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2 JOINT HEARING BETWEEN

3 WEST HARTFORD TOWN COUNCIL

4 AND

5 WEST HARTFORD TOWN PLAN AND ZONING COMMISSION

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10 VOLUME 4

11 JUNE 17, 2004

12 West Hartford Town Hall

13 50 South Main Street

14 West Hartford, Connecticut

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04-06-17

1 A P P E A R A N C E S:

2 For Blue Back Square Development:

3 CACACE, TUSCH & SANTAGATA  
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6 Stamford, Connecticut 06901-0859  
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8 By: MICHAEL J. CACACE, ESQ.

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10 CityPlace I  
11 Hartford, Connecticut 06103-3499

12 BY: JOSEPH L. HAMMER, ESQ.  
13 BETH BARTON, ESQ.  
14 ROSEMARY AYERS, ESQ.

15 For the Town:

16 TOWN OF WEST HARTFORD  
17 50 South Main Street  
18 West Hartford, Connecticut 06107-2431  
19 (860) 523-3171

20 BY: JOSEPH O' BRIEN, ESQ.  
21 Corporation Counsel  
22 PATRICK G. ALAIR, ESQ.  
23 Deputy Corporation Counsel

24

25 Present for Town Council:

Jonathan A. Harris, Mayor  
Scott Slifka  
Joseph Verrengia  
Barbara Carpenter  
Kevin M. Connors  
Charles T. Coursey  
Maureen K. McClay  
Art Spada  
Timothy Brennan

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1 A P P E A R A N C E S (Continued)

2 Present for Town Plan and Zoning Commission:  
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3 Tanya Meck, Chairperson  
4 David Brown  
Leon Daviddoff  
5 John Begley  
Booker T. DeVaughn  
6 Theodore M. Doolittle  
Jeffrey Daniels  
7

8 Also Present:

9 Barry Feldman, Town Manager  
Norma Cronin, Town Clerk  
10 Mila Limson, Town Planner  
Dave Kraus, Town Engineer  
11 Ronald R. Van Winkle, Dir. of Community Services  
Jim Francis, Finance Director  
12 Richard Hughes, Chairman, DRAC

13 Richard Heapes, Partner  
Street-Works, LLC  
14 Development and Consulting Group  
30 Glenn Street  
15 White Plains, New York 10603

16 John D. Plante, PE  
Eric Henry  
17 Langan Engineering and Environmental Services  
555 Long Wharf Drive  
18 New Haven, Connecticut 06511

19 Norman Goldman, Principal  
Desman Associates  
20 80 Scott Swamp Road  
Suite 201  
21 Farmington, Connecticut 06032

22 Peter H. Guldberg, CCM  
Tech Environmental, Inc.  
23 Reservoir Place  
1601 Trapelo Road  
24 Waltham, Massachusetts 02451

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1 A P P E A R A N C E S (Continued)

2 Bruce Hoben, AICP  
Planimetrics, LLC  
3 31 Ensign Drive  
Avon, Connecticut 06001

4 Matt Lorenz

04-06-17

5 Atma Sockran  
Urbi tran  
6  
7 Kenneth Narva  
Bob Wi enner  
Davi d Hi dal go  
8 BBS Devel opment  
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1 (Heari ng commenced at 6:29 p.m.)  
2 MS. MECK: I'd like to call this meeting  
3 to order please. Please rise for the pledge of  
4 al l egi ance.  
5 (Pause.)  
6 MS. MECK: We will now move to the roll

7 call. Mrs. Cronin.  
8 MS. CRONIN: Mr. Verrengia sitting for  
9 Mr. Bouvier.  
10 MR. VERRENGIA: Here.  
11 MS. CRONIN: Mrs. Carpenter.  
12 MS. CARPENTER: Here.  
13 MS. CRONIN: Mr. Connors.  
14 MR. CONNORS: Here.  
15 MS. CRONIN: Mr. Coursey.  
16 MR. COURSEY: Here.  
17 MS. CRONIN: Mr. Harris.  
18 MAYOR HARRIS: Here.  
19 MS. CRONIN: Mrs. McClay.  
20 MRS. McCLAY: Here.  
21 MS. CRONIN: Mr. Slifka.  
22 MR. SLIFKA: Here.  
23 MS. CRONIN: Mr. Spada.  
24 MR. SPADA: Here.  
25 MS. CRONIN: Ms. Thornberry, not here.

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1 Mr. Brennan.  
2 MR. BRENNAN: Here.  
3 MS. CRONIN: Ms. Meck.  
4 MS. MECK: Here.  
5 MS. CRONIN: Mr. Brown sitting for Mr.  
6 Roach.  
7 MR. BROWN: Here.  
8 MS. CRONIN: Mr. Davidoff.

9 MR. DAVIDOFF: Here.  
10 MS. CRONIN: Mr. Begley.  
11 MR. BEGLEY: Here.  
12 MS. CRONIN: Mr. DeVaughn.  
13 MR. DeVAUGHN: Here.  
14 MS. CRONIN: Mr. Daniels.  
15 MR. DANIELS: Here.  
16 MS. CRONIN: Mr. Doolittle.  
17 MR. DOOLITTLE: Here.  
18 MS. MECK: Thank you, Mrs. Cronin. We  
19 have now, as you know, moved to the second phase of our  
20 or third phase, depending on how you count the  
21 presentations of our public hearings on the Blue Back  
22 Square applications, and tonight is the opportunity for  
23 the Town Plan and Zoning Commission and the Town  
24 Council to ask their questions of the applicant, their  
25 questions of Town staff, and I know that everybody has

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1 patiently waited through nights of presentations to ask  
2 these questions, and I want to thank everybody ahead of  
3 time for that.

4 At the end of this evening's hearing, we  
5 will talk about this a little more later, but we will  
6 let the public know when we will proceed with public  
7 comment. At this point, that portion will most likely  
8 still begin next Wednesday on the 23rd. But of course  
9 it can be earlier or later, depending on the volume of  
10 questions that are asked this evening and the

11 subsequent evenings

12 I want to talk a little bit about the  
13 proceedings for this portion of the public hearings,  
14 and with that, I will turn it over to discuss a portion  
15 of that to Mr. Harris.

16 MAYOR HARRIS: Thank you, Madam Chair.  
17 First of all, I just would like to remind everybody at  
18 the table that you need to push the button out to have  
19 your mics working tonight and make sure they are  
20 working so you are picked up on the record. Also,  
21 speak deliberately, but not too quickly, so that the  
22 stenographer can pick up the comments and everyone can  
23 understand.

24 We've debated a lot internally about how  
25 to proceed to make sure that we go through everything

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1 of course thoroughly with the appropriate amount of  
2 detail, but that we make sure we hit all the subject  
3 matters in an organized and efficient manner given some  
4 of the complexities of this proposal before us. So  
5 after much consideration, we've decided to organize the  
6 questions into two, what we call, macro categories.

7 A VOICE: I can't hear you.

8 MS. MECK: We are having technical  
9 difficulties. If you can bear with us for a minute.  
10 We've got to figure out how to turn our microphones on.  
11 I know that most of you here can hear, but the people  
12 from the public cannot. Unless we yell the people in

13 the audience cannot.

14 MAYOR HARRIS: I will yell till I get a  
15 signal from the sound person.

16 The stenographer and TV can hear. Can  
17 everyone hear me out in the audience? Okay. Two macro  
18 categories we divided this up into. First of all, the  
19 zoning issues, those involved in the zoning  
20 applications. Secondly, what we call the nonzoning and  
21 financial. The zoning applications are essentially the  
22 Special Development District applications, the Special  
23 Use Permit, the subdivision, I believe the movement of  
24 the monument is another one of those, and then we have  
25 the nonzoning, which of course, although an integral

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1 part of this proposal, are not really technically  
2 zoning issues, the public financing that we discussed  
3 last night, some other aspects of the Master Agreement.

4 We've decided that within these macro  
5 topics we were going to try to divide up some of the  
6 subject matters that related to the various  
7 applications and those of course macro topics, and here  
8 is the order of questioning. First, tonight we are  
9 going to be starting and potentially completing, and if  
10 not, we will go and continue on Monday night next week,  
11 the zoning pieces. The first is size, density, design.  
12 This includes, but it's not limited to, the height of  
13 buildings, issues about facades, materials, elevations,  
14 signage, really the appearance of the overall project.

15 Second, the proposed mix of uses, residential,  
16 professional, retail, the public space and open space  
17 issues, and municipal space issues.

18 A VOICE: We have no sound on TV. We've  
19 lost sound.

20 MAYOR HARRIS: Why don't we take a break  
21 then.

22 MS. MECK: We will take a five-minute  
23 break until we can get a microphone that's working and  
24 reconvene in five. Thank you.

25 I revoke that five-minute break.

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1 Mr. Harris.

2 MAYOR HARRIS: Thank you. Okay, let's  
3 see if we can get through this, hopefully our  
4 questioning will be a little bit more pointed and  
5 skillful than our use of sound tonight. This area, as  
6 I said, also includes the Special Use Permit  
7 applications. The first two areas that I denoted are  
8 general areas that would involve questioning of course  
9 both from the Town Council and the Town Plan and Zoning  
10 Commission, but when we get into some of the more  
11 specifics of the zoning issues, and I'll just outline,  
12 I'm going to flag for you the body that has  
13 jurisdiction actually over those particular areas, so,  
14 for instance, subdivision issues. Since that's not  
15 within the purview of the Town Council, that is a TPZ  
16 decision, the TPZ will be asking questions on that so

17 that when they go back to deliberate on that particular  
18 item or part of the application, they will have asked  
19 the appropriate questions. So we will start there.  
20 Three, subdivision application issues. That is, of  
21 course, as I said, a TPZ only area. Four, the SDD  
22 ordinance. The actual ordinance and the issues  
23 surrounding that potential piece of law that the  
24 Council may enact after this process. That of course  
25 again is a Council only piece.

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1 The next is the pedestrian impact and  
2 walkability. That's kind of open to everybody, that  
3 impacts a lot of our decisions in this process. Number  
4 six, environmental impact, also open to both bodies.  
5 This does include, though, the environmental piece, the  
6 inland wetlands application, and I don't know if people  
7 know, but in our Town, the Town Plan and Zoning  
8 Commission also functions as our inland and wetlands  
9 water body, and so that particular issue, the inland  
10 wetlands application, that would be of course Town Plan  
11 and Zoning Commission only. The environmental impact  
12 also I'll say, as a general proposition, includes noise  
13 and light pollution and of course issues of  
14 environmental cleanup and any maintenance of the  
15 environment on the site.

16 Next, another zoning piece, monument  
17 relocation, Noah Webster. The proposal is to move the  
18 statue. That actually is a zoning issue to have that

19 statue moved, and that is a Council only piece, and  
20 then number six, one of the bigger issues of course,  
21 traffic and a related issue parking. That is an issue  
22 that goes across lines of the bodies.

23 The nonzoning-related items, really the  
24 financial issues in essence, are one, the sale and  
25 purchase of public land; number two, the bond

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1 ordinance, the public financing aspect of this  
2 proposal, and that bond ordinance, public financing,  
3 that really is a Council question only. TPZ would not  
4 have a vote on the ordinance, so that area is for the  
5 Council only. And then three, tax or other impacts,  
6 and that's sort of a more generalized community  
7 discussion about the potential tax impact of this  
8 project open to all sitting at the table.

9 We are also going to try to organize the  
10 financial portion, just so people know, around the  
11 handout that Mr. Francis used last night in describing  
12 the public financing component. We will go through  
13 that and use that as a guide to try to keep the  
14 questions grouped together so it makes the most sense.

15 And with that, I'll turn the podium over  
16 to Chairwoman Meck for procedures for asking questions.

17 MS. MECK: Thank you, Mayor Harris. I  
18 just want to add to that list of categories that we  
19 understand that our questions will overlap. There will  
20 be multiple categories that we may want to address at

21 one time, that this is a guide, and we want to try to  
22 stick with it as best we can, and there may be a point  
23 where we will ask you to come back with a component of  
24 a question at a later part of the agenda. But for the  
25 most part, we realize that we can't stick completely

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1 within these boundaries, and so we want to allow that,  
2 just for some organizational purposes on our part.

3                   As far as how we are going to proceed,  
4 this is information that the Town Council and Town Plan  
5 and Zoning Commission received, but so that everyone  
6 knows in the audience and on TV how we will proceed,  
7 the chair will introduce the topic first and both  
8 Mr. Harris and I will still be taking turns chairing.  
9 When we are doing questions at our next hearing, he  
10 will be using the same procedures as chair. We will  
11 introduce the topics that Mr. Harris just outlined for  
12 us. For the first set of questions, I'll start with a  
13 look to my right, I'll go down the line. If anybody  
14 has a question, they will indicate that they have a  
15 question, the chair will recognize them, and they will  
16 have that opportunity to ask that question.

17                   Again, we ask that you don't jump  
18 forward or backward on the agenda, that you stick to  
19 the item at hand. After we get through everybody on  
20 that item, if there are additional follow-up questions  
21 or answers by the applicant or staff or another  
22 question that triggers some follow-up questions, I'll

23 Look down the lines again, and you can indicate that  
24 you have a follow-up question. If we skip over you, if  
25 you don't have something right at that moment, it does

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1 not mean that you've lost your chance to ask questions  
2 certainly. I'll alternate the directions of the rows,  
3 I'll look then to my left and go down that way, and we  
4 can start again. We will come up from the end so that  
5 everybody gets a chance to ask their questions.

