

## Ethan Parsons

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**From:** jennifer gordon <gordonconsult@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 10, 2022 4:07 PM  
**To:** Ethan Parsons  
**Cc:** Daddy & Gordon  
**Subject:** 55 Waldingfield Road

Ms. Carolyn Britt, Chair  
Planning Board  
Town of Ipswich  
25 Green Street  
Ipswich, MA 01938

February 10, 2022

Hello Madame Chair:

My name is Jennifer Gordon, I live at 877 Highland Street, Hamilton with my husband and our three daughters. We have lived here for close to ten years. We relocated to this area, this corner of Hamilton and Ipswich for the incredible natural beauty and the local commitment to land conservation. Bradley Palmer State Park, the Winthrop property, and of course, the Appleton Farm property - a farm continuously working for 400 years.

Having moved here from outside New England, we have visitors from all over the world. When we show them around, there are two local points that absolutely take their breath away - the approach to Crane Beach on Argilla Road when you have climbed the hill and see the marshes, dunes, and Choate Island Pines leading out to the ocean. And the 2nd heart-stopping moment is a slow meandering ride through the sun-dappled trees and stone walls of Waldingfield Road.

I have followed the sale listing of 55 Waldingfield Road going back to 2015. Back then the price was \$11 million - not a bad price for this beautiful estate, land, and history - certainly by American real estate standards. The original listing talked about the landscape and gardens being designed by Frederick Law Olmstead, the father of American landscape design. When it first hit the market, [Wicked local.com](#) reported that an Ipswich Selectmen was asked if the parcel would be re-zoned and he said it was not a consideration. At that time, the town of Ipswich considered including this parcel in their Land Conservation plans, but it did not fit into their acreage requirements and the price was too high. Over the duration of this listing, one of the property's owners passed away, the price was lowered, and after many years on the market, the price continued to come down, until an offer was made and accepted.

This offer by Ora, was predicated on a zoning change. Hence, we now have a property that was brought into Massachusetts Great Estate Development Preservation without technically meeting the original land and building square footage requirements. I think we were all looking for the best outcome for the current owner, our neighborhood, and Ora. Ora's original proposal was intriguing and seemed to be the least intrusive a corporate headquarters plan could be. We had hope for a solution for all. It all sounded like a lovely place to work. And they were giving the locals a path to walk on - lovely. But, revelations of later phases of their corporate campus development sound completely wrong for this location.

Now we left are arguing about traffic. First, we heard about 1200 more cars a day: it's since been cut to 500 or 600, and with the corporate shuttle buses. Of course, there will be a significant increase in traffic. How did we get here?

All the testimony about this historic road is quite true. And there is no question a commercial entity will erode this road, the history, the natural beauty.

In my view, Waldingfield can be a dicey place to drive right now. I have taught three teenagers how to drive Waldingfield Road. There are some Waldingfield rules in our family:

First, "Stay well under the posted speed limit, because most other drivers do not and this road is not built for speed - it's narrow with blind curves and no emergency outs."

Another rule - "Watch for the 3 narrow points in the road, if there is snow, ice, pedestrians, equestrians, bicyclists, or large SUVs and or trucks, even a large pothole - there is not room for two cars to pass at the same time."

And "Be mindful of the commuters, I mean, tailgaters," often just rushing across Waldingfield to New England Biolabs. Just last week, my daughters, were behind a classmate who crashed into the snowbank when a large pick-up coming from the opposite direction essentially ran her off the road.

And the final rule, "if no one is on the road - enjoy the gorgeous view."

If any corporation were planning to build an entrance to their new corporate headquarters, the planners and engineers would never allow a road equivalent to Waldingfield to be built, it would not meet building standards in any way.

We can have loads of traffic studies done, but if accidents start happening on Waldingfield Road the towns of Hamilton and Ipswich will be forced to make it safer. The walls will come tumbling down. That is how we got our American Highway System - safer roads for more cars.

So, for you all on the Planning Board, right now the talk is how to accommodate corporate headquarter traffic on this rural road. It cannot be done. The road as is, is at it's limit.

I believe we are all stewards of this beautiful part of the world. Ora wants to be one as well, I understand that desire. But Ora's main goal will be business not environmental or historic conservation.

I do not think a corporate campus should be the next use of this land.

This part of the world has had many stewards: Masconomet and the Agawams, in 1638 Governor John Winthrop bought the whole area from Masconomet. The Appletons had it for many generations, in fact before this Italianate mansion was built in the 1920s, one of the original Appleton houses was moved from across the street and a new structure was attached to it - it burned down in 1916.

And yes, as someone pointed out, there used to be some mills around the corner on Mill Road, Ipswich used the river to run many mills. Times have changed...before the mills were there, salmon and alewife spawned up the Ipswich River. Things change. Many stewards, many decisions made over time - some good, some bad. Let's make the most informed, forward-thinking decision now.

I've been wondering this whole time how a part of the world that is so unique, on river that is critical to our water supply, so near the ocean, at a time when the planet is in crisis could even be considered for a corporate campus?

Now I also wonder what is it all worth? Ipswich has prided itself on its history and natural beauty - this is your niche, your business, your mission. And this is a mission that can be balanced out. In this case particular case before the Planning Board, there is another option. There is another offer on the table to conserve this area.

It simply took this whole process to understand Ora's vision and for local people to realize how important this area is to all of us. It is not a case of "not in our backyard," as Ora is now suggesting: this is not an appropriate location for a corporate campus, the infrastructure cannot support this plan and the environment of this historic rural route is too fragile.

I respectfully ask that the Ipswich Planning Board not approve this proposal.

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