

Hingham Station Street Condominium Trust
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Hingham Districts Commission
210 Central Street
Hingham, MA 02043
Attention: Mr. Eric Smoczynski, Chair

Chairman Smoczynski:

I am writing to express our concerns for the proposed Development for 44 North Street which does not preserve the historical and architectural legacy of downtown Hingham.

I am the president of the Hingham Station Condominium Trust at 6 Station Street. Our 5-unit building is owner occupied and a direct abutter to this project. Two of the units have occupied bedrooms facing the proposed development. I have not met with the developer and the development team nor have I been asked to. I am asking the Commission to consider the conditions below during the plan review procedure. When doing so, please keep in mind that the historic Hingham Cemetery, dating back to 1672, is located approximately 100 yards away and the proposed development has two bars seating 21 patrons. One of which is described as a cocktail lounge.

1. Deck

We respectfully oppose the proposed outdoor dining deck because it introduces a substantial new structure that is inconsistent with the historic character of downtown Hingham. The district's significance comes from historic buildings, traditional streetscape, and open views – all unique to the ambience and appeal that downtown Hingham is known for. The deck would add visual clutter, diminish the prominence of historic resources, and set a precedent for similar structures throughout the district. At present, there are no restaurants in downtown Hingham with outdoor deck dining. While we support local restaurants and outdoor dining, we feel these goals should be achieved in a manner that preserves the unique historic qualities that make downtown Hingham special and preserves the quiet enjoyment of abutting bedrooms.

2. Dumpster Screening

The proposed dumpster location is inappropriate unless it is fully screened from view from all public ways. Unscreened refuse areas are incompatible with the historic character of downtown Hingham and diminish the visual quality of the streetscape. The Historic District should not permit modern service functions to become visible features of the district. Any enclosure should be designed as a subordinate element that blends with the architecture of the property and preserves the historic setting. I urge the Commission to require substantial screening like 6 Station Street and relocate the dumpster to a less visible location.

3. Trellises

We respectfully oppose the proposed trellises because they are not compatible with the historic character of downtown Hingham. The Historic District was established to preserve the architectural integrity and visual quality of the streetscape, and the addition of prominent trellis structures would alter the appearance of the building in a way that detracts from its historic features. The proposed trellises would add visual bulk, introduce elements that are not historically characteristic of the structure, and potentially set a precedent for similar additions throughout the district. Over time, such changes could erode the authentic characteristic that residents and visitors value. Historic preservation is most successful when new additions remain subordinate to the historic architecture, and in this case the proposed trellises fail to meet that standard. We urge the Commission to protect the integrity of the Historic District and deny this feature.

4. Kitchen Odors

The proposed restaurant use signifies concerns regarding kitchen odors and exhaust emissions. Historic downtown districts are valued for their walkability, outdoor gathering spaces, and proximity of businesses and residences. Persistent cooking odors have the potential to create nuisance conditions, negatively affect neighboring properties and alter the character of the area. A type 1 exhaust hood system integrated with a multi-stage Pollution Control Unit (PCU) needs to be installed. Standard commercial kitchen hoods only trap grease and smoke; they do not remove the volatile organic compounds (VOCs) that cause smells. A dedicated PCU sits between the kitchen hood ductwork and the building's exterior exhaust point to clean the air completely before it hits the atmosphere.

5. Mechanical Systems Screening

The rooftop mechanical systems screening needs to be improved to minimize visibility from Units 2B and 3B at 6 Station Street. The goal should be to ensure that necessary modern mechanical systems do not become prominent visual features from these two condominium units.

6. Mechanical Systems Noise

Given the close spacing of buildings and the quiet character expected in Hingham's historic downtown, mechanical noise from exhaust fans, HVAC equipment, refrigeration units, or other restaurant systems should be carefully reviewed. This should include a review of equipment specifications, decibel levels, hours of operation, and any proposed sound attenuation measures. It must be shown that these systems will not disturb neighboring property owners, residents, pedestrians, or the historic village atmosphere.

7. Windows

Because 6 Station Street contains Marvin Ultimate Simulated Divided Lites windows, the applicant should be required to match that level of detail and historic appearance.

8. Acoustic Insulation

The walls facing the abutting property should be upgraded with sound-rated insulation, such as mineral wool or acoustical fiberglass, together with sealed penetrations and sound-attenuating wall construction. Foam alone should not be considered sufficient for restaurant-related noise control.

9. Dormers

The proposed dormers would significantly alter a character-defining historic roofline and are not sufficiently subordinate to the original structure. Approving this application would erode the historic architectural character that the district was created to protect. We respectfully ask the Commission to deny the proposal or reduce the size.

10. Demolition Delay By-Law

As the property sits within the Lincoln Historic District, does Hingham's Demolition Delay By-Law apply?

In closing, we respectfully ask the Commission to consider the full impact this proposal may have on the abutting property and the surrounding historic downtown area. The issues raised are not minor details; they directly affect neighboring property owners, pedestrians, and the character of the district.

Before any approval is granted, the applicant should be required to provide clear plans and enforceable conditions. These protections are necessary to ensure that the proposed restaurant use does not create nuisance conditions or diminish the historic character and quiet enjoyment of nearby properties.

We are not opposed to appropriate reuse or thoughtful business activity in the downtown area, but any approval should be carefully conditioned to protect the abutters and preserve the historic village setting. For those reasons, we urge the Commission either to deny the proposal as currently presented or to continue the hearing until these concerns are fully addressed.

Thank you for your consideration and service to our community.

Respectfully submitted,

Hingham Station Street Condominium Trust

Signed – John J. Roche

John J. Roche
President and Trustee

cc: Katia Orth – Kloth
Monique & Mike Lynch – 2A
Connie Nast – 2B
Kary & Kathleen Schulte – 3A
Mary Roche – 3B