6 All questions will be directed through  
7 the chair to the applicant, and then I will direct them  
8 to Mr. Heapes. Mr. Heapes, at that point you can  
9 either answer the question yourself or refer to a  
10 consultant to answer that. I'll let you be the gate  
11 keeper of those questions and decide who is  
12 appropriate. Alternatively, if a councilor or  
13 commission member wants to ask a particular consultant  
14 a question, I will still direct that through you, and  
15 you can call that person to speak in the microphone and  
16 we will ask that question to them.

17 In the case of the Town, it will be in a  
18 similar fashion. Mr. Feldman, we will refer the  
19 questions from the chair, I will direct them to  
20 Mr. Feldman, who will either answer the questions or  
21 pass them on to the appropriate staff, and the same  
22 thing if you have questions for a particular Town staff  
23 person, we will handle that in the same fashion.

24 We will adhere ourselves to the Robert

25 Rules of Order rule, that keeps us to a ten-minute

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1 question time per person. If we go over that, just  
2 like we are asking the members of the public, we will  
3 come back to you. So indicate that you are not done  
4 with your questioning, and we will come back to you to  
5 finish those questions. We just want to make sure that  
6 everybody has a chance to get their questions in on  
7 each item.

8                   Lastly, although we expect the questions  
9 to be numerous and have a lot to them, again, we ask  
10 that everybody up here, this is just a reminder for  
11 ourselves, that we stick to the question and answer  
12 format. There is certainly going to be a place for  
13 comment when we go into our deliberations and for  
14 statements when we go into deliberations and we take  
15 our vote. That however is not this time. And with  
16 that, Mr. Harris.

17                   MAYOR HARRIS: Thank you, Ms. Meck.  
18 First of all, I want to say just because we are  
19 starting on the right wing of the table that does not  
20 mean that we are endorsing any political philosophy  
21 here. This is a nonpolitical proceeding, but in all  
22 seriousness, I just want to say that although I am to  
23 your right, as someone who is a co-chair but not  
24 chairing tonight, I will yield to the other members of  
25 these bodies to begin questioning.

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1 MS. MECK: Thank you, Mr. Harris. I  
2 will just add to that, that we considered quite  
3 numerous ways of how to proceed and who gets to ask  
4 questions when. We thought about going alphabetically  
5 and because of where my name fits in the alphabet, and  
6 that's never really mattered to me one way or the  
7 other, but we decided directionally would keep us least  
8 challenged to make sure everybody got a chance to speak  
9 and ask questions.

10 So with that, I'm going to go back and  
11 remind us of our first set of questions which is on a  
12 zoning-related piece, and we are talking about signs,  
13 density and design and the many issues that go along  
14 with that. I'm going to start to my right, pass  
15 Mr. Harris and call upon Mr. Slifka.

16 MR. SLIFKA: Thanks for making me go  
17 first. Is this where I get to ask the governor about  
18 the condo deal?

19 MS. MECK: That's the wrong hearing,  
20 Mr. Slifka.

21 MR. SLIFKA: Okay. So you said we have  
22 ten minutes, and I'm supposed to make that ten minutes  
23 of questions, not a statement.

24 MS. MECK: This is correct.

25 MR. SLIFKA: Thank you. Mr. Heapes, we

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1 have heard, and through you, Madam Chair, I think we've  
2 heard you, if you weren't quoted directly on this, I  
3 think it certainly has been implied through your  
4 presentation that density is good, and I have a  
5 several-part question, and I think it would be tough to  
6 answer those one by one, so I'll just give you the  
7 various topics in there and let you go from there in  
8 your answer.

9                   One is, could you explain in a general  
10 sense, again, why would density be good for the Town of  
11 West Hartford in this particular instance? How much  
12 density is too much? Which of your projects that  
13 you've discussed with us are most similar in terms of  
14 size and density to the Blue Back Square proposal? And  
15 could you give a, for any of the projects that might  
16 apply, and I'm most familiar with your Bethesda Row  
17 project, and it seems that that might be the one that's  
18 most applicable, can you explain how in the evolution  
19 of those projects, how putting that density into that  
20 area interacted with the existing level of density  
21 impact, how things turned out?

22                   I know that we have all been inundated  
23 with e-mails from a lot of members of the community who  
24 have said that maybe their number one concern is the  
25 density of the project, and I think we need to, before

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1 we pursue anything else, explain, you know, essentially  
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2 why it's a good idea to put what's been described as a  
3 new neighborhood right next to an existing  
4 neighborhood, an existing commercial Center, so I hope  
5 I was able to convey my question through all that.

6 MR. HEAPES: I'll take a crack at it.  
7 That's funny, this will be the first meeting relative  
8 to the condo question and governor. Someone hasn't  
9 asked me how they get one, so I would be happy to  
10 answer that as well.

11 I don't know that I would have said  
12 density is good. I would say defining density is an  
13 interesting question. I believe it means different  
14 things to different people. To some people it means  
15 height, for some people it means traffic. It's kind of  
16 one of those words that can get translated into a lot  
17 of things.

18 From our perspective, the question is:  
19 What is the appropriate density to achieve the kind of  
20 lifestyle and character, number 1, and the economic  
21 return to afford a quality level that makes sense?  
22 There are very dense neighborhoods that are quite low.  
23 I grew up or my office was in Alexandria, Virginia  
24 which has a two-story height limit, which is much more  
25 dense than Blue Back Square because there is no

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1 parking. It's cheap to general townhouses, two and  
2 three stories, but no open space, no sidewalk, nothing,  
3 very dense and very charming. So density doesn't have

4 to be viewed in kind of the old-fashioned urban renewal  
5 big, tall, monstrous buildings with all kinds of  
6 infrastructure.

7                   The question is: What kind of  
8 environment do you want, and what is the appropriate  
9 kind of uses and size of uses, and what is the impact  
10 on density?

11                   No matter what happens in the Blue Back  
12 Square area, it will be perceived as more dense than  
13 the existing Center. If I put literally the same  
14 buildings, picked them up, moved them over to Blue Back  
15 Square, it would seem more dense.

16                   Why is that? Number 1, streets, as they  
17 are today, Memorial, Isham are significantly less wide  
18 than LaSalle and Farmington. It doesn't make them  
19 better, it doesn't make them worse. They are just  
20 different so a one-story building on Memorial across  
21 from another one-story building would look different  
22 than they do on LaSalle.

23                   Secondly, we are parking different than  
24 the other side of the Center. If you look an aerial of  
25 the Center today, you'll be astonished by how much

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1 asphalt there is. There is the streets, there is the  
2 sidewalks, there is the -- you can see it on the model  
3 as clear as a bell. You don't perceive it that way  
4 because of the trees or whatever, because there is a  
5 ton of surface parking. We, for a variety of reasons,  
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6 have stacked the parking in garages, which become  
7 buildings rather than big open spaces. So it seems  
8 denser because you've stacked the cars on one another.

9                   You'd have to ask yourself: What do we  
10 achieve by stacking those garages? Well, we get I sham  
11 Road. We get a different kind of road here. If this  
12 was the Center, that would be all surface parking in  
13 the middle of the block. So that would be true with  
14 even one-story buildings in the Center, it would seem  
15 more dense. Whatever happens here, unless it's a  
16 single gigantic building, will seem more dense.

17                   Then the question is: What are you  
18 trying to achieve through the design of this? And that  
19 goes through what uses, which I know we are going to  
20 talk about later. Obviously there is a lot of reasons  
21 having to do with supporting the Center that we want  
22 more than one kind of use. It shouldn't be all retail;  
23 it shouldn't be all office; it shouldn't be anything  
24 else, and so you start stacking uses on top of one  
25 another. We will talk about uses later.

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1                   I think density is appropriate where you  
2 are trying to achieve the same kind of sidewalk system,  
3 the same kind of lifestyle, the same kind of character,  
4 and you want the development to do some other things,  
5 help pay for some things.

6                   So the question is: When is it too big?  
7 That is really the question from my aspect. It's not

8 mid-size, it should be when is it just over-the-top too  
9 big? I would say in the case of this site, it would be  
10 too big if it changed the skyline of the Center. So if  
11 you had a ten-story condo designed by the world's most  
12 incredible architect, that would fundamentally change  
13 the character of the Center. Our plan doesn't do that.  
14 The steeple, cupola stay the same. It would be too big  
15 if at the street level it seemed like some other place,  
16 more like a city than a Town, more like New York than a  
17 village. We haven't done that because our sidewalks  
18 have trees. Everything you are going to see and feel  
19 when you are walking on the sidewalks will be familiar,  
20 not the same, but familiar, same people, same customer,  
21 same parking, same pavers, same streetlights, same  
22 kinds of stores. So from that aspect, it will feel the  
23 same at the sidewalk level and at the street level.  
24 It's going to be a more dense feeling district no  
25 matter what, so this is where architecture and other

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1 things come into play so they can create that  
2 familiarity.

3                   The reason -- I don't really think I  
4 would have said density is good. I would say the goal  
5 is to find the appropriate density to accomplish what  
6 you want. The best example of this is the staggering  
7 difference between Goodman Green and LaSalle and  
8 Farmington. I go there every day just to check my  
9 radar. They are both quintessentially West Hartford

10 places. You stand in either one of those and you go, I  
11 am in the Center. It couldn't be more different in  
12 terms of scale, in terms of width, in terms of hard  
13 versus soft, and so what we are proposing here is that  
14 there can be another neighborhood district in the  
15 Center that is equally as West Hartford as those two  
16 are. It happens to be new; it happens to be a little  
17 different, but it's very familiar. I don't think  
18 that's really a density issue without a doubt.

19 But as to Row, it's the correct  
20 analysis, it has a structured parking, and most  
21 importantly, it fits into the surroundings of Bethesda  
22 and doesn't stand out like a project. Land and foot  
23 marks, as I think I mentioned before, no one knows when  
24 Bethesda Row first started. No one knows which  
25 properties were in and which were not in. It's

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1 seamless because the people come there to enjoy it from  
2 the neighborhood.

3 I think the interesting thing about  
4 Bethesda Row, in comparing with this, is that was a  
5 hole in the Center, a great, intact neighborhood on one  
6 side, a relatively healthy commercial area on the other  
7 side and we planned to get it together.

8 When we talk about the importance of  
9 this site, we really have to knit together some  
10 environment with Whole Foods, some environment with the  
11 Town civic social structure, an environment with the

12 church, an environment with the Center. My job is to  
13 knit those things together so as you are walking  
14 through there you don't even notice it. You don't  
15 think about it, it just seems so natural, obvious, and  
16 I believe that's what our proposal does.

17 So the question about density from my  
18 perspective is: What is the right size? We can go  
19 into that if you like. I don't know if that answered  
20 your question.

21 MR. SLIFKA: I have a follow-up. You  
22 did, Mr. Heapes, thank you. I guess my only follow-up,  
23 it seems that your answer is that density is a relative  
24 term.

25 MR. HEAPES: It's a relative term,

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1 absolutely.

2 MR. SLIFKA: I asked you how much would  
3 be too much and you answered that, I guess conversely,  
4 how little would be too little for Blue Back Square?

5 MR. HEAPES: Well, you wouldn't want it  
6 to be unsuccessful. You wouldn't want it to stand  
7 apart. So, for example, if we just did something on  
8 the Crowley Chevrolet site, take the Board of Ed out,  
9 take the Town property out, and in that manner, it  
10 would pretty much be impossible for it not to stand  
11 alone as a project over there behind the Board of Ed  
12 building, number 1.

13 Number 2, each type of use, and  
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14 particularly in this case, is designed around certain  
15 critical mass issues. You can't build 15 condominiums.  
16 There is no financing, more development, there is  
17 certain market thresholds that are important.  
18 Certainly that's true with the financial thresholds.  
19 Secondly, we have a really fine balance. This is the  
20 most finely-tuned development I've worked on because of  
21 the SSD financial structure. The area needs new  
22 infrastructure. You are not going to bury half the  
23 utilities and build half the sidewalk and put in half  
24 the trees. So there is a very kind of finely-tuned  
25 issue to the environment, but the overarching thing

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1 from day one is it has to have enough impact to  
2 complete the Center. There is no such thing as half a  
3 kid or half of anything else, so we need to be in both  
4 sides of Memorial so that street connects to something.  
5 We need to have enough critical mass there so that it  
6 can do what it has to do and knit all this stuff  
7 together.

8 I don't know if that is answering your  
9 question, but we can go into it. I am fundamentally  
10 convinced that if you go use by use, open space by open  
11 space, it is the right size without negatively  
12 impacting the Center.

13 MR. SLIFKA: Thank you.

14 MS. MECK: Thank you, Mr. Slifka.

15 Looking down to my right, Mr. Begley.

16 MR. BEGLEY: Thank you. I have a  
17 question on design. You had mentioned that you were  
18 filling the area around Isham Road. I'm curious what  
19 the effects will be on the surrounding buildings, the  
20 church, the imprint buildings, in regards to the grades  
21 and how you will match that in with the street  
22 elevation and the sidewalks.

