What would be hard to determine would be, if denied the special exception for the project, what could happen? We all should know that Ben can build a much larger building and do it under the "Ag" option. This would definitely disenfranchise the actual abutters due to the fact that there is no site plan review process or really no oversight at all. Just an application for a building permit and go. Staying off the 35' setbacks, Ben can build the same building or bigger and spend time later working on his approval for retail up to 3000 square feet. I believe that would fly also if it meets all the same things that he is doing now. The big difference is the abutters' input on natural wooded buffers, lighting, etc. as well as various bookends, if you will, within reason would be gone! The abutters, as well as the concerned non-abutters, would be denied that process at the planning board stage. So they don't stop the building, they just stop some of the retail, but at the same time destroy important input on the project.

I will end with this – Please pass the special exception and send this project on to the planning board. At that stage, let's work with Ben and all the neighbors to deliver an outstanding addition to our town and overall community. This is an awesome project and it doesn't have to be negative at all. The concerns have all been addressed and can be more defined at the planning board review stage. Let's all make this a project that Temple can be proud of!

Cheers,  
Steve Andersen