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Southold Town Board  
c/o Mrs. Elizabeth A. Neville, Town Clerk  
Southold Town Hall  
53095 Main Road  
Southold, NY 11971-0959

December 18, 2019

**Re:** Change of Zone Application of Fishers Island UFSD/Walsh Park Benevolent Corporation  
Premises: Southeast side of Winthrop Avenue at its intersection with Equestrian Avenue,  
Fishers Island, N.Y.  
SCTM #: 1000-9-10-10 (the "Subject Property")

Dear Supervisor Russell and Members of the Town Board,

I am writing in support of the above application requesting a change of zoning district classification from R-40 to Hamlet Density (HD) for a portion of the Subject Property. The requested change would allow the applicant, Walsh Park, to build multi-family housing units on the Subject Property, housing that would be reserved exclusively for year-round island residents. This will not be a case of development for private profit but an investment in the long-term viability of the island community.

- Housing need: The loss of year-round housing stock to seasonal home buyers continues to be a major contributor to the gradual depopulation of Fishers Island. This trend has reached the point where it threatens the sustainability of 24/7 emergency services, which are staffed by volunteer firemen, EMTs and ambulance boat captains who live on the island. The trend is also a looming challenge for other essential services, such as the ferries, airport, highway department, waste management, food store, school and building maintenance services, that need at least some employees to live on-island.
- Resource efficiency of multi-family units: Multi-family units are the most resource efficient form of housing to build. They use scarce land more efficiently than single-family houses and are more cost-effective to build.
- Location near amenities: The most desirable location for year-round housing on Fishers Island is at the west end, close to community amenities, including the school, ferry, stores, gas stations, doctor's office, fire house, ambulance service, waste transfer station, post office, state trooper, year-round church, American legion, theater and museum.
- Neighborhood density: The Subject Property is in the one area of Fishers Island that has had multi-family houses for decades, much of it originally built by the U.S. Army as part of Fort Wright. A multi-family development on the Subject Property would be consistent with that housing, particularly along Whistler Avenue, including a six-unit apartment building just to the south of the Subject Property as well as a number of two-unit houses

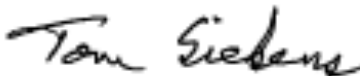
and a five-unit apartment building a bit farther west along Whistler. Less than a quarter mile away from the Subject Property, six apartments are being completed in the Freight Building of the Fishers Island Ferry District.

Nearby residences are well separated from the Subject Property given their setbacks and the roads on three sides of the Subject Property. Occupant density is low given that a number of the nearby residences are used only on a seasonal basis.

- Traffic and parking: Most housing in this area has off-street parking or parking along the north side of Whistler Avenue, which is wide enough to accommodate that parking plus one lane of traffic in either direction. Even at busy times of day such as the school runs or ferry arrivals, traffic jams are unknown.
- No alternative sites: Other than the Subject Property, no vacant properties are available on the west end of Fishers Island that are of sufficient size to accommodate multi-family units.
- No better alternative uses: Alternative uses for the Subject Property would not be of significant benefit to the community. Fishers Island does not need more open space and the Subject Property itself is close to large open space owned by the Town. The Subject Property is not worth preserving as public park. Continued R-40 zoning for part of the Subject Property will make it available only to development of single-family houses, most likely by seasonal residents with the means to do so.
- Precedent: Recently the Town Board granted the Fishers Island Utility Company a change of zone to HD. See Town Resolution 2019-224, dated March 12, 2019, enacting "A Local Law to amend the Zoning Map to change the zoning of the parcel known as SCTM #1000-6-6-20.8, from R-80 (Residential) to HD (Hamlet Density)". The change was conditioned on restricting occupancy of multi-family units to fulltime year-round residents. Pursuant to the change, the Utility Company is currently building a two-family unit to house essential operations professionals who will be year-round residents.

In short, given that Walsh Park will be required to build its multi-family units in compliance with applicable laws, including building and health codes and HD use restrictions, as well as recommendations, if any, of the Town Planning Board, the interests of the entire Fishers Island community will be well-served by granting the requested change of zone.

Sincerely yours,



Thomas B. Siebens