23 MR. HEAPES: That's a good question. To  
24 remind those of you that maybe didn't see the  
25 presentation, right now if you stand at South Main and

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1 Memorial and look down Memorial towards Trout Brook,  
2 you'll see the slope go down into a valley, and then it  
3 will rise back up again at Raymond Road. Our proposal  
4 is to bring not only Memorial but Isham Road, really  
5 this whole district up to the level of Raymond Road.  
6 You stand out there, it's quite obvious to see. That  
7 can range from anywhere from 8 to 10 feet in height.

8 The goal of that is to have a completely  
9 walkable neighborhood, like you have in the other side  
10 of the Center. We've been very careful in terms of how  
11 that influences the surrounding neighborhoods, which is  
12 what you are talking about, so let's just kind of walk  
13 around the site if you wanted to. First of all, it  
14 will raise the grade in the Town Center lot somewhat,  
15 so we've used that to our advantage by essentially  
16 putting the parking seemingly below grade one level, so  
17 as I stand in the Town lot after Blue Back Square, I'll

18 be about five or six feet higher than I am today. And  
19 our parking essentially gets to be one level less. If  
20 you stand out there now, you'll notice that the Town  
21 Hall Common, the parking actually dips down a little  
22 bit. So it will actually be flatter in this area, and  
23 it allows us to make our parking structure appear one  
24 level shorter. It actually is one level shorter, so it  
25 has a positive impact there.

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1 I think we talked about what you'd see  
2 from Burr and how that allows me to build a berm that  
3 you won't see. So it will be flatter, so as you walk  
4 around the site, Memorial isn't fundamentally changed,  
5 other than it doesn't go down so far. Webster Walk,  
6 that area between the library and existing Board of Ed  
7 building, which if we were just to leave Isham where it  
8 were would have quite a lot of steep steps to go down.  
9 Right now you kind of walk gradually, but it is rather  
10 steep, certainly unsafe in the snow, has much fewer  
11 steps, almost half as many steps to go from Isham up  
12 the steps over to the Center. Walking around the  
13 library, we've taken care of that grade because our  
14 level of Isham is below the children's entrance now,  
15 but we've put that use down there, and as you remember  
16 Ron and Denis describing the lobby coming down a grade  
17 so you'll have an entrance there and won't have to go  
18 any steps. So we have made some gains to Blue Back  
19 Square to get you up to the children's level and the



22 MR. CONNORS: Close to 18 months ago,  
23 you made a presentation before the Council, which is  
24 the first time I think most of us saw some of the  
25 schematics, what you are going to propose. And one of

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1 the concerns, first concern I had at that time was the  
2 integration of the two centers.

3 Right now you had mentioned that the  
4 focal point of the Center is not in front of the Board  
5 of Ed building. You think that's where it will be -- I  
6 believe you said that is where it will be when the  
7 project is complete. That will be the Center of the  
8 Center.

9 MR. HEAPES: It is geographically  
10 currently the Center of the Center.

11 MR. CONNORS: I have a couple of  
12 different questions on this. I look at it  
13 post-development because of how it's laid out, because  
14 of the grade levels of two different neighborhoods, the  
15 neighborhood of Blue Back Square and the neighborhood  
16 say in the south Farmington area. The Blue Back Square  
17 neighborhood faces in toward that Center where the  
18 gazebo would be and LaSalle Road is, that I don't think  
19 is the focal point because there is only two streets  
20 that cross where most of the restaurants are.

21 How do we assure that these two centers  
22 integrate? I guess this is a question for the Town  
23 administration, too. How do we assure that these two

24 centers are integrated, that they are not considered  
25 separate from each other? And how do we eliminate the

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1 identity of the new and old Center.

2                   You have a specific name for Blue Back  
3 Square. The name for the Center as it is now is "the  
4 Center." How do we connect those two? We haven't  
5 really talked about connections on Main Street to  
6 LaSalle Road, Memorial Drive extension. I'd like to  
7 get a feel for how you think that will all work.

8                   MR. HEAPES: I'll take a shot at it and  
9 the Town can fill in behind me. I think it has to be  
10 multi-pronged, it matches one approach. I guess I'll  
11 start with the physical. We've done everything we can  
12 for both the creation of Webster Walk and the  
13 pedestrian signal, et cetera, in the middle of South  
14 Main to try to -- and the moving of the statue as well  
15 to try to build that up as really a primary new  
16 pedestrian function. We are trying to support that  
17 with putting pedestrian connections at Memorial, cross  
18 that way, and we have good pedestrian connections down  
19 at Farmington.

20                   I will tell you physically from day one,  
21 and we have no control over this, but the extension of  
22 Memorial I think is really, really, really, really,  
23 really important over to LaSalle, so that there is a  
24 natural loop that would develop, and as you know, that  
25 was in your plans from 1977, and we are working hard to

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1 get the pedestrian side of that done as soon as  
2 possible, and I believe over time there is ways to do  
3 that. That is a physical connection. It's very  
4 important. The crosswalk is very important. The  
5 naming issue, I'll talk about it in a minute. There is  
6 as many pedestrian connections as possible.

7 I also think we have a good tool with  
8 the parking since the Town manages the parking on both  
9 sides. That's an organic thing you have to work with  
10 and encourage. But the most important physical thing  
11 is the use of the Board of Ed building, not to make  
12 that the Center of the Center, what we are proposing  
13 bringing uses that were here. Pardon me, but it's  
14 essentially what you had with Sage Allen, 30,000 square  
15 foot and the central theater that drove customers to  
16 the Center, that would do all kinds of things.

17 The reason the Board of Ed is important,  
18 as I mentioned, is it is in the geographic Center of  
19 the Center and has the ability to attract people from  
20 both sides. It's one way to get people from one side  
21 to the other and encourage the opposite. That begins  
22 to talk about merchandising. So it's physical, it's  
23 retail and merchandising at the Board of Ed building,  
24 and that's essentially all that's in there, is the new  
25 central or the new Sage Allen.

1                   But merchandising there is much further,  
2 it goes into marketing. We want to bring our marketing  
3 strengths, ideas, management, budget to the Center. We  
4 are proposing working with the merchants to make sure  
5 that our merchants belong to the Merchants Association,  
6 that there is one single marketing program for the  
7 Center. Yes, you could have dancing under the stars at  
8 the Farmington, LaSalle and Noah Webster at the square,  
9 but it will be one marketing program, one message to  
10 the marketplace, come to the Center, period, not  
11 anything else. That's the merchandising, marketing  
12 side. Our uses were really determined to be uses that  
13 aren't there now, but where people will go use services  
14 there.

15                   I guess at the end of the day, I think  
16 it has to be all hands-on deck, all prongs. We've used  
17 the same materials on the sidewalk, so you are going to  
18 see the same streetlight on one side that you see on  
19 the other. I'm putting locust trees on Memorial.  
20 That's what you have on Farmington. I think that  
21 message has to be constant in everything we do, from  
22 marketing to connecting, et cetera. That's been our  
23 tact from the beginning. One thing I don't have any  
24 control over is the Memorial connection, other than you  
25 will hear me talk about it every time I talk about

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1 anything.

2                   But I don't know if that answers your  
3 question. It's got to be a full-pronged attack in  
4 every way possible, and that's what we are committed  
5 to, completely committed to. There is little things,  
6 way-finding signs. We need a directory in the corner  
7 of LaSalle and Farmington that kind of says here is  
8 where all the stores are over there and another at Blue  
9 Back Square that points back. There is way-finding  
10 signs constantly reinforcing that message, so anyway we  
11 can think of we need to do.

12                   MS. MECK: Mr. Connors, would you like  
13 to address that to the Town staff as well?

14                   MR. CONNORS: Yes, I'm wondering if they  
15 can talk about Memorial Drive extension. If you walk  
16 down that driveway down, there is the parking garage,  
17 dumpsters, the backs of the buildings, and there needs  
18 to be I believe coordinated effort between property  
19 owners and the Town to make that work.

20                   MS. MECK: Mr. Feldman.

21                   MR. FELDMAN: Madam Chair, let me pick  
22 up on the team, but it's also a comment to further my  
23 thoughts. We have one Center. We don't have a --

24                   MS. MECK: Mr. Feldman, I think your  
25 microphone is fading out.

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1                   A VOICE: Either that or you changed

2 your language.

3 MS. MECK: Let's try another microphone,  
4 Mr. Feldman, and see if we can --

5 A VOICE: Move the mic closer.

6 MR. FELDMAN: Better? Same? Let me try  
7 again. Let me elaborate a little bit more and then  
8 I'll ask Ron to elaborate further. We have one Center,  
9 it's not a Center at Blue Back Square. I hope at some  
10 point the name "Blue Back Square" looks somewhere else,  
11 but we have the Center. We have the east side and west  
12 side maybe, but we have the Center. The Center is  
13 pulled together by South Main Street. Think of South  
14 Main Street as basically a zipper, South Main Street  
15 pulls together both east and west sides. The key is  
16 that there is lots of activity on South Main Street.

17 One of the reasons that we were  
18 initially attracted to this investment had to do with  
19 the investor's desire to activate more retail, bringing  
20 pedestrian citizens along South Main Street. That  
21 caught our attention because we realized without  
22 activity and lots of excitement on South Main Street  
23 that we couldn't have the potential of having two  
24 separate centers.

25 The marketing, the advertising, the

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1 promotion of West Hartford Center is actually key, and  
2 I don't need to elaborate any further beyond what was  
3 just told to you, but it's more than the physical

4 connections. It's the identity; it's the promotion;  
5 it's the common store hours; it's the recognition that  
6 we function as a unit. There is a couple of things in  
7 addition to the marketing, store hours, strategy  
8 concept that Mr. Heapes identifies, but it also deals  
9 with again some physical connections, the east-west  
10 physical connections that have to be made. There is  
11 the Webster Walk that leads us westbound over South  
12 Main Street into the Center, but there is also the very  
13 key connection on Memorial Drive and maybe, Ron, you  
14 want to talk or explain a little bit more what we might  
15 hope for in the future.

16 MR. VAN WINKLE: The connector that we  
17 have talked about, I found a document from 1961 that  
18 talked about building the road that takes Memorial over  
19 to LaSalle, so it's been long discussed in this  
20 community. I'm meeting with the post office on this  
21 site again next week to talk about how we might design  
22 that connector to the post office property and create  
23 at least a pedestrian way, a wide treed successful  
24 pedestrian way that will take pedestrians from LaSalle  
25 Road to Main Street or from Main Street to LaSalle

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1 Road.

2 Yesterday at the hearing I had  
3 discussion with one of the property owners adjacent to  
4 that, and we had a conversation about, well, if we  
5 didn't turn it into a road, how would we do that? I

6 think it's long been talked about. It's private  
7 property, we needed their cooperation, but I am very --  
8 feel very positive. The post office has talked to us  
9 for about four years about the possibility of that  
10 connector. My last conversation on the phone with them  
11 was, I don't see why we couldn't do this. So I feel  
12 very positive about it. We are going to start a more  
13 serious discussion with them next week and see whether  
14 we can put that into place.

15 I guess the other piece that I would  
16 think about of how we connect these two pieces is, we  
17 are bringing into the east side of the Center  
18 residences, offices of significant numbers, and those  
19 are all shoppers. One of the things that really helped  
20 West Hartford Center was when the Town Center building  
21 was built, it brought a lot of workers into the Center.  
22 Those workers shopped, ate lunch, spent time there. It  
23 changed some of the character of the Center and  
24 strengthened it, and the residences and the offices on  
25 the east side will do the same. They will cross that

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1 street; they will shop; they will eat in the Center.

2 And again, I can't restate everything  
3 we've said, it's really true, but the concept has got  
4 to be one. It can't be two. And just having Blue Back  
5 Square agree to join the West Hartford -- the Merchants  
6 Association will dramatically change the strength of  
7 the Merchants Association to create that one Center.

8 And that was really a great success, and I think that  
9 will really make that goal that we are talking about  
10 today achievable.

11 MR. CONNORS: Just one follow-up.

12 MS. MECK: Yes.

13 MR. CONNORS: Back to the Memorial Drive  
14 extension, is there a chance that that may not work,  
15 that the parties can't come together? Everyone  
16 contends that that is an important link to both  
17 centers.

18 MR. VAN WINKLE: It's private property.  
19 We are not in the mode in West Hartford of taking  
20 someone's property for public purpose, so we still  
21 would need to persuade them. I am -- I feel positive  
22 about the conversations we'd had with both of those  
23 office and adjacent property owners. I think they  
24 recognize the value of this connector. Right now it  
25 acts as a pedestrian way. It's not the most pleasant

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1 pedestrian way, but it acts today as a pedestrian way.  
2 So, yes, there is a chance that it wouldn't happen, but  
3 I think every one of those property owners recognize  
4 the value of doing this.

5 MR. CONNORS: Forgive me for asking  
6 this, but should we have moved further along on that  
7 prior to getting to this point?

8 MR. VAN WINKLE: That would have been  
9 nice. We have been meeting with the post office for

10 sometime. They are an amazingly slow-moving  
11 organization. They turned us down a year ago and said  
12 no. It was through the Congressman's office that I  
13 approached them again and that interest brought  
14 Washington's interest into our question, and their  
15 response was, I think we could do this. So it has been  
16 a long process. As I said, it's been since 1961. If  
17 the post office -- if they weren't the post office, I  
18 would be writing them tickets for the condition of  
19 their property. They need to invest in their property.  
20 They tell me they have no money to invest in their  
21 property to fix it up. We are presenting them a way to  
22 invest in their property to bring it into better  
23 condition.

