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January 5, 2020

## DIRC: 2019 - A Very Successful Year in Review

It is hard to believe it's been one year since this community rallied together to form DIRC. From the beginning, our grassroots organization's goal has been to defend our community, our neighbors, our resources, and our environment from the enormous apartment complex proposed for 20 Elm Street in North Reading....and what a year it's been!



**What have we accomplished in 2019?**

### **Community Awareness**

We asked and you answered. You showed up when it counted. Volunteers offered their services, skills and time. Subcommittees were formed. We all hit the pavement with street signs, door hangers, banners and letters to the editor. Hundreds of you sent letters in opposition to Mass Housing and local elected officials. Advocacy efforts took place at both the state and town level. We saw full house attendance at the ZBA and Conservation Commission meetings with thoughtful public commentary presented at these hearings. People attended library meetings and took the time to become educated on the issues. In the fall, we had an unprecedented number of attendees at town meeting and a unanimous yes vote to appropriate free cash towards the town's safe harbor appeal efforts at HAC (Housing Appeals Committee).

### **Fundraising**

Through on-going fundraising efforts and a hugely successful Horseshoe event attended by hundreds over the summer, we raised enough money in 2019 to hire the best. We retained a top 40B attorney, Dan Hill, and two nationally renowned field experts, Scott Horsley, hydrologist and Marti Nover, wetlands expert. This level of expertise was expensive, yet gave the community the ability to have talented professionals guiding our efforts which yielded key insights that have put us on the path to stop the project! As we move forward into 2020, the need for further funding by DIRC is required. Although the town has appropriated funding to defend against the developer's appeal of our Safe Harbor status, DIRC has a role to play for oversight and involvement in the HAC process

this winter.

## Strategic Advances

At a time when it was widely accepted that the town had not met the safe harbor threshold, DIRC attorney, Dan Hill, made a key observation. Attorney Hill determined that the town had not factored in group home acreage into its calculation, due to the confidential nature of these properties. Once the state made that data available, it put North Reading over the minimum threshold, which led to the town's Safe Harbor declaration. Attorney Hill was also able to make positive contributions during the ANRAD process by discovering in old deeds that a drainage pipe was actually a culverted stream connecting two wetlands together. After confirmation from Marti Nover, the wetlands expert, we were able to launch an appeal to the ORAD document, claiming that the culverted stream is worthy of a buffer zone. This zone would run through the middle of the property and hinder the developer's plans to work within that area. The verdict for this ORAD appeal is still pending.

## Looking Ahead to 2020

Keep an eye out for our next newsletter which will detail DIRC status and strategy in the HAC Safe Harbor appeal. We will be back in touch with our goals for 2020 and the ways in which you can help, because we will need it!

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## DIRC NEEDS HELP!

Click here  
to keep  
up the  
fight  
against  
20 Elm!

**DIRC is looking for volunteers in 2020.** No experience or special skills required....Just a passion for the cause! Your level of commitment could range from giving an hour of your time to stuff envelopes, to serving as a sub-committee head, to even joining us on the steering committee. Please send us a note if you're willing to help! We **NEED** you to keep up the fight! [info@defendipswichriver.org](mailto:info@defendipswichriver.org)

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