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February 8, 2022

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JAMES W. MURPHY
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Via Email & 1st Class Mail

Carolyn Britt, Chair
Planning Board
c/o Ethan Parsons
Town of Ipswich
25 Green Street
Ipswich, MA 01938

Re: Ora, Inc., 55 Waldingfield Road, Ipswich, MA; Special Permit

Dear Chairman Britt and Members of the Planning Board:

In the past month, several letters have been penned to the Ipswich Planning Board, expressing concern that the Great Estate Bylaw's goals of rehabilitating and restoring historic buildings, preserving landscape features, open vistas, and historic gardens, creating open space in perpetuity for public access, and providing an alternative to yet another residential subdivision, is appropriate everywhere *except* on Waldingfield Road. The Opponents' "anywhere but here, not in my backyard, message", is a familiar refrain designed to distract the Board from the significant benefits to the Town and the environment that the Ora restoration project brings and as the Great Estate Bylaw contemplates. Additionally, in the spring of 2021, the Ipswich Town meeting voted overwhelmingly (309-21) to make changes to the Ipswich Great Estates Bylaw to modify density and open space requirements to promote the preservation of this valuable Property. The Bylaw recognizes the extreme cost of preserving, rehabilitating, and restoring these historic buildings and this Great Estate by allowing nonresidential and residential space to be added to generate the revenue for the restoration efforts while restricting the total amount of new structures. Subsequently, the Project meets the Bylaw requirements for a Special Permit.

For almost ten years, 55 Waldingfield Road has been on the open market with its historic mansion, schoolhouse, carriage house and barn, formal gardens, and natural open landscape, without any takers. The owners of 55 Waldingfield Road, who have been long standing stewards of the mansion and open space finally have a buyer who will preserve the Property as a Great Estate rather than converting the forty acres to a sprawling thirteen lot subdivision and losing the opportunity for accessible open space.

The Buyer, Ora, Inc., a leading clinical research and consulting organization that brings vision-healing ophthalmic therapies and innovations to the global market, developed a strong offer

to acquire the property. Ora has moved to establish the property as a Great Estate, utilizing it as a complimentary campus within the bounds of the Bylaw, the needs of local stakeholders, and principles of environmental sustainability. This campus is complimentary to Ora's "remote-first" work model that is widely preferred by the employees and will be used by the organization's stakeholders when events, tasks, and projects necessitate in-person collaboration and connection.

As the future of work becomes remote, Ora strives to offer only the most profound in-person experience at work to better serve and support their stakeholder ecosystems. The future of in-person work at Ora is dynamic, proximate to nature, and promotes holistic health of key stakeholders as paramount to its business. Moreover, Ora has taken an interest in this property specifically because of its pastoral nature, historical relevance, and scenic location.

Thus, Ora has an essential interest in protecting, preserving, and reinvigorating these characteristics of the property. This is reflected clearly in their plan to reduce the total space used for new construction, the restoration of the historic buildings on-site, the commitment to donate more than 60% of the land to open space conservation, the establishment of public access to previously inaccessible land, the incorporation of sustainability features that are unparalleled in any commercial building in Ipswich, and the tireless efforts to insulate the buildings and potential impacts from Waldingfield Road and to preserve the overall neighborhood character.

Every step taken, and every design feature, reflects Ora's commitment to the principles and intent of the Bylaw. This approach also reflects Ora's broader goal to use business as a force for good. The design meets the Great Estate Bylaw as outlined below.

Ora Encourages The Preservation And Restoration Of Buildings Of Historical And Architectural Significance Through An Appropriate Development.

While not visible to passersby, the century old historic buildings are deteriorating and in need of substantial repair and restoration efforts. The Ipswich Historical Commission has voted at least three times that the five (5) existing buildings have historical and architectural significance. Ora plans to restore the five (5) buildings, including the barn and carriage house at the east of the Property. The downsized Collaboration and Wellness Center is proposed behind the existing mansion and largely outside the view of Waldingfield Road users. The Bylaw allows for significantly more square footage of newly constructed structures but Ora has assessed its business needs in tandem with listening to citizen feedback and is comfortable with significantly less than what is permitted. More than sixty percent (60%) of the 40 acres will be set aside as permanent open space and substantial public access will be provided where there presently is none. Further, the Property will be a connecting property to two of the most cherished conservation land masses in Ipswich – Appleton Farms and the Julia Bird Reservation.