24 They were also talking about the  
25 possibility with me of changing their post office one

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1 day, so that that site might be something different,  
2 and a post office will only be part of it. There is a  
3 lot of opportunity and a lot of these things will take  
4 longer term, but I am much more positive today about  
5 the direction that this is going. I can only persuade  
6 and push so far, and we are hopeful that that will  
7 happen.

8 MR. CONNORS: Thank you.

9 MS. MECK: Thank you, Mr. Connors.

10 Mr. Brown.

11 MR. BROWN: Thank you. Through the

12 chair and Mr. Feldman, to our district professor,  
13 Mr. Van Winkle. I'm reflecting back to your comments  
14 about the early plans of development, and as I  
15 understand from your comments, there was a desire to  
16 increase density of this area, but not as high a  
17 density as what's being proposed, and I'm wondering why  
18 the staff, maybe I'm making assumptions, but I'm  
19 assuming that the staff is supporting this higher  
20 density, feels it's better than what was proposed in  
21 the past plans of development.

22 MR. VAN WINKLE: Mr. Brown, actually the  
23 opposite. Early studies from the eighties had  
24 buildings up to ten stories in this area, both on the  
25 Town Hall site and on the Crowley Chevrolet area. Both

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1 of them looked at eight stories with a two-story bonus  
2 or ten stories for mixed-use kinds of developments.  
3 Council and the TPZ recommended and adopted zoning  
4 ordinance change in 1989. That ordinance said the  
5 buildings would be allowed to go to six stories in the  
6 Grody Raymond Road area with an additional two stories  
7 for creating a mixed-use, well-designed project.

8 Though this fits right into what you  
9 have been telling us of the goal down there, all of  
10 these buildings are less than six stories. It fits  
11 within the zoning category that you have identified.  
12 You've told us that's where you want to go. This  
13 project actually is not Town staff telling you we think

14 it should be more; it's Town staff giving you a project  
15 that you've been talking about for many decades.

16 MR. BROWN: Does that include the lot  
17 coverage?

18 MR. VAN WINKLE: The lot coverage also  
19 agrees with what is in the zoning code, of course. We  
20 adopted an ordinance about two years ago changing lot  
21 coverage. In the early studies, lot coverage was seen  
22 as dramatically different than what we are looking at  
23 today. Development was much lower four-one ratios and  
24 lot coverages were smaller. It was mostly thought of  
25 as buildings that didn't have parking garages, that had

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1 surface lots, that had lots of asphalt. We increased  
2 the lot coverage to try to get a Center that was more  
3 like Farmington Avenue. Buildings are, you go from one  
4 property owner on the party wall to the next property  
5 owner. There aren't many spaces between them, and  
6 behind those buildings is a parking lot which could be  
7 a garage, it could be something else. In the Center  
8 all those buildings could go to four stories today,  
9 garage placed on it, and you can build more by the  
10 zoning code. So it's not dramatically different than  
11 what we've been thinking about, the four-one ratio is  
12 different than allowed in the Center, but would allow  
13 character that's very similar to what we see in the  
14 Center.

15 MR. BROWN: Thank you.

16 MS. MECK: Thank you, Mr. Brown.  
17 Mr. Coursey.

18 MR COURSEY: Thank you. This is my  
19 first question for Mr. Heapes. I'm very interested in  
20 the new public space and the park on Raymond Road. As  
21 you probably know, there is an effort to create a Trout  
22 Brook green way, a pass along Trout Brook. This is not  
23 something that's going to be done overnight obviously,  
24 but I think we have the unique opportunity here, and I  
25 guess it's maybe not as much of a question, but a

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1 request, or maybe if you can elaborate on that, and  
2 again understanding that you had indicated to us that  
3 it's really up to the Town to decide what kind of  
4 public use should be for that park, but I think it's  
5 very important that you take the opportunity, if there  
6 is going to be development there, to tie that park into  
7 what exists in the green way there now.

8 MR. HEAPES: Well, just to be clear on  
9 the park kind of deal, because it seems that there is a  
10 lot of agendas in Town on what to do on that piece of  
11 property, certainly any time I talk to someone, there  
12 is a new idea from a parking garage there to a science  
13 museum. It's a very important piece of property  
14 obviously. And as you know or perhaps don't know, that  
15 property was really not part of the Blue Back Square  
16 discussion until maybe 90 or 120 days ago when it was  
17 clear to me, having met with the citizens a lot and

18 opened my head as to what the citizens of West Hartford  
19 really think is open space, that we probably weren't  
20 going to be able to do it within the scope of Blue Back  
21 Square, and together with the Town, we had to step back  
22 and say, you know, let's get real here. There is a  
23 loss of a certain kind of open space. It has symbolic  
24 green open characteristics that are very important to  
25 the citizens of this community. Could we rethink what

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1 we are trying to do rather than shoehorn something in  
2 there that's unsatisfactory to everybody? That's what  
3 unlocked that site.

4                   What I liked about that site, and in  
5 fact we had a lot of discussions with Chan Kreiger of  
6 Harvard Urban Designers, what are the advantages of  
7 that site versus having the space in the middle? And  
8 one of the primary advantages -- I would say there were  
9 three -- one primary advantage is that it takes off the  
10 opportunity for a lot more development so that really  
11 south of Memorial is pretty much finished under this  
12 scenario, relatively speaking. But the real advantage  
13 was, as you mentioned, it provides a new green gateway  
14 to the Center to match the new Trout Brook extension,  
15 which is a new way in, and as you know from our traffic  
16 will be a significant way in; and secondly, it connects  
17 to the Trout Brook regional waterway system and allows  
18 that system to have a connection to the Center that's  
19 extremely meaningful.

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20                                   What we did is say, listen, we don't  
21 want the property. It's not part of this deal; it's  
22 the Town's property. We are willing to donate what is  
23 essentially being removed from the existing Town Hall,  
24 which is an open space with trees, flat, easy to use  
25 for a million kinds of events, facade, and essentially

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1 make it larger than what the Town has today.

2                                   As I believe I mentioned, beyond that  
3 and its use, I just, as I've heard so many ideas, felt  
4 very insecure even proposing something. I think a band  
5 show would be great, but it doesn't matter what I  
6 think. So we proposed a process similar to the  
7 Veterans War Memorial, some visioning where the Town  
8 takes the leadership and says, what could that be? It  
9 does seem obvious to me, and the reason we've extended  
10 our sidewalks across Raymond and tried to provide  
11 almost two gateway anchors is to say, now people are  
12 going to cross Raymond to do something. What that is,  
13 I don't know, but clearly the connection to the  
14 regional opportunity.

15                                   In Washington there is a bike path  
16 that's 30 years old now, and they are going to expand  
17 it because it's so popular, so important to that  
18 region. We would completely support however it gets  
19 integrated, but I have to be quite honest and say, give  
20 us direction on how to do that. I don't know if that  
21 answers the question, but it's a tremendous

22 opportunity.

23 MR. COURSEY: Regardless of what goes  
24 there, I mean, even if it was a parking garage, you  
25 still think it's an opportunity to really sort of

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1 connect, and I don't know if the Town staff has  
2 anything they want to add on that.

3 MR. FELDMAN: Through Madam Chair,  
4 Mr. Coursey, our Town Engineer Ron probably could  
5 elaborate further. There has been some work done, and  
6 we continue to have some long-range plans to perhaps  
7 implement that area.

8 MR. VAN WINKLE: Several years ago David  
9 Kraus developed a plan for a green way that goes from  
10 Elmwood up to UCONN, West Hartford. It runs along  
11 Trout Brook. It curls in and out. We have a plan. We  
12 have thought about what we can do. It's going to  
13 require some significant changes over time to achieve.  
14 We've achieved getting a grant from the State  
15 Department of Transportation to start the first piece  
16 of that. Unfortunately the funding for that is not due  
17 to show up until 2007, but it's the beginning.

18 And as we bring that trail through the  
19 beach land parks and all the way down to West Hartford  
20 Center, there is a number of obstacles we've looked at  
21 and that's perhaps for another day. But as we pass by  
22 this property, this will be the green connector that  
23 will take you through a green space that will go into

24 West Hartford Center, so it's an important piece for  
25 this green connector.

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1 I think the green space has  
2 significantly more value when connected to a larger  
3 green space, and so as you sit in this new park, you  
4 will be part of a much larger green way, green space, a  
5 walking area that the public will probably enjoy more  
6 than they would have if they created some small park.

7 MR. COURSEY: Thank you. Thank you.

8 MS. MECK: Thank you. Mr. Doolittle.

9 MR. DOOLITTLE: Is this on? Thank you,  
10 Madam Chair. First I'd just like to just briefly say  
11 that I'm very encouraged by the amount of time --

12 MS. MECK: Mr. Doolittle, I think you  
13 have to speak up. I believe your microphone is on, but  
14 if you can get a little bit closer.

15 MR. DOOLITTLE: Thank you, Madam Chair.  
16 I was saying I appreciate how much --

17 MS. MECK: Mr. Doolittle, we still can't  
18 hear you for the stenographer, so if you could.

19 MR. DOOLITTLE: Okay. I'll try to  
20 maintain this position so that this is good, a good  
21 Yoga test.

22 MS. MECK: All we need to your ten  
23 minutes, Mr. Doolittle.

24 MR. DOOLITTLE: I have heard a comment,  
25 and I don't know whether this question is for

1 Mr. Heapes or Mr. Plante. I'll let Mr. Heapes decide.  
2 I have heard a question or comments that in terms of  
3 the driving experienced down South Main, that some  
4 people think there might be too many stop lights. I  
5 wonder if you can elaborate on what's there now, what  
6 the plan calls for, and whether there is a chance for a  
7 feeling of delay and congestion moving up and down the  
8 Main Street.

9 MS. MECK: Mr. Doolittle, I would ask  
10 Mr. Heapes maybe to give you a general answer, but we  
11 can explore that in more detail when we actually do a  
12 very indepth set of questions on traffic and parking  
13 together. Would that be acceptable to you?

14 MR. DOOLITTLE: It certainly would be,  
15 and I apologize for moving off of the agenda. I'd like  
16 to turn briefly to a specific question for Mr. Van  
17 Winkle.

18 Mr. Van Winkle, I understand from your  
19 testimony that in order to save money, the Town has not  
20 yet executed or had drawn up a specific plan for how to  
21 integrate the Board of Education into the Town Hall. I  
22 did notice that there was at least a fairly  
23 well-developed concept for the library piece of it, and  
24 I was wondering why those two had been treated  
25 differently.

1                   MR. VAN WINKLE: Yes. The library  
2 design had to occur because of the change to the  
3 library site. In order to understand how we would be  
4 able to add to the library, the Isham -- let me just go  
5 to, the Isham Road site drops substantially in  
6 elevation. It drops a full floor below the rear  
7 entrance to the library, and so in order to understand  
8 how we could add to the library and create a new  
9 entrance, we had to do a lot of concept design. We  
10 don't have construction drawings or anything like that.  
11 We went through a lot of concept to show here is how we  
12 could enter the library, here is how we would get up  
13 into the library, go up a full floor where we actually  
14 get through the building, and when we make these  
15 elevation changes within the Blue Back Square area,  
16 here is where we can do additions to the library.  
17 There is a 12,000 square foot addition. We didn't have  
18 much choice but to kind of spend a lot of time looking  
19 at that to make sure that our hopes for the library  
20 were still going to be possible once Blue Back Square  
21 changes the topography of the area.

22                   At the Town Hall site, there is a green  
23 space that is left to the south of the Town Hall  
24 building. Should there need to be some addition to  
25 Town Hall, that green space was deemed to be large

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1 enough to hold some addition, but our hope is to take  
2 and reconfigure the interior of Town Hall and put as  
3 much as possible into that building. I don't need to  
4 do that understanding of the architecture at this  
5 moment in time. We did reconfigure the parking lot to  
6 hold the capacity that would be needed for both the  
7 Board of Ed and the Town Hall and the police uses, so  
8 the exterior piece is done. It's the interior piece  
9 and reconfiguring the architecture of the existing  
10 building to accommodate the board which has not been  
11 done yet. It isn't necessary for this application and  
12 it would have taken a significant amount of effort to  
13 put it forward.

14 MR. DOOLITTLE: Thank you. My next  
15 question, Mr. Heapes, is, I noticed in the Design  
16 Review Advisory Commission's report that they were, in  
17 discussing the trees, you've got a number of 7 inch  
18 caliper trees called for, and the Design Review  
19 Advisory Committee was of the feeling that perhaps  
20 there would not be an adequate supply of those kind  
21 of trees. I know that you focused -- if you said big  
22 trees once, you said it 100 times. Are there 7 inch  
23 caliper trees and what is the difference there? Is the  
24 Design Review Advisory Committee, Commission I should  
25 say, right that these 7 inch trees are not available?

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1 MR. HEAPES: Of course, I should note  
2 they are all professionals and are aware of certain

3 market conditions. The seven inch trees was what we  
4 did in Bethesda. We are not going to find 7 inch trees  
5 driving around Town looking at people's front yards.  
6 We would have to go to large scale nurseries, many of  
7 which are Pennsylvania, New Jersey, ship them here.  
8 And there are whole areas of them. As being good  
9 professionals, I think they were trying to offer maybe  
10 flexibility that frankly we didn't ask for, but I  
11 appreciate it.

