

November 15, 2018

Select Board  
Town of Brookline  
333 Washington Street  
Brookline, MA

Dear Select Board Chairperson Wishinsky, and Select Board Members Franco, Greene, Hamilton, and Heller:

On behalf of myself, Sean Lynn-Jones, Kate Silbaugh, Chris Tsouros, Ranch Kimball and the more than 760 concerned citizens who have signed the Opposition Letter, I want to thank you for the opportunity that we had to speak with you during the public comment period at your last Select Board meeting.

I want to follow-up and provide you with four positions that we hold regarding Ascend's application and process.

First, our Neighborhood is densely residential that just happens to have a tiny, one block stretch of businesses. We have a very large number of apartment buildings and condominiums, some single family homes, and enough residential density to support the 13 schools and youth institutions that are in our near our neighborhood. We have a very small retail strip along Beacon Street, with no dedicated parking for any of our businesses. Our diverse mix of housing stock holds a wide range of residents including families, young professionals, international visitors and individuals in recovery. This unique blend of people sharing a common experience on a small, one block stretch of businesses in Saint Mary's.

Second, we are talking openly, putting written information into the public domain, providing deeply-researched facts and figures and comparisons in our letters, talks, and materials, which is posted on our web site. In contrast, other than those documents legally required, it does not appear that Ascend is willing in the least to put factual, written information out into the public domain. Certainly, they walked back at the October 30 meeting an early commitment to provide information to us.

How can we as the neighbors, can you as the town leaders, and how can the other town's boards evaluate any proposal from Ascend, with such an imbalance of information? How can major policy, zoning and community agreements be made with such a lack of information and the appearance of a black-box process of private conversations and hidden information? We strongly believe that moving forward with a Host Community Agreement without full disclosure from Ascend, analysis and community involvement would be a mistake.

Third, this industry is new to Massachusetts, and only a few years old anywhere. It doesn't seem at all sensible to jump right out of the gate at the beginning putting relatively big stores in dense

residential neighborhoods, at least not if that neighborhood doesn't want the facility. We would ask that the town experiment carefully, cautiously, with initial zoning of smaller shops in contained, non-residential areas, even if it means a slower rollout or more second-floor shops. As a dedicated volunteer group, we have looked – as I think you all know – very closely at our own neighborhood and the proposed Beacon Street site within it.

Fourth, we hold the position that Ascend, with its mistreatment of the community through bullying and intimidation, including a high school student at the second community meeting, has disqualified themselves from being a provider to St. Mary's Neighborhood. Who is going to sit with Ascend after they open when security, open use, parking and other issues come up and require community engagement and partnering? Will those who approach Ascend's management be bullied and intimidated the way that they were during the application process? Any applicant needs to earn the trust and support of the community. Ascend has not done this. In fact, they have done the exact opposite.

After our careful analysis and continuous discussion with our concerned neighbors, we think that Saint Mary's is the worst possible location for a marijuana store or dispensary at this time. Our key concerns with respect to the location are:

- This is the wrong neighborhood, with 13 schools, pre-k programs, and day care within about 1,000 feet of 1032 Beacon Street;
- The overwhelming demand from 60,000 college students, 81 Red Sox home games and year round concerts at Fenway will overwhelm our small, local, retail strip of stores.
- An enormous group of thoughtful, caring people in this neighborhood have spent countless hours carefully looking at the impact and appropriateness of a potential retail marijuana store here in this block of Beacon Street. Their conclusion, arrived at with hard work, questioning, and a shared process, is that this site is wrong, this site is inappropriate. They did not reach this conclusion lightly or in haste. And, they overwhelmingly reached this conclusion, to an unprecedented level of near-unanimity and scale. As of this morning, as I type up this letter, we have received 760 signed letters of opposition in the two weeks we since started getting letters.

I look forward to continuing this fruitful and open dialogue with you as our town's Select Board, and the rest of our town and the state.

With very best regards,

Paul Warren  
Save St. Mary's Neighborhood  
[www.no1032pot.org](http://www.no1032pot.org)