TOWN OF WINTHROP
OFFICE OF THE TOWN COUNCIL

Town Hall 1 Metcalf Square, Winthrop, MA 02152 Telephone 617-846-1742

March 11, 2024

By email Nikko.Mendoza@mass.gov

Edward M. Augustus, Jr.
Secretary, Executive Office of Housing & Livable Communities
100 Cambridge Street, Suite 300
Boston, MA 02114

Dear Secretary Augustus,

On behalf of the Winthrop Town Council, we thank you for responding to our request for reclassification and relief related to the MBTA Communities Law (3A). While we understand why you denied our request to be reclassified, we believe there is still more work to be done and a conversation to be had that will acknowledge the uniqueness of Winthrop, the challenges we face, and our successful prior efforts to densify in a way that is sustainable for the community. It is imperative to the continued responsible growth of the Town of Winthrop that the Commonwealth fully understands Winthrop's historic and continued dedication to zoning for growth. Also, we would like to point out that Winthrop only has 1.6 square miles of developable land, rather than the 1.9 square miles used in Census data and the resulting density calculations, as the remaining .3 square miles are under the control of Massport and are being utilized as a runway at Logan Airport. Using the historical description of Winthrop as 1.6 square miles, our population density would more accurately be defined at 12,073 people per square mile.

With the understanding that many municipalities are hoping your office can offer some respite from the guideline requirements of 3A zoning, and as we understand some have received it (Hull, North Andover), the ask in Winthrop is relief from the current guidelines by acknowledging our unique conditions as well as the town's forward-thinking, proactive approach, and successful implementation of zoning for multifamily properties by right in designated areas of Winthrop. Some of these efforts were pursued and achieved through partnerships with MAPC and the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development.

Over the past two decades, Winthrop has grown its housing stock by implementing zoning areas that allow for various housing types, leading to a current statistic of roughly 36% single-family housing. Compared to the state average of 72%, Winthrop already reflects the housing mix that the State is attempting to achieve with 3A zoning. Winthrop has proactively and without the need for legislation from the State of Massachusetts zoned for and has begun to build multi-unit properties by right in several areas. Within the last twelve years, the town has opted to rezone its Center Business District (CBD) to allow for mixed-use (first-floor commercial with three floors

for housing) properties up to four stories and other business districts, the Shirley Street corridor, and finally waterfront zoning at various locations around town. A conservative estimate would be that Winthrop has zoned for roughly 750 potential units across all these districts before the implementation of 3A. These decisions were not made lightly or without contention. Through a concerted effort to move Winthrop forward to meet the rising housing needs of the community, the local government was able to partner with citizen groups to make these changes that the state is now looking to implement in other communities.

Winthrop is proud of its proven dedication to housing and our fruitful efforts to densify our community responsibly, safely, and appropriately. We have shown as a community that we are not shying away from zoning for density and growth; rather, we have outpaced the Commonwealth. We hope that those efforts can be recognized and applied appropriately.

Rather than continue the discussion between you and Winthrop by letter, we would be most grateful if you would agree to meet with representation from the Town of Winthrop to tour our town, discuss our prior efforts, current housing status, and how we can align our community's anticipatory approach to maximizing housing availability with the state's implementation of 3A compliance models.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We look forward to continuing a strong partnership with the Commonwealth to achieve appropriate housing goals.

Sincerely,

James Letterie
Winthrop Town Council President

Hannah Belcher
Town Council Vice-President

Robert DeMarco
Town Councilor – At Large

John Munson
Town Councilor P-2

Joseph Aiello
Town Councilor P-5

John DaRos
Town Councilor P-6

Suzanne Swope
Town Councilor P-4

Max Tassinari
Town Councilor - At Large

Cc: Governor Maura Healey
Lieutenant Governor Kimberley Driscoll
Senate Majority Leader Cynthia Stone Creem
Senate Minority Leader Bruce Tarr
Speaker of the House Ronald Mariano
Senator Lydia Edwards
Representative Jeffrey Rosario Turco