12                   And so what we've done instead is, we  
13 have different tree species on each street which makes  
14 sense. It's a good thing to do from an urban forestry  
15 perspective, and it's one of the things we've learned  
16 over the past 15 years. We have locust trees on  
17 Memorial similar to what is in the Center. We have a  
18 different species on Isham, so we have a mix of tree  
19 species. In our application to DRAC, we have  
20 recommended alternative species, should we have  
21 marketplace issues, et cetera.

22                   We have in the budget the money to get  
23 them someplace far away, pull them together, truck them  
24 here and provide them. We are fully confident that we  
25 can do that. We tried to give ourselves the

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1 flexibility through the species rather than the  
2 opportunity to kind of back off on that. I will, in  
3 case you didn't hear, emphatically say that the most  
4 important thing we are doing is mature trees out of the

5 box. I mean, so it is our number 1 priority. If it  
6 can't be done, it's because it physically is not  
7 possible in the universe. I can't say that any  
8 stronger, my feeling about the value of that, the  
9 importance of that to the pedestrian experience. So  
10 come hell or high water we are going to get 7 inch  
11 caliper trees on those sidewalks.

12 MR. DOOLITTLE: Thank you, Mr. Heapes.

13 MS. MECK: Thank you, Mr. Doolittle.

14 I'll now move to my left and proceed in that direction,  
15 and we will start with Mr. DeVaughn.

16 MR. DEVAUGHN: Thank you, Madam Chair,  
17 and through you, three questions which I'll ask at one  
18 time, and if they belong under another section, that  
19 will be fine. One of my questions has to do with the  
20 fact that it appears that the land around the area that  
21 is sometimes referred to as "the Town government  
22 campus" is fully developed, and the question I have is  
23 that with the exception of the future expansion for the  
24 library, has any thought been given to reserving some  
25 land for future municipal use should that need occur

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1 sometime in the future so that we are not in a  
2 land-locked situation?

3 The second question has to do with the  
4 configuration of retailers and whether or not that's a  
5 function of the marketplace or are there other  
6 considerations given? For example, if someone is

7 looking for a space for a bicycle shop and a bakery,  
8 how do you decide which one goes in if you can't do  
9 both? Because it seems to me that the configuration of  
10 retailers will give the whole area a certain character  
11 that we may or may not want.

12 The third question relates to the  
13 Special Development District, where we are creating a  
14 district under single ownership, and will that last in  
15 perpetuity or would there be a time when it's possible  
16 to sell off some of those and break up the district?  
17 I'll stop there. Thank you.

18 MS. MECK: Thank you, Mr. DeVaughn. I  
19 think what we will do is maybe we can take questions 1  
20 and 3 through you, Mr. Feldman, and then we will move  
21 on, Mr. Heapes, to the retail question.

22 MR. FELDMAN: Madam Chair, Dr. DeVaughn,  
23 as far as the question pertaining to possible expanded  
24 municipal usage, the other night there was a  
25 description of possible ways the library could continue

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1 to expand as planned, and that is probably one of the  
2 key features for future library use. As far as  
3 expansion of this building, I don't envision now or way  
4 into the future where we will be hiring new employees,  
5 generating need for additional space. Perhaps you and  
6 others know we continue to track, not expand as far as  
7 our municipal employment, so I would not envision again  
8 a need to expand this building.

9                   Our police department, again, will be  
10 renovated. Within the existing footprint, we will  
11 actually expand into what was the former Superior  
12 Court, allowing this additional square footage to  
13 accommodate the police department both now and to the  
14 future as well. I think we have covered the needs both  
15 current and to the future as far as possible municipal  
16 building expansions.

17                   MR. VAN WINKLE: Our population in West  
18 Hartford is probably not going to change much from  
19 60,000, unless people start having six kids, and I  
20 don't think that's going to happen very soon, so as  
21 long as our population stays around 60,000, our police  
22 force, our Fire Department, our work force is probably  
23 going to be in some relative capacity to that, so I  
24 would expect our Town Hall also to stay about where it  
25 is. If we needed to expand there is the potential to

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1 do some small expansion on the Town Hall site. On the  
2 north side of the building are two lower buildings that  
3 contain the facility offices and a small piece of the  
4 senior center. So if we actually needed to expand,  
5 there would be the potential to build on top of those.  
6 But there is the opportunity, and as Mr. Feldman says,  
7 I don't think there is the need.

8                   MR. FELDMAN: Madam Chair, if I could  
9 continue with Dr. DeVaughn's third question, it had to  
10 do with, I believe, the SDD and the possibility perhaps

11 into the future of subdividing that. I don't want to  
12 misstate your question but subdividing --

13 MR. DEVAUGHN: That's correct. That was  
14 my concern.

15 MR. FELDMAN: Perhaps our Deputy  
16 Corporation Counsel can respond.

17 MR. ALAIR: Madam Chair, through you,  
18 just so that everybody is clear to start, I want to  
19 make sure we have SSD and SDD clear. We are talking  
20 Special Development District zoning designation as  
21 opposed to dividing up the Special Services District.  
22 I think that's what your question relates to.

23 As with any Special Development District  
24 or any parcel of property, Town zoning classification  
25 on that property is not dictated by the owner. It runs

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1 with the land regardless of whether the property within  
2 it sold. It is certainly contemplated as part of this  
3 project that the residential units, for example, will  
4 be sold. There will be condominium units, there will  
5 be a change in ownership there.

6 The Special Development District  
7 designation will remain in effect. As the plans  
8 indicate we are going from what is now one SDD owned by  
9 the Town exclusively to three SDDs which will be owned  
10 on the north by the Town and the American Legion, and  
11 the south by the Town exclusively, and in the middle  
12 initially exclusively by the developer.

13                   Subsequent to that obviously you will  
14 have sales, you will have condominiums. I believe it's  
15 their intention, and certainly perhaps Richard can talk  
16 a little further, I believe that it's their intention  
17 to retain ownership, but nothing would preclude them  
18 from selling off, for example, Building A to another  
19 property owner. That property owner would, however, be  
20 bound by all investors.

21                   MR. HEAPES: I guess I will answer  
22 question number 2 which had to do with the  
23 consideration of the retail so to speak. I think there  
24 is a really important principle here. We are trying to  
25 build a 100-year infrastructure, sidewalks, and very

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1 flexible first floor space for retail. As you can  
2 imagine, the retail and retailers are a pretty dynamic  
3 part of any Town Center. I've been looking at the  
4 books and looking at just the whole picture from the  
5 thirties and the eighties, and I didn't do a count, but  
6 I'll bet probably out of all the old merchants in the  
7 Center, maybe 10 percent of them are still the same  
8 merchants, and you've watched the Center change with  
9 restaurants, et cetera.

10                   What we are trying to do is build the  
11 right scale for retail space, and we have something  
12 that we can do that the Center can't do, which is we  
13 can kind of strategically organize the mix of retailers  
14 on the street so that they achieve certain

15 characteristics, which is what I believe you are  
16 talking about, certain kind of familiar  
17 characteristics. Right now in the Center if the  
18 building owner wants to do all financial services, and  
19 the building owner next to him wants to do financial  
20 services, and I can think of a couple of places where  
21 that's what you get, it's not a great shopping  
22 experience. It's kind of one of those missing teeth I  
23 was talking about.

24 We think, number 1, also a couple of  
25 things we are not interested in. I've already told you

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1 we are not interested in bringing merchants from the  
2 existing Center. It's not that we don't like them,  
3 it's not that we wouldn't have them. The reason we  
4 like them is the reason we're here. We don't want to  
5 transfer them over. We are also not interested in  
6 focusing on tenants that are right down the street in  
7 the mall. You know, why would you want to do that? So  
8 we are really interested in bringing really good  
9 merchants who are unique, and unique is an interesting  
10 word, unique to the marketplace. I don't really get  
11 into national chain or not. I think we talked about  
12 that before, Three Dog Bakery is a chain and so is Ten  
13 Thousand Villages and so is CVS, very different  
14 characteristics. What we want to do is for this to be  
15 familiar to West Hartford people. We are very  
16 interested in local merchants, interesting merchants

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17 that will create the same kind of eclectic mix as you  
18 have in the Center now.

19 If you were to walk Bethesda, you would  
20 see Dunkin' Donuts next to a hair cutery next to a  
21 woman's clothing store that's sells a thousand dollar  
22 apparel. I think the most important thing is that this  
23 is not a luxury retail project. This is a real  
24 project. You'll be able to have your nails done.  
25 You're probably going to need a coffee shop, at least

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1 more than five of them on this side. It will be market  
2 driven, but we can organize it, and our goal is to have  
3 that interest in mix that is familiar and supportive to  
4 the Center knowing that the tenants over a 100-year  
5 period will tend to change as taste and whatever  
6 changes. But we have the ability to manage it.

7 It's a really important concept because  
8 sometimes the moms and pops don't have the credit,  
9 don't have the financial muscle to come in, and when  
10 you can organize the whole merchandising, you can help  
11 subsidize them or help cover their assets so they have  
12 a chance to get into the Center. With the current  
13 lease rates in the Center, that may not be the case, as  
14 you notice the new tenants coming to the Center. We  
15 can do that for the reason, I think you are asking,  
16 which is how do you keep that familiar neighborhood  
17 presence of unique interest in stores? I think we are  
18 in alignment there, and we have a few tools that the

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19 Center doesn't currently have to do that. Does that  
20 answer your question?

21 MR. DEVAUGHN: Did I understand there  
22 was a follow-up question on the expansion?

23 MS. MECK: Yes, Mr. Harris.

24 MAYOR HARRIS: It went to the expansion  
25 of the Town Hall. It seems like the logical place to

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1 ask it. We also have within this Town Hall our space  
2 based on the original design that was built back in  
3 1923 in kind of a traditional sort of courtyard,  
4 hollowed-out area in the middle. Would that provide at  
5 any point in time some area for expansion also?

6 MR. VAN WINKLE: There are certainly  
7 opportunities like that. This building could be  
8 expanded without having much impact. It's a four-story  
9 building, so a small footprint can add a lot of square  
10 footage. We are never doubling this building for  
11 government use, but we might add 20,000 square feet to  
12 it. That would be a very easy thing to do on a  
13 four-story building, take a small space, a hollowed-out  
14 center of the building. The atrium below this room we  
15 are in is the old gymnasium. This was the old high  
16 school gymnasium below it. We looked at putting a  
17 floor in the middle of the gymnasium to create two  
18 stories of space in that area. So there is lots of  
19 things you can think about doing to a building like  
20 this to create additional space should you need it.

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21 MAYOR HARRIS: Thank you, Mr. Van  
22 Winkle.

23 MS. MECK: Mrs. Carpenter.

24 MS. CARPENTER: Thank you. I have a  
25 couple of questions here. In reviewing the e-mails

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1 that I received from people in the community, most of  
2 them do deal with size and density, and I think it  
3 would be remiss of me not to even quote the real  
4 concern in this development. 80 percent of them did  
5 mention that size and density was a real concern. One  
6 person writes "Blue Back Square is too high and too  
7 close together." Another one writes that "six-story  
8 high buildings will change the low-key skyline," and  
9 another one writes, "I have seen the Center's potential  
10 future, and my opinion is the size of this proposal  
11 will forever change the Center." I think these are --  
12 this is something that I would like to address. The  
13 way I see it, there are two competing factors in any  
14 development. They include the economics and the  
15 aesthetics, and I think how do we balance the two of  
16 them is something that all of us are questioning.

17 I understand, Mr. Heapes, your  
18 definition of density. You have quite a lot of  
19 experience working with developments, but I think that  
20 our definition of size and density is different than  
21 your definition of size and density. My first question  
22 is: How has the project changed with size and density

23 since the original plan and inception of the project?  
24 That's my first question. And my second one would be:  
25 Are you still willing to compromise size and density

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1 with this project as this procedure goes forward?

2 MR. HEAPES: I will try to sort size  
3 from density, and then I'll let you help me put them  
4 back together at the end of the day. Relative to  
5 physical things on size, let's just start with height.  
6 When we first brought the proposal in, we had two  
7 six-story buildings which were residential in character  
8 that were approximately 100 units of residential, and  
9 two five-story -- excuse me, one five-story building  
10 for the office building. Within our proposal today,  
11 you will see that there are 70 residential units being  
12 proposed, one third less, that the residential  
13 buildings are in fact five-story, one floor less. So  
14 that program, which is a third of the project, it was  
15 cut by a third.

16 In our original application, we had  
17 suggested as many as 1800 seats of movie theater, and  
18 as many or up to eight or nine screens. We've worked  
19 really hard with motion picture operators and cinema  
20 operators to get that down to less than twice the size  
21 of the old central theater, which is around 1,000 seats  
22 and five screens. That's a reduction of about 50  
23 percent of that key component.

24 We have also worked on reducing the

25 height of the Hartford Hospital building, which I

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1 believe you heard direct comment about. How does  
2 height relate to experience, scale, et cetera. We can  
3 talk about that further if you'd like.

4                   What has been really clear from the  
5 outset is that I want the buildings in this Center to  
6 essentially be no taller than this Town Hall building  
7 and the existing Town Center office building. Now, I  
8 believe that the Council's original planning  
9 anticipated higher buildings, not so that they would  
10 project up in the sky. It's very similar to  
11 Washington, D.C. Washington, D.C. is really simple.  
12 You can't block the capitol building, but obviously the  
13 topography of Washington is not flat. So as you are  
14 down near the Potomac River, you can get twelve stories  
15 in fine. If you are up on Capitol Hill, you can only  
16 get eight stories in fine.

