

A number of people have referenced the re-development plan that was approved by Town Meeting. Even though I voted for it, I thought that refreshing my memory in the interest of dealing with the facts at these hearings would be helpful. Here is what I found, directly out of the Town Zoning Code:

Business Re-development Bylaw

- Passed at Town Meeting, Nov. 8, 2004
- Approved on Dec. 30, 2004

It is now Article XLVI, Chapter 240-240 of the Zoning Code for the Business Redevelopment District.

A. Purpose

The purpose of this article is to promote the re-vitalization of commercial centers using mixed-use re-development integrating retail, office, restaurant and community service uses with housing, such as second floor apartments, condominiums and townhouses.

That is what I voted for, and not one of these purposes is applicable to this plan by this developer. This is not mixed use, it is not retail, it is not office, it is not a restaurant, it is not community service, and there is no housing. Commission staff in their comments said that this proposal fits with this zoning, and so did Brian Currie, the Town Planner. While the proposal might meet some of the details that come later in the bylaw, I can't possibly see how it meets the purpose of it.

Also in this bylaw, sizes of 4K, 7K, and 10K sq ft are mentioned as either maximum allowed, or requiring a special permit if bigger. When I voted for this, my assumption was that it was clear we were looking for a mix of small-medium uses on a lot, not one giant use as this 65,000 sq ft. hotel is.

Finally, just an aside: When Brian Currie reviewed the plan for consistency with Town zoning, he mentioned the need for a Special Permit from the ZBA for commercial accommodation and from the Planning Board for lot coverage. I'm puzzled why he didn't mention the further requirement of a special permit from the Planning Board. Maybe I don't understand this, but it says, under the Heading, "Uses Allowed on special permit from the Planning Board:

(a) Any new construction of a business or commercial shopping center with a proposed gross floor area of seven thousand (7,000) ~~square~~ feet or more."

Of course I hope this plan never makes it to the Planning Board, but if it does, I want to be sure it's with the full review it deserves.

There is one other point that I would like to ~~make~~ ^{has been} ^{continue with}. The word "blighted" has been used multiple times in previous hearings to describe the existing site. This is opportunistic hyperbole and would cause great amusement to anyone living in a truly blighted area of most cities. A vacant lot? Yes. Under-utilized? Yes. Somewhere between boring and ugly? Yes. But hardly blighted, though admittedly not gorgeous, and I suggest to you that building something new in a place that isn't gorgeous is not an automatic improvement.

Respectfully submitted,

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