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TOWN OF MANCHESTER
PLANNING, ZONING & ECONOMIC
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August 28, 2020

Honorable Tom Stevens, Chair
House General, Housing & Military Affairs Committee

RE: Town of Manchester Comments on S.237

Dear Representative Stevens & Committee Members,

On behalf of the Town of Manchester, we write to express concerns regarding S.237 as introduced. ***Specifically, we strongly oppose the provision that would mandate one-eighth acre lots in all zoning districts served by municipal water and sewer.***

Although this provision may be advisable in Vermont's most populated municipalities, for the vast majority of towns throughout the state, this provision will have negative unintended consequences, and in the end will impede efforts to address critical housing and environmental needs throughout the more rural parts of the state. It also flies in the face of Vermont's longstanding tradition of local control and citizen participation in the planning process.

For Manchester, it is problematic as we consider extension of our sewer service to some long-established outlying residential neighborhoods within our aquifer protection area and to serve other areas outside of our town core that are well positioned (1) for in-fill multifamily housing development, (2) to serve an existing community recreation center and mobile home park, and (3) for potential expanded development within a light industrial area. The town wastewater system is permitted for a maximum 600,000 gallons per day. Mandated smaller lots within an extended sewer service area as we have been contemplating may trigger major plant upgrades that the town is not positioned to pursue. ***In short, this one-eighth acre lot mandate threatens our efforts to expand sewer service to address environmental, public health, housing, and economic development needs.***

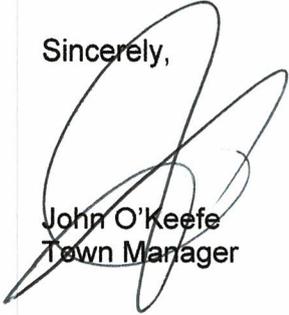
The Manchester water and sewer systems also serve Manchester Village, which has a separate governing body and planning and zoning process from the Town of Manchester. Although we cannot speak for the village officially, our communities are inextricably linked, the one-eighth acre mandate would threaten the integrity of the very carefully cultivated historic pattern and form of development in Manchester Village. ***Both the village and the town economies rely on visitor-based elements that could be critically harmed by this mandate.***

In summary, although we enthusiastically support the broad objective of this housing bill, ***we must join the chorus of voices from municipalities across the state and urge you to***

consider eliminating this provision from the bill. It would have very significant adverse consequences if it were to become law.

Thank you for considering our concerns as you work to address critical housing challenges for our state. We would be happy to provide further testimony to the committee if called upon to do so.

Sincerely,



John O'Keefe
Town Manager



Janet Hurley
Planning & Zoning Director