17                   I've taken the same approach, which is  
18 to say, let's make sure as you come down Trout Brook,  
19 as you come down the hill on Farmington and you look at  
20 the Town Center, the same skyline will be there at Blue  
21 Back Square as it is today. Our buildings are  
22 essentially, forget the number of stories, it doesn't  
23 matter, the same height as this building and the same  
24 height as the Town Center building. The reason we can  
25 have more stories is because we are down in a valley,

1 the Isham valley, if you want to call it. So there is  
2 another 20 feet there. That was really our approach,  
3 work from the top down and fill in with the stories.

4                   So I would respectfully suggest that the  
5 statement that we are affecting the skyline is not  
6 true. We are not much higher than the Crowley  
7 Chevrolet sign, to be quite honest. Those were the  
8 changes in height and density. I think as I mentioned  
9 before, the size issue is very interesting. I think  
10 you need to break this project down into pieces and  
11 think about how big are the pieces. Seventy  
12 residential units, residents, ownership residents  
13 living in the Center. If you were to count up the  
14 houses that just face the Center today, Brace Road,  
15 Raymond Road, Burr, et cetera, there are more than 70  
16 houses facing the Center today. So we are not any more  
17 houses really living on -- people living on the site  
18 today that are currently living in the Center because  
19 they are across the street. It's not a tremendous  
20 number of residential units.

21                   If you take all of our office space,  
22 which by the way is in two buildings, it is less office  
23 space than is in the Town Center office building. If  
24 you go to their website, they have 185,000 square feet,  
25 we have 160,000 square feet in two separate buildings.

1 That's not adding a tremendous amount of new office  
2 space to the Center if you think about all the other  
3 office buildings that are in the Center.

4                   Take the Board of Ed building,  
5 essentially replacing the central theater with a larger  
6 theater and the Sage Allen, and that's all that is in  
7 that building, two stories, large retail, a few small  
8 shops and the movie theater. So that is certainly  
9 within the character of the size, height, detail,  
10 appropriateness for the Center.

11                   And finally, the amount of retail is a  
12 really simple equation for me. How do I make sure that  
13 as I walk around this piece of the Center, I'm walking  
14 near interesting, open, well-lit cafes and stores so  
15 that it's familiar to me as I visit the Center? So  
16 equating the retail was a really simple equation. I  
17 want to make sure I'm not walking by big, blank, ugly  
18 walls. So the streetscape sensitivity is the same. I  
19 think as I mentioned, no matter what height a building  
20 you put on these streets, it will seem different, not  
21 worse, not better, different.

22                   But I think when you break the pieces  
23 down, 70 neighbors in the new neighborhood, office  
24 space less than what you have in one building in the  
25 Center, yes, it is the biggest building. Forget all

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1 the other office buildings. Returning to Sage Allen  
2 and the central theater to the Board of Ed to attract  
3 those people who used to come to the Center to go to  
4 the movies, to do a different kind of shopping, and  
5 then making sure that the sidewalks have all the great  
6 places to walk. I think those are the right sizes.

7 As a result of that, no, we are not  
8 interested and willing to significantly downgrade the  
9 Center. And my question to you as a Council would be,  
10 this combination, particularly the retail, is  
11 supporting the SSD. So if you want to lower the  
12 revenue side, I would ask you: Are you willing to not  
13 expand the library? Because I have to put the  
14 utilities under the road, I have to have sidewalks, I  
15 have to have the parking, so if you want to reduce the  
16 SSD, about the only discretionary thing in there, we've  
17 got to move the Board of Ed, that I can think of, I  
18 could be wrong, is do you not want to do the library?  
19 Or do you want to begin to dedicate those tax dollars  
20 that it was clear in every model we looked at were  
21 untouchable? If you are willing to change that  
22 financial formula, we are more than happy to consider  
23 how you could play with the program, but this is a  
24 balancing two-way street that works, I think,  
25 beautifully. I don't really care about any of that.

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1 It's living in the right environment in this part of  
2 the Center, exclusive of the economics.

3 MS. CARPENTER: My next question is  
4 probably for you, Mr. Van Winkle. There has been a lot  
5 of talk about consolidating services from the Council  
6 from the Board of Education to the Town Hall, and the  
7 project has earmarked 7 million dollars for this  
8 renovation for the project, the consolidation.

9 Would it be possible at all to only make  
10 interior changes to the Town Hall and that the Board of  
11 Education would be able to fit into this space and  
12 therefore reduce the 7 million dollars that's been  
13 earmarked for that project?

14 MR. VAN WINKLE: Ron Van Winkle. I  
15 think that's possible. Everyone will have to give a  
16 little something, and when we start down that road, one  
17 of the reasons we avoided it too is that I'm going to  
18 disturb everybody's nest, everybody's place. We are  
19 going to talk about changing how we operate in Town  
20 Hall and perhaps how the Board and Council operate in  
21 separate spaces. All those issues will have to come to  
22 the forefront to deal with them. But if we do that,  
23 renovation of existing spaces in Town Hall is  
24 substantially cheaper than building new space onto the  
25 Town Hall.

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1 We may not be able to get all of those  
2 people into this building, but we may -- we are  
3 certainly going to give it a good try, and if we can  
4 renovate and do less new construction or no new

5 construction, we can save significant dollars.

6 MS. CARPENTER: Thank you. I just have  
7 one more question -- I'm sorry, Mr. Feldman.

8 MR. FELDMAN: I'm sorry, I didn't mean  
9 to interrupt, but if I could, Madam Chairwoman, and  
10 Ms. Carpenter, let me just state the obvious, this is  
11 truly an office building, yes, but it's also the public  
12 meeting place. The room we sit in, the public  
13 conference rooms that are scattered throughout this  
14 building serve a very important function, and I don't  
15 believe any of us want to take away from that important  
16 public function, so while we will do everything  
17 possible to fit within the existing footprint, I would  
18 not want that sacrifice of public meeting space to come  
19 only to just provide office space where it once was  
20 public. So I just want to make sure that we are all  
21 thinking about this building is not just an office  
22 building, but also as a public meeting place.

23 MS. CARPENTER: My last question is for  
24 you, Mr. Van Winkle. You said in 1989 a group of you  
25 started working on this project, which today has

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1 developed into Blue Back Square, which is mixed use,  
2 retail, residential and business.

3 What was the original plan in 1989? Was  
4 that mixed use? Was it retail? Was it just business?  
5 I'm just curious about -- I know that you talked about  
6 the density of the project, but I was wondering what

7 the concept, the development of that plan was.

8 MR. VAN WINKLE: The date would be 1999.  
9 And it coincided with our efforts to begin to look at  
10 what we were going to do with the police station. Were  
11 we going to renovate it, or would we have to build a  
12 new building? Was there a way to consolidate the  
13 police into Town Hall and look at those options and  
14 what we were going to do with the library, since they  
15 had been talking for years about change? That  
16 discussion generated a look at our neighbors, and we  
17 said to ourselves, well, let's look at our neighborhood  
18 and see what's going on in our neighborhood so we can  
19 understand how we fit into that neighborhood. When we  
20 met with private property owners, they said we would  
21 like change.

22 The goal of good economic development in  
23 centers across the nation is a mixed use. We don't  
24 want to see just stores that are open and no one lives  
25 in that area. We don't want just offices. We don't

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1 want just residence. Mixed use is the perfect thread.  
2 It's what every community is trying to create right  
3 now, and it works really well because it works  
4 together. The office people, the people that live  
5 there are always on the street, those eyes on the  
6 street that bring character to the street, bring people  
7 to the street, makes them strong. It's widely  
8 recognized across the nation today that that kind of

9 development is what communities should be striving for  
10 and not industrial sectors only and commercial sectors  
11 only and residential sectors only.

12 MS. CARPENTER: Thank you.

13 MS. MECK: Thank you. Mr. Davidoff.

14 MR. DAVIDOFF: Thank you, Madam  
15 Chairwoman. I have seven questions on this particular  
16 topic to be directed to the developer. First, will  
17 there be signs that say "Blue Back Square" once this  
18 project is completed?

19 MR. HEAPES: Do you want to do them one  
20 at a time?

21 MR. DAVIDOFF: I'm going to do them one  
22 at a time.

23 MR. HEAPES: Thank you. Will there be  
24 signs that say "Blue Back Square?" That's up to the  
25 Town. The square is owned by the Town. Public space

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1 is owned by the Town. It doesn't have to be named  
2 anything. We would highly advocate the importance of  
3 naming things, and I give you the Center as the best  
4 example of having to have a brand in the marketplace so  
5 people know where you are talking about. If I were to  
6 ask you to meet me in Goodman Green, I think -- by the  
7 flag, I think we probably have a pretty good shot of  
8 finding each other. So from our position, it's  
9 important to have a name, what that name is is up to  
10 the Town. It's owned by the Town. I don't see a sign

11 on Goodman Green, so I don't see why there would have  
12 to be a sign that said "Blue Back Square."

13 MR. DAVIDOFF: Thank you. My second  
14 question is: Could you elaborate more about the  
15 details on the marquise that are being proposed for the  
16 Center?

17 MR. HEAPES: I think our desire, and in  
18 our conversations with some operators, is not to bring  
19 in a homogenized national cinema like anywhere else.  
20 When we look at landmark cinemas in Bethesda, we want  
21 the marquise to say Bethesda -- if you've seen it, it  
22 says "Bethesda Row," it doesn't say "Landmark Theater  
23 International Proudly Presents."

24 I look at the old pictures of the  
25 central marquise, of which there is just the kind of

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1 mere bones left of it. If you look at the old pictures  
2 with the lights and the script, it's wonderful. It's  
3 romantic, it's everything in your mind you associate  
4 with going to the movies. That's essentially what we  
5 would like to try to create. By the way that would not  
6 be coded, I'm sure you are aware. That would require  
7 variance. Our goal is to bring movies, the kind of  
8 movies that we are talking about, to bring back the  
9 romance that we are talking about, not just sliding  
10 that into some empty box. That's our goal, the design  
11 process associated with that and DRAC and the Town  
12 Planner that we've asked for, but we did want to

13 identify our desire to have that kind of marquise that  
14 speaks to the romance of going to the movies.

15 MR. DAVIDOFF: Thank you. My third  
16 question talks about during the presentation, you  
17 mentioned that the loading docks and trash removal  
18 sites will be invisible to those on the streetscape,  
19 and I was wondering if you could elaborate as to how  
20 they would be marked to those who needed to use them  
21 and how they would be buffered from other users in the  
22 site?

23 MR. HEAPES: That's a very good question  
24 to talk about loading. I guess by invisible, I meant  
25 that they are within the building so that the dumpster,

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1 in our case compactors and all the accoutrements  
2 associated with particularly trash, more than loading,  
3 are within the building, so if you were to look at the  
4 firehouse on Brace Road and look at the big glass  
5 rolling doors, it would essentially look like that, but  
6 it won't be a fireengine in there. Maybe the glass is  
7 frosted. But the goal was to have them inside the  
8 building so they were very benign in terms of how they  
9 affected your experience on the sidewalk.

10 Secondly, I think something that's very  
11 important to understand about loading and trash removal  
12 using this system, is we have the ability -- and it  
13 will be a requirement of our tenants -- as to when  
14 trash is picked up and removed. You can imagine if you

15 are a residential condominium owner this would be of  
16 primary concern to you, and frankly, this is of concern  
17 to us relative to traffic and congestion and things  
18 that are going on in this part of the Center. So not  
19 unlike a mall, we can simply say you are coming to do  
20 this loading at these hours of the day, et cetera.

21 The other interesting thing is because  
22 they are centralized versus if you look at the Center  
23 today and with the smaller property owners, they are a  
24 little Higely-Pigely, we can organize not only when  
25 they come, but our merchants will be responsible for

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1 them knowing where to go. They will be marked as  
2 loading, et cetera, but that will be managed in the  
3 lease. We have the ability to really manage that.

4 Now there would be the road Fed Ex  
5 driver and the road UPS man and et cetera. I should  
6 also say that we are not anticipating any different  
7 kind of delivery trucks than what's in the Center  
8 today, other than there is less of it because we don't  
9 have as much retail. We are not expecting semi trucks  
10 to come into Town, et cetera. It's the same panel  
11 trucks, UPS, et cetera, that you would see in the  
12 Center today. We just have the ability to manage it a  
13 little better.

14 MR. DAVIDOFF: A follow-up to that  
15 question is 18-wheel trucks that are delivering to a  
16 variety of merchants make their delivery at a

17 particular time regardless of when the landlord may  
18 need to set out the parameters, and as a retailer, I  
19 see on a daily basis bikes being delivered, things that  
20 in my establishment would be on a time basis, so I'm  
21 kind of concerned as to how that 18-wheeler fits into  
22 your streetscape when it shows up here at 1:30 in the  
23 afternoon.

24 MR. HEAPES: Our merchants don't get  
25 their deliveries from 18 wheelers. I suppose it's

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1 possible that people moving into a condominium and/or  
2 into an office space on a sporadic basis would have  
3 things delivered, but we know our merchants and how  
4 they take their deliveries and particularly on the  
5 retail side, and we can manage that so that doesn't  
6 happen.