Ora Preserves The Design Integrity Of Landscape Features, Both Natural And Built, Which Contribute To The Character Of This Great Estate.

55 Waldingfield Road is graced with open vistas, a picturesque allee leading to the mansion, a significant forest area to the rear, formal gardens and access to the Ipswich River. The Ora proposal preserves all of the above with a permanent conservation restriction that includes the western vista and which covers the formal historic gardens and creates a one-mile public access loop with a de minimus impact to the landscape. The proposal includes the continued use of the east side for a horse paddock and equine use, creates a safe pedestrian path inside the stone wall for Waldingfield Road pedestrians and horse riders and includes parking spaces for those who want to enjoy the trail as well as the Greenbelt Trail that exists today and has no formal or safe parking area.

Ora Encourages The Efficient Use Of The Land In Harmony With The Natural Features Of This Residential District.

Ora's design retains almost all trees and avoids fill being brought in to change contours, retains the open vistas exposed to Waldingfield Road, and places the majority of the developed space in the open areas to the rear of the Property taking advantage of the contours and natural setting for the Collaboration and Wellness Center, a significant distance away from Waldingfield Road. The proposal also enhances public access to the Ipswich River. Almost 25 acres of the 40 acres will be in one or more conservation restrictions in perpetuity retaining its natural state.

Ora Provides An Alternative To The Subdivision Of The Estate Property For Residences.

The current owner presented a subdivision plan for consideration by buyers which would allow between 12–14 single-family houses as a matter of right with driveways, garages, sheds and other structures in accordance with the 2-acre zoning. In addition to losing all of the Property's vistas, increasing the consumption of Town water, increasing domestic septage and increasing the demands on the municipal and school resources, access for public pedestrian and equestrian use, the existing historic and architecturally significant buildings, and link to the adjacent historic Appleton Farms and Julia Bird Reservation, will be lost with a conventional subdivision.

Ora's Project Preserves Open Space For Conservation Or Recreation Use And Provides Appropriate Public Access To Said Open Space.

As mentioned, several times, the signature characteristic of 55 Waldingfield is its flat terrain and open scenic landscape. The Ora design is able to secure these features in perpetuity by placing a permanent conservation restriction on more than 16 acres of the Property to join the existing 8.8 acres that was placed under restriction by Julia Bird in 1970's. In addition to preserving

considerable open space, Ora has designed a one-mile looped trail within its boundaries that it will allow for public use and access. Presently, the 8.8 acres contains one or more trails that have been used by equestrians by permission of the current owner. That permission was recently revoked by the current owner. As all are aware, there is no right to public use of the trails. This is why Ora has proposed that the trails are available for public use in perpetuity. To enhance the public access, Ora has agreed to create at least five (5) parking spaces near the entrance to the Property. It has also designed a walking path on the inside of the stone wall to allow pedestrians and horse riders safe passage along the perimeter of the 55 Waldingfield Road property. These access points on the trail loop conveniently line up with entrance to Appleton Farms and provide better access to more trails and the existing polo field. The road that currently is often closed and is marked as private property will be officially public in perpetuity.

Ora's Design Protects Natural Features Which Are Important To The Character Of The Town, Including The Vistas Of The Main Corridor Roads.

The existing physical features and buildings on the Property separate the larger western vista (heading towards Mill Road) from the smaller eastern vista which is adjacent to the Greenbelt conservation area and the railroad line heading towards Route 1A. The substantial western vista will be placed in a conservation restriction as will the eastern vista, while the section behind the barn not visible from the road and outside of the eastern vista will remain in its present use as a paddock for equestrian use. The barn will be repaired, restored, and renovated with at least the current 10 stalls consistent with the future equestrian management and use of the conserved western and eastern paddock areas will remain as they are used today – for horses.

