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Kevin Sweet, Town Administrator
Town of Maynard
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RE: Public Workshops, 129 Parker Street

As you know, last night was the second of two scheduled public workshops regarding the 129 Parker Street property. As outlined in the project Scope of Work, the workshops were "intended to provide a public forum for meaningful discussion of the property reuse and redevelopment options." The workshops were generally organized around four topics:

1. What is an appropriate mix of uses for the site?
2. How would alternate use mixes affect public roads and infrastructure?
3. What project design features are important?
4. How could site development affect the Town's fiscal health?

As part of my work scope, I'll be preparing a summary report regarding the process, outcomes and recommended next steps. This is not complete, but is underway.

Earlier this week, I requested that the Board of Selectmen include an item on the agenda of the upcoming October 1 meeting for Board discussion of the 129 Parker Street workshops and recommendations for potential next steps. Thank you for facilitating this, which I expect will be a constructive follow-up to the workshops.

Leading up to last night's workshop, my primary recommendations were:

- ▶ Designate public sector lead entity with specific charge and timeline

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- In reviewing processes leading to successful Town Meeting zoning votes in other communities, a common element was the presence of a dedicated body representing the Town's interests throughout the process. This has included both active give-and-take with the developer, but also coordinated communication to the larger public, both formal and informal. This function can be served effectively by either an existing Board/Committee, or a newly designated working group. However, any such group should be prepared to invest a significant amount of time and energy into the process and, to assist all parties, a specific timeline for work should be agreed up front. In my experience, 4 to 6 months has been an effective timeframe for such a process: it allows for enough time for real analysis and information sharing, but is short enough to keep all parties fully engaged. (A more extended process can lead to participant fatigue and, when one or more parties are not fully present, it affects the usefulness and efficiency of the process for all parties).
- If an existing Board/Committee does not serve this function, the composition of a newly organized group would be the purview of the appointing authority, presumably the Board of Selectmen. To be responsive to the core issues, I would recommend that it include the a member of the BoS, PB, FinComm, and two (or more) at large members. Town staff, including the Town Planner, Town Administrator and key public works and finance personnel should be closely involved.
- ▶ Consider pursuing Smart Growth Zoning (G.L. c. 40R)
 - Last night's workshop was primarily focused on site design issues, but I also introduced the potential for 40R Smart Growth Zoning as a policy option worth consideration. 40R offers financial and other incentives for Town adoption of as-of-right permitting for housing or mixed-use development in suitable location. The statute provides specific authority for adoption of Design Standards, and requires that, prior to adoption, the town engineer or public works official must certify that the public infrastructure is adequate to support the potential development. Such certification may be conditioned on agreed improvements, and 40R proposals often proceed in parallel with a development agreement.
 - My report will include information regarding this program as relates to the subject property; however the Board may wish to review materials online at:

<http://www.mass.gov/hed/community/planning/chapter-40-r.html>

- In my opinion, 40R offers several potential benefits to arriving at a “win/win/win” outcome that balances the interests and concerns of the Town, the landowner and developer, and Maynard residents and businesses. I will speak to this recommendation in more detail in my report.
- ▶ Recommend a charge for the public sector lead entity to include:
 - Conduct a detailed review of Smart Growth Zoning as a policy option and make recommendation to the Board of Selectmen.
 - Work with the landowner/developer to agree to a scope for modified or additional professional support that will be needed to support Town Meeting consideration of a zoning change for 129 Parker Street. In my opinion, this can be expected to include legal, infrastructure, and fiscal impact support.
 - Lead a continuing public process, including at least two public workshops, prior to proposing an article(s) for consideration at Town Meeting.

It is not my expectation that the Board of Selectmen would take a position on whether 40R or another policy option is the right course moving forward; however, I do think that discussion on Tuesday evening will be helpful to continue to move a planning process forward for the 129 Parker Street property. This discussion will also provide me more input to ensure that the recommendations in my report are relevant and helpful to the Town in keeping this process moving forward.

I will be in attendance at the meeting, and will be prepared to provide more information as needed, and to respond to questions.

Sincerely,

Angus Jennings, AICP
Principal

cc: Eric R. Smith, Town Planner