

From: [Michael Behrendt](#)
Subject: Main Street #18 - email from Tom Elliott
Date: Wednesday, February 13, 2019 5:43:37 PM

To the Planning Board,
Please see the email from Tom Elliott below.

Michael Behrendt

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From: Tom Elliott []
Sent: Wednesday, February 13, 2019 5:04 PM
To: pnrasm@yahoo.com; Michael Behrendt
Cc: Todd Selig; Peter Murphy; Mike Sievert
Subject: 18 Main Street Parking Lot proposal

Durham Planning Board,

I write tonight as both a resident (26 Edgewood Road) and as a business owner downtown at 20 Madbury Road. I also sit on our Downtown TIF advisory committee.

I support Peter Murphy's proposed expansion of his parking lot at 18 Main Street, and urge the Planning Board to strongly support his application tonight.

While I largely disagree with the arguments made by HDC members who opposed the proposal last week, I would be far more sympathetic if the HDC hadn't supported (and in fact served as cheerleaders for) the

historically fauxsy, excessively large, and low-value student housing monstrosity (built to the brimming lot edge) just across the street in the historic district.

Particularly absurd is the fact that Orion was not required to provide even a *single* on-site parking space for potential commercial tenants at 27 and 31 Main Street. Please note that these tiny commercial units (compelled into their project after the ZBA granted an egregious use variance that destroyed the commercial/residential balance in the ordinance) comprise a mere 3,800 square feet of office space... 100% of which has remained unused and unfinished by the owners to this very day. They have sat empty now for four+ years!

The number one reason these commercial office spaces at 27 & 31 Main Street haven't filled yet is PARKING. I learned from Orion's realtor today that it is now offering parking to commercial tenants at \$800 per year- more than four times the town's parking permit rate. This insane rate makes renting these office spaces very challenging if your employees commute.

Since the Town Council decided to divert most of the tax money collected under our TIF back to the general fund (rather than to plan for a structured parking facility near downtown), private parking lots are the only near-term partial solution to our downtown's biggest growth issue. There is no viable public parking solution on the horizon; any proposal I'm aware of will cost \$20-\$40k per space in a structured parking garage. Peter's proposed lot is

the only near-term feasible (though partial) solution.

I urge the board to approve Peter's plan for additional parking spaces behind his historic building. It will help maintain office and retail uses downtown, uses that are already suffering from a dual lack of affordable, usable commercial office space downtown with nearby parking to accommodate daytime employees.

Thanks for reading,

Tom Elliott
Business Owner & Resident

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