

To: Hingham Planning Board
From: Hilary Hosmer, 204 Linden Ponds Way
Date: January 14, 2026
Subject: Permit for HCAL at Bare Cove Park

Thank you for permitting me to speak at the January 13, 2026 Planning Board meeting regarding Bare Cove Park. Here are additional issues that there was not time to bring up. I have bolded key points.

I urge the Planning Board not to issue a special A2 permit to build the Hingham Center for Active Living (HCAL) at Bare Cove Park (BCP) until minor improvements are made and serious issues are resolved.

Traffic issues

I agree that existing traffic problems at the intersection of BCP Drive and Fort Hill Drive must be resolved, whether or not the HCAL is built. **The Planning Board should not approve HCAL's application for a special permit until a traffic solution is actually in place, rather than simply proposed.**

The two traffic studies presented on January 13, 2026 to the planning and zoning boards illustrate the vagueness of current plans. The first study seriously underestimates traffic conditions because it looks only at historical data, without taking into account new projects planned in and around BCP, like the pickleball courts on BCP Drive and 60 possible affordable housing units on Beal St.

The peer review traffic study, which includes estimated traffic for 3 proposed projects, is far superior. However, its estimates are based on assumptions that traffic measured on Feb 12, 2024 is "typical" of an average day, and that simple mathematical projections allow for estimates of additional summer and future usage. Spring and fall weather ideal for walking and sports, plus new apartment developments in Weymouth, suggest that **Monte Carlo simulations would be a more appropriate vehicle for simulating the complexities of the BCP/Ft Hill/South Road intersections and seasonal variations in the use of BCP.**

Police at the intersection are proposed for "large events", but, due to the presence of many older drivers, may be required much more frequently.

Plans to have a police or civilian traffic officers stationed to direct traffic does not indicate a properly sited project. The town is willing to improve traffic at the intersection, but on-going use of traffic officers because of underestimation in the design process is costly and to be avoided.

The repaving of BCP Drive is needed and to be commended.

Natural Issues

Soil testing has not been done due to its disruptive effects. We hope that the \$7 million allocated for site prep is sufficient to cover possible surprises underground. I hear that site prep for the Foster School was \$51 million due to underlying conditions.

HCAL planners just announced that there will be 3 acres of impervious surface around and in an area of critical environment concern (ACEC). **The percentage actually in the ACEC appears to be small, but I hear from an expert that “It’s like being a little bit pregnant”.**

Currently, soil contains billions of tiny critters that break down leaf litter which absorbs water and prevents erosion. New plans call for stormwater runoff to be managed on-site. DPW will clear snow and leaf litter from the impervious surfaces and keep drains clear, I assume.

Tree Illustrations are misleading. Although 2.5" - 3.5" diameter deciduous trees will be planted, the diagrams make the proposed new tree trunks appear much larger. This is visual “sales pitch”.

New trees will be warranted and tended for only a year. It’s unclear who will water them afterward? Sprinklers? Hydroponics? A paid gardener? Garden Club members? I hear that landscape trees are already dying at the Foster School due to lack of care during drought conditions.

The area to be clear cut for the HCAL is currently a lively area for singing, mating, and nesting songbirds, including rare species.

BCP's mature trees with trunks up to 30 inches in diameter, are "keystone species" that support many forms of wildlife, including thousands of caterpillar that birds catch to feed their young. **The proposed HCAL landscape trees will not be mature enough to support the current local and migratory songbird populations for many years.**

Legal Issues

Bare Cove Park is still a wildlife sanctuary until Town Meeting votes that it is not. Town Counsel's repeated assertions that BCP was never a wildlife sanctuary "because it was never registered with the state" are erroneous, according to experts I consulted, including a former Dept. of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) commissioner and the New England Zoo PhD conservation biologist Hingham consulted when planning the "rewilding" of BCP.

Safety Concerns

Maximum **slope** (2 ft horizontal for 1 ft vertical) **seems steep for seniors.** I could tell "before" slopes but not "after" slopes on the plans.

At HCAL's first exit, **signage is needed to turn right** so that seniors don't turn left and the wrong way on one-way BCP Drive. It's not obvious on the maps that vehicles departing HCAL must loop around the central strip to rejoin two-way BCP Drive.

Will fences around water catchment basins keep animals from falling in?

Design Concerns

The library/den is isolated from oversight by the receptionist. Will it become a place for inappropriate activity?

The Meals on Wheels area needs easy access to autos. The driveway to MOW has been replaced by a rain garden.

Thank you for your hard work reviewing HCAL and many other projects for the Town of Hingham!

I ask that the Planning Board NOT give a special A2 permit to build the HCAL project until safety/design concerns are addressed and critical issues underlying the project, such as legality, traffic, and ACEC are actually resolved!

Sincerely,

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