In addition to meeting the stated goals and objectives of the Bylaw, the design achieves far more benefits to the Town and neighborhood.

Ora's Design Will Be Without Parallel In Its Commitment To Sustainability And Conservation Principles.

The Ora design incorporates the following sustainability features:

1. Reuse of the existing buildings through restoration and repair rather than the disruption of constructing all new buildings.
2. Treatment and infiltration of stormwater on-site rather than discharging off-site.
3. Careful management of the existing landscapes and gardens to promote naturalized areas and to address invasive species.

4. Elimination of fossil fuels, reduced carbon generation, the introduction of modern thermostat control systems for reduced energy usage, and sustainable waste management including composting.
5. Use of a rain garden to capture, collect and use rainwater for future use including irrigation.
6. Equipping buildings to be solar-ready to promote renewable energy sources on-site.
7. Commitment to LEED Management Practices during site work, construction and future building uses.

Ora's focus on sustainability in its design has already been recognized by the majority of the Planning Board to be creative and responsive. The Planning Board members also acknowledged that the commitments by Ora to these extra ordinary sustainability features will be expensive but beneficial to the neighborhood and to the Town.

Ora Will Contribute To The Tax Base Without Placing Any Demand On Municipal Services.

At a time when the Town seeks to increase its tax base without the traditional demand by property owners on municipal services, Ora's lack of need for utility, school or other services should be a welcomed addition to the Town of Ipswich.

Ora's Use Of The Waldingfield Road Property Will Not Have An Adverse Effect On The Roadway Or The Residents.

The Opponents to the project have suggested that the additional trips associated with the project will have disastrous consequences to Waldingfield Road and the town. Ora has listened to the concerns and has responded in multiple ways to reduce that concern.

First, there are three (3) existing conditions affecting the existing and future use of Waldingfield Road.

1. Waldingfield Road is one of twenty-seven scenic roads in Ipswich. There are nine (9) single-family houses along the road and presently more than 1600 average daily trips, which means the overwhelming majority of the trips are from sightseers or people using Waldingfield Road as a cut through for any number of purposes.

2. There is agreement from the traffic experts, including the Town's peer reviewer, that the existing road is structurally sound and equipped to handle existing and future traffic. There is no need for any physical improvements to accommodate vehicles. This is consistent with the small number of reported accidents (5) over the past five years, which is reflective of the winding and varying slopes and physical characteristics of the roadway.
3. Decisions with respect to whether the neighborhood would like to adopt traffic calming measures to be installed in the future are within the control of the residents, the DPW and the Board of Selectmen. While Ora suggests that the Select Board may reduce the speed to 20 mph, it does not believe that its traffic will prompt the need for speed bumps or speed tables or limited access. These traffic "calming" decisions are appropriately left for the Town and the residents.

Given these factors, Ora has presented a plan to the Planning Board to reduce traffic volume associated and mitigate potential impacts with the campus to retain the character of Waldingfield Road and its' properties with the following:

1. The Ora employees will continue to work primarily on a remote basis, coming in twice per week for specific purposes. Ora is a visual impairment clinical research company and does not require employees in the office in cubicles on an 8 or 9-hour, five (5) day per week basis. Their limited New England employees are acclimated to working remotely and prefer that working environment. The 500 ADT number associated with the employees and space is inflated because as all traffic engineers admit, the trips associated with employees and commercial space has not been adjusted to reflect the new normal that people do not travel to work every day anymore.
2. Ora owns a shuttle bus and is finalizing an agreement with EBSCO to utilize 20-30 off-site parking spaces, when and if needed upon the build outs of Phase 2 and/or 3, specifically downtown, which will reduce traffic to and from the Property and will also promote employees to use commuter rail when available. When Ora employees and guests come to Ipswich, they will be coming in groups with specific time slots of on-site presence and will not need to come and go individually, making the shuttle use simple and easy without multiple trips accommodating different individual schedules. Lastly, 50% or more of Ora's employees and any other guests such as scientists, doctors, clients, etc. would be visiting most likely from outside of MA and coming by airplane or train and use the shuttle.

