

**Donald W. Rowley
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65 Ridgefield Road
Wilton, CT 06897**

June 17, 2021

Town of Wilton
The Wilton Zoning Board of Appeals
Town Hall Annex
238 Danbury Road
Wilton, CT 06897

Subject: Public Comments for Public Hearing Agenda

Item #21-05-06 Wilton Congregational Church, 70 Ridgefield Road

Request a variance of Section 29-5.D to permit an emergency generator with front and rear yard setbacks of 10 ft in lieu of the 50 ft required for both, and to permit an increase in maximum building coverage to 18.3% from the existing 17.8%, where a maximum of 7% is permitted and section 29-4.D.E.5, a fence over 6 feet high from grade within the front and rear yard setback. Said property is owned by Wilton Congregational Church and consists of 1.25+/- acres in a Residential (R-2A) Zoning District as shown on Assessor's Map #74, Lot #18

To Whom It May Concern,

My wife and I have lived at 65 Ridgefield Road since 1992. We bought our home from the Wilton Congregation Church. Our home, the Church, the Old Town Hall and other historic properties are all part of our Historic District that restricts visible additions without historical perspective.

The Legal Notice sent to us noted application 21-05-06 as described above. The notice did not disclose the entire description in the application:

“To install a diesel fired generator to power the Church during power outages. The Church will be opened to the community as a heating/cooling shelter, soup kitchen, and charging station during these emergencies. The property is located in a Historic District, therefore the generator must be located in the rear of the Church where the code setbacks cannot be achieved.”

When we purchased our home from the Wilton Congregational Church, everyone involved with the sale gave us the impression that Historic District was highly regarded and respected by all residents in the area. The Historic District surrounding the Wilton Congregational Church has tremendously added to the beauty, charm, and appeal to Wilton. We purchased our home with this understanding that the Church operates as church and not a community shelter during emergencies.

In addition, the Town of Wilton has other facilities and organizations that currently provide services and help to residents during emergencies. Since we moved here, the Church has greatly expanded its building, reducing its green space and parking and requiring a variance to accommodate a structure/facility of this size on its 1.25+/- acres.

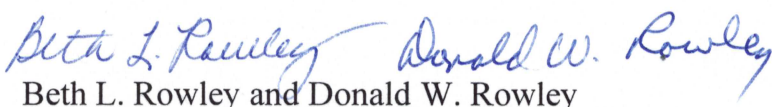
We strongly oppose the request for a 10-foot variance in lieu of the 50-foot requirement by the Wilton Congregational Church to: a) install a large diesel fired generator requiring an enclosure and fencing with the dimensions of 40 feet by 18 feet and by 6 feet, and b) become a community center/shelter in a Historic District due to the following:

- 1) There is no hardship to the Church operation from periodic power outages: Power outages on Ridgefield Road near town like our home and the Church since 1992 have been limited, usually to only 5 to 15 minutes, and an extended power outage of several days occurred only once in the nearly 30 years we have lived here. Building operations could be maintained by a much smaller generator installed behind the Church **that would not be visible to the public**,
- 2) The proposed location is a prominent rise beside Lovers Lane, and contains deciduous vegetation that will not screen the view in wintertime,
- 3) There is no fencing proposed behind the generator enclosure and electrical transformer to shield the view of people walking or driving on Lovers Lane,
- 4) The fencing in front of the generator, enclosure and electrical transformer is 6-foot high, while the generator enclosure is 10-foot high that will result in the generator enclosure being 4 feet taller than the fence in a very unsightly manner,
- 5) The existing electrical transformer added during the expansion is only 6.5 feet from Lovers Lane, and has no screening, only ugly bollards.
- 6) Lovers Lane is a narrow road, which has experienced increased traffic and is high visibility. The fencing for the power generator and existing electrical transformer will extend to Lovers Lane, which could cause a safety issue due to potential restrictions for large vehicles in an emergency.

Properties in the Historic District are not allowed to add or make visible changes on or to the property to without appropriate design, so that the Historic look and use of property is preserved. The Historic District, as well as the town of Wilton, will be negatively impacted by such a large and unsightly structure.

We know many neighbors who are in strong agreement with our position having learned of the size and visibility of the enclosed generator and fencing.

Sincerely,


Beth L. Rowley and Donald W. Rowley