

Who better to talk about community character than the people of the community? And not just one or two people, and not just abutters of the proposal. Hundreds of people from all over Falmouth – East, West, and North Falmouth, Woods Hole, miles from the site, have now attended 3 (and today 4) hearings. An estimated 90 have spoken out – including an architect who devoted untold pro bono hours -- all but about 3 opposed. As of Tuesday, I counted 71 letters that had been submitted and posted on the Commission website. I believe all but 2 or 3 were opposed (and one of the pros was an attorney representing the land owner). While some of this testimony has focused on things we now understand are not in your purview, like traffic and impact on local residences, the vast majority have talked about how ill-suited this project is for this site, how out of scale, how it does not offer any interaction with the public, how it will destroy the character of a now-charming and inviting downtown – which is a treasured resource for ~~the~~ both the Town and the Region. For this number of people to keep showing up, to speak out, to write letters – speaks to how much people care about this town. You have heard from the developer's architect and attorney about how this project fits the character of the town. But I ask you, who better understands and cares about protecting the character of a town – those who live, work, shop, own businesses, volunteer, pay taxes and have lived there for years? Or a group of out-of-town, paid consultants and the person they represent who stands to profit, and then promptly leave town with no thought for the resulting consequences, should this development go through?

You have seen the list of benefits and detriments from the Commission staff. You have heard the detriments rebutted by Mr. Eriksen, and the benefits rebutted by residents at the last hearing. It is clear that both are subjective – data and conjecture are available and used to support both sides. Consider, though, that the benefits are supposed to be benefits for the community. If they were perceived as such, many people would have spoken out for them, in support of the project. But virtually no one has. So how can they be benefits if the beneficiaries don't believe or want them?

What the community wants, what the community would actually consider a benefit, what Town Meeting thought it was voting for, is what is outlined in the Purpose of the Redevelopment zoning: “to promote the revitalization of commercial centers using mixed-use redevelopment integrating retail, office, restaurant and community service uses with housing, such as second floor apartments, condominiums and townhomes.” This is not it, and the Commissioners should turn it down.

Alison Leschen
Falmouth, MA