I have been a homeowner and Walden Woods since 1997. My property has distinct property lines and it is my responsibility as the homeowner to take care of all landscaping, snow removal, full insurance and all costs of maintaining my property. My property also borders on clearly outlined Conservancy property which is noted in my deed. When I purchased my home there were limited amounts of Conservancy property that were being paid for. Essentially I was paying for pool and tennis court use as well as the main entrance to the property. At the time the payment was $34 or so. The community didn’t enforce the rules the same way against Woodmoor as it did against the other councils.

When I purchased, the documents clearly said and they still do that Woodmoor is not anticipated to need a budget and is not required to provide one. As I read the documents, there was no need to worry because I was simply buying the pool and tennis court membership. All of the rest of the property within my counsel was considered to be Conservancy or Woodmoor would not require a budget.

When I look at the boundary proposals being made at this time, they are contrary to the property interest that I bought into. Granted, there were documents that were changeable- but nothing could be more clear than Woodmoor requires no budget since it is not anticipated to need one. The status quo was fine. Who could imagine that neighbors would try and force something different? Perhaps I’m naïve but I couldn’t imagine that.

Property value is very important to anyone whose home is a major asset as mine is. Belonging to a Conservancy where you are essentially buying a three month pool and tennis court membership at a low price may not have a large impact on property value. Many people might view that as a value. When someone is buying a standalone home with their own lot and yard, they have certain expectations of the interference they want from a planned community. They take care of the cost of maintaining their yard, their driveways hardscape and their entire home as well as insuring it. When you purchase in a Condo Association understanding that you will have condo fees for maintenance and common items within your counsel, you’re purchasing a different type of unit. You don’t want the responsibility of snow blowing/plowing and taking care of your yard and repairing your house, painting it taking care of maintenance inside or out depending upon the type of unit that you purchased. When people purchase in councils outside of Woodmoor and Pond Bridge they are looking for specific type of home ownership or property interest that includes the costs responsible for maintaining the home. That type of ownership takes away the responsibility and the control of home maintenance issues. It’s a specific expectation in homeownership. In Pond Bridge and Woodmoor we are looking for something different, the type of home owner who looks to purchase a property like ours is interested in the autonomy of maintaining and controlling their own property with minimal interference. We had that for my first 10 years here.

The boundaries and proposed declaration amendment that are being contemplated at this time by the board will change my property interest, from a standalone home that pays for a pool and tennis court membership to a home with a condo fee and all that goes with it. When homeowners with individual lots try and sell their homes, the potential buyers are looking at what their costs are and what they get for those costs. For a while our monthly budget went way up while we were waiting for the declaration of the units in parcel C now known as the Duplexes and Townhomes. We understood that our community unit owners would more than double by adding 188 new units and would decrease our monthly costs by more than half. All 188 new units are now declared in our monthly costs have not gone down by half, not even close. With this new change, our cost will now go up. Regardless of how much they go up, selling a home within Woodmoor and Pond Bridge will become much more difficult. It is already much more difficult to sell a home in Pond Bridge or Woodmoor. Our homes are selling for substantially less per square foot than are homes outside of Walden Woods. When the property values in our councils go down so do the property values in your councils.

I understand that in general property values have gone down in the entire community outside of Walden Woods as well; however this has been exponential within Woodmoor. Within the last six months homes sold at 109 and 92 Pierce. Another home just sold on Pierce outside of Walden woods at 61 Pierce the price per square foot is noticeably different when you are within and without Walden woods. Homes outside of Walden Woods sell for much less per square foot. The examples are easy to find. The more the home values go down within Woodmoor, the more they go down every Council.

At the special meeting discussing the boundaries that are being proposed Attorney Perlstein was asked if this boundary map and declaration amendment would end all of the discussions and disagreements regarding who pays for what and where. He was very clear to inform the Board and those that attended that this will solve some of the problems, but not all of them. In other words even though we go through this and spend many thousands of dollars on a survey and an attorney to change our declaration, against the wishes and interests of at least one Council, this will not solve the discord between the councils.

This proposed Declaration Amendment must set forth that once these boundaries are agreed upon, then the expense allocations that are set forth address all issues and are not subject future boards changing who pays for what at a whim. This Amendment seems to be doing only half the job that everyone thought was the goal and what was promised at the outset. We need to fix this immediately and reach a real compromise and certainly before this proposal goes to a vote of the unit owners.

The board previously set a budget of $20,000 to spend on the survey and the attorney and the declaration amendment which won’t solve all of the problems that we have.

Why are we doing this then? Until we come up with a solution that meets everyone’s needs not just that meet needs of those who have the most votes on the board I intend to vote no.