7 What happens if he rolls up at 1:30? He  
8 doesn't get to do his deliveries and is told to move  
9 on. Very clear.

10 MR. DAVIDOFF: Thank you. My next  
11 question deals with, the plan called for signage on the  
12 second floor. You were seeking some type of waiver.  
13 Would that signage be illuminated, or would it not be  
14 illuminated?

15 MR. HEAPES: There is three kinds of  
16 signage on, I'm just going to call it upper floors.  
17 One is a condition created by the grades at Isham and  
18 Memorial, which is a two-story building that

19 essentially has two first floors, Main Street first  
20 floor, Isham first floor. We have some two-story  
21 retail space. You don't have two-story retail space  
22 typically in the Center. Those retail signs we would  
23 want some illumination and some capacity for that  
24 tenant at night. It doesn't mean that the letters have  
25 to be illuminated. It just means that we need to find

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1 a way to see it at night.

2                   The other upper story signage that we  
3 are interested in is some head dressing for buildings,  
4 one of them being the Hartford Hospital building, which  
5 will be important, and they need a sign on the upper  
6 level. It's fundamental to our deal with them. We can  
7 explore how that is lit. I think probably the most  
8 important criteria, and we will talk about light  
9 pollution in a minute, is locating those signs so  
10 that --

11                   MS. MECK: Mr. Heap, I'm sorry, we need  
12 to change tape for the television so I hate to  
13 interrupt you mid-stride, but if you can just hold for  
14 one moment, please.

15                   MR. HEAPES: Sure.

16                   (Pause.)

17                   MR. HEAPES: We were talking about  
18 upper-story signs and second-story signs, and then  
19 there were some address signs at the entrance of the  
20 office building and one sign for Hartford Hospital. I

21 think we've been really careful to not ask for any  
22 signs that would have a negative impact outside the  
23 project area to a residential neighborhood. We are  
24 certainly willing to work with staff on how they are  
25 illuminated. I don't think we are proposing big, shiny

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1 letters like you see on the Marriott on the highway.  
2 That's really not the goal. It's really identity on  
3 some upper floors.

4 MR. DAVIDOFF: My next question deals  
5 with the condo units, the design illustrated of the  
6 windows, would there also be outdoor patio space for  
7 these residents, and if so, would they face Memorial  
8 Road or will they face the backside of the property?

9 MR. HEAPES: I think what we are  
10 proposing is what you might call a French balcony,  
11 which is really the ability to open French doors into  
12 your unit, have air and light and amenities of a  
13 balcony, and then there is a rail, a very thin balcony  
14 that doesn't allow you to go out on it and barbecue and  
15 put a couch and all that stuff that you would be  
16 fearful of, but allows that kind of transparency into  
17 the unit, and with both residential buildings, we do  
18 have units completely around the building, so I would  
19 expect to have those kinds of balconies on all sides  
20 including facing the Town Center area.

21 MR. DAVIDOFF: My next question deals  
22 with the parking garage. Would you elaborate as to the

23 point of entry?

24 MR. HEAPES: Yes. I think you can see  
25 behind you there on the plan, if you would, there is

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1 the North Parking Garage, the South Parking Garage.  
2 Essentially there are two points of entry and egress on  
3 each garage. There is the main point of entry, which  
4 is up New Street right here. You go into the garage  
5 and be able to go up the ramp and go up. Because of  
6 the grade issue, interestingly enough, the grade behind  
7 the garage on Isham is actually one level below. So  
8 you can actually enter and exit on Isham here one level  
9 below and have access over to parcel B and be able to  
10 come up.

11 A couple of important things. We didn't  
12 want the entrances near Raymond Road, so that it didn't  
13 interfere with the stacking required, kind of just a  
14 mess there. We really wanted the entrances easily  
15 accessible from Isham so as you came to the area and  
16 drove down Isham and were wondering where the parking  
17 was, unlike the Town Center garage, it would be right  
18 where you want to be. So you come down, take a left,  
19 go right into the garage, go around the corner and go  
20 right into the garage.

21 The South Garage has one primary entry  
22 point which is at the end of Isham Road. You have the  
23 ability to come down, turn around if your intention is  
24 not to park and leave, or go into the garage. The

25 secondary entrance is right here. For those off-peak

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1 times when we want some interaction between the surface  
2 parking lot and that parking, either for overflow on  
3 Thursday night or nights and weekends when you want to  
4 generate some revenue out of this parking. It's not  
5 required for that garage to move. So there are four  
6 entrances, one off Isham both ways and one back  
7 entrance, if you will.

8 MR. DAVIDOFF: My last question, through  
9 Madam Chairwoman, is discussion of the 40,000 square  
10 foot anchor tenant. It calls for a retail  
11 establishment that would meet that. There is not a lot  
12 of retailers that could occupy space like that, and I  
13 was wondering if the developer had a backup plan, if  
14 they were going to have a future subdivision of that  
15 space if it didn't pan out, if the economy didn't work  
16 in the retail environment. I'd like to know that going  
17 into this. One can just look at the Berlin Turnpike  
18 where there is huge box stores that just sit there  
19 vacant, and either they get torn down or redesigned or  
20 things like that, and we saw that with the reuse of the  
21 Sage Allen property, and I'd like to know what the  
22 developer's backup plan is if the initial one doesn't  
23 pan out.

24 MR. HEAPES: I can't find the specific  
25 reference to 40,000 square feet, but we will find it so

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1 I can be specific in my answer, but it's important to  
2 kind of put things in context about sizes. The Sage  
3 Allen is two-and-a-half stories, a little bit of a  
4 basement, but basically two stories. That store was  
5 about 25,000 square feet. So the things you'll see on  
6 Corbins Corner, et cetera, the Target is over 150,000  
7 square feet, food store is probably 80 to 100,000  
8 square feet. It would be a Staples, Whole Foods, any  
9 of those fit in that 40,000 square feet. We don't  
10 really anticipate having a 40,000 square foot large  
11 tenant. We anticipate having one or two, possibly  
12 three, tenants that are larger, like the Sage Allen is  
13 in the 20 to 30,000 square foot category.

14 Now what is really important here, there  
15 is no interior common mall-type space. All of the  
16 retail space is accessible from the street and walk,  
17 all of it, including the cinema, could be broken down  
18 into small stores, and the space is really  
19 fundamentally not much different than the street space.

20 We think the larger tenants are really  
21 important because of what they add to the mix of  
22 merchandise in the Center. If you have the  
23 opportunity, if there is going to be one store that  
24 comes to Connecticut, it's not going anywhere else,  
25 we'd like for that store to be here, not in Avon or

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1 someplace else.

2                   So we are looking for the opportunity to  
3 have those larger tenants, and our intention is tenants  
4 that are anywhere from 20,000 square feet to say 40,000  
5 at the outside. They would not be the candidates that  
6 you see out in Corbins Corner, Staples. That's the  
7 idea. We are not talking to any 40,000 square foot  
8 tenants now.

9                   MR. DAVIDOFF: Thank you.

10                  MS. MECK: Mr. Spada.

11                  MR. SPADA: Thank you, Madam Chair. I  
12 have less than half the questions of my neighbor, but  
13 they may require longer answers. I want to first thank  
14 the applicant and the Town for phenomenal amounts of  
15 detail, so much detail that I'm referring to parts of  
16 my house as Building C, Lot D. I also want to thank  
17 the two chairs for putting up with us.

18                  I have three questions. I think they  
19 are fairly simple. They are directed to the Town side  
20 so to my left. The first would be: Going back to the  
21 very beginning of this, this is at least, in my  
22 experience, as complex a deal as you are going to get.  
23 The retail and the residential stuff I'm okay with, but  
24 building a parking garage and making street  
25 improvements, I know we have standards around putting

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1 things out to bid, you know, following certain protocol  
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2 in terms of lowest bid, particularly around  
3 construction items, so we are going to own this garage,  
4 we are going to have somebody build it for us. Is  
5 there a bid process? Was there a bid process? Will  
6 there be a bid process on any or all of this?

7 MR. ALAIR: With the exception of the  
8 South Garage, which is being built on land which we  
9 currently own, we are acquiring a structure. We are  
10 buying structures from the developer as part of a land  
11 transaction. There was no bid process for the simple  
12 reason that no one else could engage in the  
13 transaction. No one else owns the property that they  
14 can sell to us. There is simply no one else to do it.  
15 The one exception possibly is the South Garage, and the  
16 South Garage is being constructed as part of this same  
17 transaction. Part of the Master Agreement in front of  
18 you specifically says that to the extent that that is  
19 viewed as a public works project, it's our way for that  
20 just to cover that issue, but there is in fact, in the  
21 purchasing jargon, this would be what would be known as  
22 a sole source of supply project. There is simply no  
23 other source from which we can produce the property.

24 MR. HEAPES: Can I add to that? Because  
25 it's important to understand our process, the Town

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1 isn't purchasing anything from us that doesn't meet the  
2 Town's spec. It's not our spec, it's whatever their  
3 kind of standard and spec is, and although we are

4 working with a construction manager, everything that we  
5 build will be bid. Even though it's a sole source on  
6 the ownership financing side, everything that we build  
7 will be through the bid process.

8 MR. SPADA: Thank you. Second question,  
9 kind of a follow-up to Mr. DeVaughn's, slightly  
10 different, but same jargon, in terms of the control  
11 mechanism, what types of businesses go in there, will  
12 this district be held to the same standards in terms of  
13 the zoning process? And I'm concerned because times  
14 change. I know Mr. Heapes talked about 100 years, but  
15 25 years ago there was a disco near the central theater  
16 which I attended, but I'm concerned about, you know, I  
17 don't know what the threshold restaurant is. Can an  
18 OTB go in there? Can a Hooters go in there? I don't  
19 know, and I don't know who controls that piece of it.

20 MR. ALAIR: At the risk of dredging up  
21 such nightmare scenarios as Mr. Sparkle, the simple  
22 truth is that the underlying uses permitted in the zone  
23 on this side of the Center will be the same as those  
24 permitted on the other side of the Center. There will  
25 be no difference. Today if one of the property owners

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1 in the Center chose to rent what is now CVS to the  
2 Hooters organization, they could do that. You can  
3 imagine you would all be very upset, we would all be  
4 very upset, but legally we cannot preclude that. A  
5 restaurant is a restaurant.

6                   The same could be true on this side. We  
7 would assume, and I think Richard will probably jump up  
8 and down and scream, heck yes, we would assume that it  
9 would be in the developer's best interest to have uses  
10 on this side of the project which are oriented towards  
11 the type of activity it wants to see.

12                   Now, the one area where I would add to  
13 that is the, what we call the pad lease, the tenant  
14 space which the Town is leasing for 50 years on the  
15 north side of the square itself. We have put into the  
16 Master Agreement a provision and into the pad lease a  
17 provision which gives us some degree of control. I  
18 wouldn't call it a veto right, but some degree of  
19 control over tenants who are allowed to go in there to  
20 give us the ability to establish that they are a user  
21 and a use which is consistent and appropriate with both  
22 the public square that they will be facing onto and the  
23 fact that there is a library and specifically a  
24 children's library immediately adjacent to them. So we  
25 built that into that lease as an added caution, if you

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1 will, for that specific setting.

2                   MR. SPADA: Thank you. I just have a  
3 quick follow-up and last question. The quick follow-up  
4 is just a yes or no. On the same topic, but things  
5 like sound threshold, hours of operation, same rules of  
6 engagement there that exist throughout the Town?

7                   MR. ALAIR: Yes.

8 MR. SPADA: Thank you. The last  
9 question I have, I guess this would be for Town Manager  
10 Feldman or anybody else, and it may be in one of these  
11 presentations so I apologize, but when you are breaking  
12 out the financial piece, I'd be interested to see what  
13 you anticipate for impact on Town services in the way  
14 of additional police, additional fire, public works,  
15 education, and if that's been factored in, just let me  
16 know, and if it hasn't been factored in, I think that  
17 would be an interesting number.

18 MR. FELDMAN: Madam Chair, Mr. Spada,  
19 it's a good question. The quick answer is yes, we  
20 have, but I'll hold further elaboration till we get  
21 into that area.

22 MS. MECK: Yes, please.

23 MR. SPADA: I'm all set.

24 MS. MECK: We are going to try to fit a  
25 couple of more questions in before we take a break so

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1 we will go to Mr. Verrengia.

2 MR. VERRENGIA: I'd like to start off by  
3 thanking the members in this meeting that are here  
4 tonight and also our viewers. I think what makes West  
5 Hartford a real special community is not the brick and  
6 mortars of the development, it's the people who live  
7 here, and I just want to thank you for taking time and  
8 being here.

9 Mr. Davidoff had a very simple question,  
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10 in fact, it was one of my first questions, but yet it's  
11 a really important question because it can define  
12 whether or not we have two centers, and I understand  
13 Mr. Feldman's opening comments on how important it is  
14 that we have one Center, and the question that he asked  
15 is: What are the signs going to say? What are the  
16 directional signs going to say, or any signage that are  
17 in the plans presently?