3. Ora will adopt a traffic monitoring plan to measure traffic entering and exiting the Property. It will have a reservation system for all visitors to ensure that the facility is properly provisioned for use, contact tracing and the company's utilization of space.
4. Ora has proposed a one-mile looped trail around the Property for horses and the public as well as a walking path along the inside of the stone wall on Waldingfield Road to take pedestrians and horses off of Waldingfield Road for recreation and public safety purposes.
5. Ora recognizes that the Zoning Bylaw sets the number of parking spaces and parking according to square footage. The Bylaw would require 120 parking spaces which is far too many. Ora understands that this is an inflated number that will not be required for its employees use and Ora will request a waiver from the Planning to reduce that number by twenty-five percent (25%) to 90 parking spaces. In addition to the reduced spaces, it will have another benefit, as the area where the 30 spaces were shown previously in front of the mansion, will now be part of Ora's open space conservation restriction area, removing the ability to put a parking area there in the future.
6. Ora agrees with the description of Waldingfield Road offered by its many users, including neighbors, Ipswich residents and residents of the North Shore. Ora has no intention of changing the physical features of Waldingfield Road. Ora's commitment to preserving open space and placing buildings beyond the mansion reflect its' intent to retain the pastoral setting with little visual disturbance.

Finally, to the extent that the Opponents are concerned with what happens if Ora leaves the Property sometime in the future and another entity seeks to purchase the Property and use the Estate for another purpose, Ora is prepared to provide an enforceable right-of-first refusal with an NGO or its designee to purchase the Property provided that the proposed use is not more intensive. Ora also understands that a condition could be placed on the Special Permit approval to require an amendment to the Special Permit if a subsequent buyer proposes a different or more intense use.

The distinctive characteristics of Ipswich and Waldingfield Road were two of the many reasons why Ora and its CEO, Stuart Abelson, selected this Great Estate for its supplemental campus. From the beginning, Ora has been transparent with the Planning Board, public agencies, and the neighborhood. It initially proposed a 56,000 square foot Collaboration Center building and a 16,000 square foot Wellness Center in early 2021, all within the permitted density guidelines of the Bylaw, when we all believed that the pandemic would be short lived, and most office workers would return to a conventional 9-5 office experience. With the realization that most businesses, like Ora, can survive and thrive with a remote work model resulted in the re-evaluation of Ora's needs

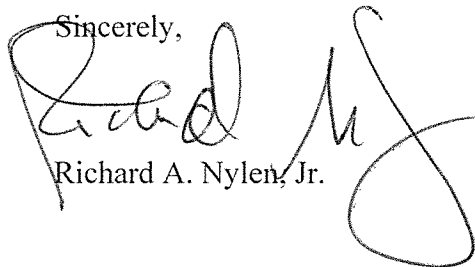
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as well as the concerns of the residents of Waldingfield Road. Ora is not sure when, or if, additional space for the Collaboration and Wellness Center, known as Phases 2 and 3, will be constructed but has pledged to the above conditions to ensure that the neighborhood character is preserved. Ora sees the 55 Waldingfield Road project as a great opportunity to use business as a force for good; to reconcile the divide between people and business and to develop a mutually beneficial relationship with the local Ipswich community.

Ora is dedicated to continuing the open dialogue as the project progresses. and will continue to uphold their commitment of responsibility, with minimal impact to the environment or the character of Waldingfield Road. The project presents extraordinary benefits to the community and its tax base without any drain on municipal services.

Ora looks forward to the approval of its project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard A. Nylen, Jr.", written in a cursive style. The signature is positioned to the right of the word "Sincerely," and above the printed name "Richard A. Nylen, Jr.".

Richard A. Nylen, Jr.

RAN/kad

cc: Stuart Abelson, Ora, Inc.
Jennifer Williams, Sr. Manager, Special Projects/Ora, Inc.
John Harden, AIA LEED AP – Principal/Olson Lewis + Architects
Charles E. Wear, III, PE/Hancock Associates