



July 24, 2023

Dear Waterford Zoning Board of Appeals,

I am writing in regard to the variance request to allow construction of a single-family house on the vacant lot of 4 Ridgewood Avenue.

The primary concern relates to the impact on Alewife Cove. Our family has owned and lived on Ridgewood Avenue since 1954, with the 1st generation using Alewife Cove, the adjoining creek, and both Ocean Beach and Waterford Beach land since the early 1920's. Across these four generations, we have seen changes to the ecosystem which have been disheartening: species in Alewife cove disappeared or reduced; water quality compromised; changes in bird variety and population; and so forth. During this time frame, environmental knowledge and awareness has grown and with this, protective measures and action have occurred in communities across Waterford and New London with heartening results. It is because of the progress gained for these wetlands that we now understand the significant role Alewife Cove plays in the surrounding ecosystem. The negative impact from building a new residential house on these wetlands is far reaching to this ecosystem, both during construction and in the years during its use.

Below are several points I hope will be considered in the decision-making process, perhaps providing aspects to further examine.

1. 4 Ridgewood Avenue is regularly covered by water, either partially or completely. This occurs during high tide and various times of the year regardless of tide. It occurs during storms and hurricanes, with water rising up and over the street.
2. Negative changes to Alewife Cove's habitat have been observed for decades, but examples over the years to mediate and protect it have been successful. In fact, learning from past mistakes has resulted in wisdom with local communities now dedicated to protecting these fragile wetlands, as well as other wetlands across the State. The environmental context for building a single-family home in 2023 is not the same as when the lot may have first been deeded, and only seems irresponsible now.

The following are examples of actions being taken to protect Alewife Cove and highlight the inappropriate nature of building a residence on the wetlands. The first two examples, along with a prediction for rising sea levels, are also evidence that the water level in Alewife Cove is no longer stable and to assume such when building a new residence on its edge is unfounded.

*There has been a periodic need for dredging when Alewife Cove and the creek's depth and water flow are not optimal for its health. In 1973 my grandfather and others worked with Congress and the Army Corps of Engineers to initiate dredging in that area. Alewife Cove is home to a plethora of species and the life of these creatures is far reaching. The Alewife Conservancy and others are currently working again to assess this need.

*Along with the need to dredge Alewife Cove and the creek, there are other important actions to save this fertile and critical ecosystem. One such effort has been to examine the removal of a dam constructed above the cove which has prevented important functions such as Alewife fish spawning. We are fortunate to have environmental organizations such as Alewife

#ZBA-23-5
4 Ridgewood Ave
EXHIBIT 17

7

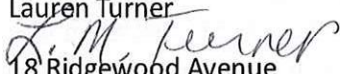
Cove Conservancy to create a team of stewards to help protect and navigate what needs to take place to keep Alewife Cove healthy.

* Ocean Beach seems to have acknowledged its impact on the Cove from the parking lot, amusement rides, run-off, etc.; the addition of a dedicated nature path as a protective border along the property and the water is one such change.

3. The process of construction on Alewife cove brings dangers to the habitat. The amount of machinery, alterations to the land, etc. is exceptional, especially considering the small size of land being developed and the large portion of it that is marsh quality. The addition of a home with its daily impact also brings danger to this habitat. To pretend that gardening, soil with additives, fertilizers, non-native shrubbery, exterior cleaning regiments, etc. will not change and impact these wetlands is ignorant. We know how fragile and important these wetlands are to the larger ecosystem, something that may not have been understood at the time of the Ridgewood Park development in the 1920's.
4. The lot at 4 Ridgewood Avenue has already had a potential negative impact on Alewife Cove. There has been illegal dumping over decades. There are large pieces of asphalt and other debris from what may have been the Ridgewood Park storm sewer project years back, or the replacement of the bridge, or another source? To my knowledge, the owners have not taken responsibility for this land and its oversight. Building a residence on this wetland is not the answer.

Thank you for your time and careful consideration to the future of our Alewife Cove wetlands,

Lauren Turner


18 Ridgewood Avenue

781-820-1258