18 MR. FELDMAN: Madam Chair, I agree that  
19 that is an important issue, and maybe we should take  
20 just a moment or two longer to think through what that  
21 really means. I feel so strongly that we have the  
22 Center. Blue Back Square originally came to be known  
23 as a concept as a proposed investment. Blue Back  
24 Square to me now means just one spot in West Hartford  
25 Center, the same way Goodman Green is a spot in the

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1 Center. So perhaps we may decide at some appropriate  
2 time at this physical one spot to call Blue Back  
3 Square, but we don't have "West Hartford Center," a  
4 sign, and we won't have a sign that says "over here is  
5 Blue Back Square." There is no longer a concept called  
6 "Blue Back Square," at least not from my perspective,  
7 and I perhaps assume, Mr. Verrengia, from your  
8 perspective as well. So there is no sign that says  
9 with an arrow pointing "Blue Back Square," no, not in  
10 my understanding of what the future looks like.

11 MR. VERRENGIA: I have a question for  
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12 Mr. Heapes. Earlier in your presentation when you were  
13 talking about attracting businesses, retail, you had  
14 indicated how important that Blue Back Square had an  
15 identity to attract those businesses, and I don't know  
16 if it's in conflict with what you said tonight, that  
17 it's not important to have Blue Back Square signage. I  
18 don't know if that's just a generous statement. I  
19 guess my question is: How do you plan on marketing the  
20 retail, commercial, residential part of it if it's not  
21 going to be Blue Back Square?

22 MR. HEAPES: That's a pretty  
23 sophisticated question. We have two marketing efforts.  
24 We have the marketing effort to attract tenants to  
25 someplace before Blue Back Square exists. It's in the

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1 construction. You know, it's in a brochure someplace,  
2 and in that sense, we need to organize that it actually  
3 is a place that's in the Center that is a certain  
4 place, that has an address, et cetera. That's to get  
5 the tenants here before it even exists. Once it's here  
6 and the tenants are here, we have had numerous meetings  
7 with the merchants and the Merchants Association. In  
8 fact, we have a process that we proposed to set up and  
9 pending the results of this effort to jointly develop a  
10 marketing plan, to jointly develop the brand, identity,  
11 built on experience of the merchants today and our  
12 experience in how you can ramp up the visibility in the  
13 marketplace, and that's through event planning, joint

14 merchandising, branding, you name it, and we've made a  
15 commitment to the Merchants Association to do that  
16 together. This is not the developer cooking up a  
17 merchandising plan and saying, you guys want to do it  
18 or not? It's we are going to join the association.  
19 Our dues will go there the same as everybody else's and  
20 together we will do it. It's a really powerful  
21 combination, because we will bring in national people  
22 who know how to spend those merchandising dollars, get  
23 the most bang for the buck in the marketplace, combined  
24 with merchants who have been on the streets and the  
25 sidewalks trying to do events who know what worked, who

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1 know what the cows did, who know how celebrates work  
2 and we have management muscle. We have infrastructure  
3 to do that. They have the on-the-street knowledge. So  
4 this is the right way to do it, and that's a proposal  
5 that we've been talking with them on how to do. We  
6 will establish that over the course of it getting  
7 built.

8                   At the opening of Blue Back Square,  
9 there won't be such a thing. It will be the opening  
10 grand celebration in the Center, a new neighborhood.  
11 I'm hoping that it's tagged with a wonderful Veteran's  
12 Day opening for the American Legion, some event with  
13 the Noah Webster House related to school kids. It's  
14 those kinds of things that will happen. Some of them  
15 will happen in this space, whatever it's called. So

16 our intention is to be part of the Merchants  
17 Association and merchandise and market the Center, come  
18 to the Center.

19 Now, that's not to say we don't need  
20 signs that help both sides point to one another. So  
21 that people that come to Blue Back Square for whatever  
22 reason know that, you know, Pearlers is up there, and  
23 Lux, Bond and Green, and when you are up on the other  
24 side of the Center that you know there is more things  
25 to do, there will be signs. They won't say "to Blue

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1 Back Square." Maybe they will say to XYZ from up there  
2 and a kiosk or something in the square that points up  
3 to the other side of the Center.

4 We need to do that Centerwide, and I've  
5 told the merchants that we will explore with them what  
6 do you put where and how do you organize that, how do  
7 you make sense out of it? The only way I know how to  
8 do this is to work with the merchants who know the  
9 Center because they are there, and they've been there  
10 for a long time. That's what we are committed to do.

11 MR. VAN WINKLE: Madam Chairwoman, if I  
12 can add to this, there is no sign in this application  
13 that says "Blue Back Square." There is no sign. If  
14 you choose to put a sign on the plaza that's behind the  
15 library, that's your property, you can name it what you  
16 wish. If we decide to have way finding, which is a  
17 very common thing in centers, give you directional

18 signs that say go this way for the Noah Webster, we can  
19 put way signing. If you choose to put in Blue Back  
20 Square, we can put in Blue Back Square. These are in  
21 your hands, but there are no signs here in this  
22 application that use the word "Blue Back Square" for  
23 the purpose of signage of anything.

24 MR. VERRENGIA: Thank you for that  
25 response. One last question. I think we heard this

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1 evening from many of us at this table with respect to  
2 concern regarding the density of the project. I have  
3 listened to many people in the community, and I would  
4 say probably eight out of ten people, even the people  
5 who are for the project have concern with respect to  
6 the size and density.

7 My question through you, Mr. Feldman,  
8 would be, I understand we did an economic analysis for  
9 the Town's interest. Was there any type of analysis,  
10 particularly any outside analysis by a consultant, with  
11 respect to the other side and their situation and  
12 really are we really at the breaking point with respect  
13 to the size of this project?

14 MR. FELDMAN: Madam Chair, I guess  
15 you'll have to help me, Mr. Verrengia, understand your  
16 question. I want to be -- I do want to be responsive,  
17 but I'm not sure I understand.

18 MR. VERRENGIA: The developer has  
19 indicated that he needs all the pieces to this project.

20 Have we done an analysis of the developer's side, and  
21 what their situation will be, in the sense that are we  
22 at the breaking point as far as the size? One of the  
23 other Councilors had mentioned about reducing the size  
24 of the project, and the developer responded that that's  
25 not possible.

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1 MR. FELDMAN: Madam Chair,  
2 Mr. Verrengia, let us try to answer what I believe is  
3 your question. If we don't, stop us in mid-sentence.  
4 I'm going to ask Ron to pick up the thought. Before he  
5 begins I just want to remind everybody that we did hire  
6 an independent underwriter to look at the economics of  
7 the private investment to assure ourselves that they  
8 were not somehow unfairly being enriched, that there  
9 was not so much money being made here. We wanted to  
10 assure ourselves so we could assure you and the public.  
11 I guess with that as a beginning statement, I'll let  
12 Ron continue.

13 MR. VAN WINKLE: If your question is  
14 about what would the impact on existing West Hartford  
15 Center be, the economics of the existing Center?

16 MR. VERRENGIA: No. I was really  
17 looking at --

18 MR. FELDMAN: You are looking for the  
19 economics of the investment?

20 MR. VERRENGIA: Of the investment,  
21 correct.

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22 MR. FELDMAN: In other words, had they  
23 built enough to essentially make a fair return, or are  
24 they overbuilding so that their return is going to be  
25 too much?

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1 MR. VERRENGIA: Correct.

2 MR. FELDMAN: That's the way I would  
3 understand your question.

4 MR. VAN WINKLE: We did a careful study  
5 on that and had an excellent gentleman, a retired  
6 underwriter from CIGNA who helped us do an incredibly  
7 detailed analysis. I submitted yesterday for the  
8 record a document from him, and it was his conclusion  
9 that the returns for this project are within the  
10 normal, the low end of the normal, but within the  
11 normal. And that was the goal that we hired him.

12 He sat with the developer, went through  
13 all their numbers, and he did this his whole career,  
14 that's all he did in his career, so he couldn't be  
15 fooled. He wasn't being shown things that he didn't  
16 understand. And his conclusion was that it was a  
17 doable project, but it is at the low end of the numbers  
18 that one might expect.

19 MR. VERRENGIA: Okay, thank you.

20 MS. MECK: At this point I'm going to  
21 ask that we have the three remaining people, not  
22 counting the mayor and myself, to ask questions,  
23 assuming that the three of you do have questions, I'm

24 going to ask if you have any questions.

25 MS. McCLAY: I have questions.

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1 MS. MECK: I'm trying to figure out if  
2 she should move through the questions now or take a  
3 break.

4 Let's go with the assumption that we  
5 have some quick questions, and we will try to get  
6 through this side of the table, not mine and  
7 Mr. Harris, and then try to take a break.

8 MS. McCLAY: Thank you, Madam Chair.  
9 First of all, I also would like to thank both our Town  
10 staff and the developer on the very thorough  
11 presentations they gave, which really answered most of  
12 our questions, and most of the rest of them, I know we  
13 went down the table tonight.

14 I have just a couple of things I'd like  
15 to touch on that was actually mentioned in passing, one  
16 of them was the lighting. You have talked about it  
17 being a very nonpolluting type of lighting. I would  
18 like a little more detail on that, especially the  
19 lighting around the garage that's going to be near Burr  
20 Street and Raymond Road and even the medical building  
21 and the retail that are going to be facing the road  
22 that has the residential people on it.

23 MR. HEAPES: I know that's a topic for  
24 the future, but let me just summarize it as, we've been  
25 very sensitive to it. I would say there are two areas

1 of lighting, and this may be not that articulate, those  
2 areas facing on Memorial and Isham, of which the  
3 primary affected person is the other side of the  
4 street, ourselves, and those areas facing our other  
5 project, which would certainly include the parking  
6 garages, specifically and importantly the parking  
7 garage to the south.

8                   There are a number of lighting issues.  
9 First and foremost, remember I have people living  
10 upstairs and working -- really important is living  
11 upstairs, because that's when the lights are on and  
12 we've worked with the staff to assure that we are going  
13 to use the Town's lights as you have them now with two  
14 modifications. On the street we want to use  
15 single-headed fixtures versus the double-headed  
16 fixtures that you have. We will use those at the  
17 corners, et cetera, to reduce the light pollution from  
18 those fixtures to the upper floors, and the Town staff  
19 has allowed us to consider how, within that light  
20 fixture, to screen and minimize the impact of that  
21 light on the upper floors.

22                   More importantly, on particularly the  
23 south, you have three kinds of lighting. You have the  
24 lighting from the Town's parking lot, which is  
25 currently there in those standards. We are proposing

1 to use the same lights, possibly shielding them to  
2 minimize impact. We want the garages very well-lit and  
3 yet minimizing their impact on the neighbors. So we  
4 are screening the exterior of the garages, the plant  
5 material, for other visual reasons, and we will shield  
6 those lights inside the garage so you won't see the  
7 light source from the neighborhood.

8                   Remember when I showed you that diagram  
9 from Burr, you can't see the garage from the street  
10 level there, but nonetheless, we are sensitive to light  
11 spillage on the top of that structure. You will not  
12 see big, tall, 20-foot parking lot level lights. We  
13 are using low level lights and plan on managing that so  
14 that they can go off as early as possible. We are  
15 going to manage the lighting of the storefronts  
16 collectively, so whether or not the stores are open,  
17 the sidewalks are safely lit to a certain time and then  
18 turned off, which will help supplement the feeling of  
19 safety and security.

20                   I guess at the end of the day,  
21 residences will have lights on, I hope. At night we  
22 can somewhat control the light in the office buildings  
23 through the exterior window selection, window covering,  
24 but that will be pretty similar to an office building.  
25 The garages, the surface parking, the street lighting

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1 are all being specially designed to control the light  
2 spillage. It's really important when I have people  
3 living upstairs. They can't live in an environment  
4 that has all that light pollution. I don't know if  
5 that answers your question, but it has been thought out  
6 in almost every layer to minimize the impact while  
7 keeping the district safe and well lit.

8 MS. MECK: Ms. McClay, I will point out  
9 although there is a valid design angle to that  
10 question, that we will a little later on in the agenda  
11 go through things like light pollution, environmental  
12 pollution -- under the environmental pollution topic.

13 MS. McCLAY: I wasn't sure which.

14 MS. MECK: And the noise pollution, and  
15 in that respect really address our questions about how  
16 this might affect the residents that are in the  
17 development and in that area, the existing residents.  
18 So whether it's traffic, light or noise, I'm sure that  
19 we have pretty substantive questions on those subjects.

20 MS. McCLAY: Okay. Then my one other  
21 one on design is: Mr. Hughes last night from DRAC  
22 actually brought up a suggestion that he thought --  
23 that they thought, DRAC thought, that the medical  
24 building comes to a low or at least part of it, and  
25 that part of it should be raised to a fifth floor. I

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1 wasn't exactly sure how that should be done because he

2 thought the east end should still be lower. I was  
3 wondering what you thought about that, what the real  
4 reasons for that, but he thought because of the looks  
5 of it, that it should be that way, and I would like you  
6 to address that.

7 MR. HEAPES: If you look back on the  
8 diagram there, before the citizens meetings, that  
9 building was a five-story building, of which this  
10 little area here, if you would draw a line at the face  
11 of the police station, that area there was two stories  
12 tall and the rest was four stories on top of that. So  
13 the building had a little step-in. So as you looked  
14 down Raymond Road, you would see this shorter size and  
15 then it would step up behind the police station.

16 In responding to the neighbors and  
17 citizens, and really thinking about the impact of  
18 massing, neither one of those schemes has much  
19 influence on the experience at the sidewalk. You only  
20 experience about the first 30 feet anyway. They will  
21 seem essentially the same. I think their feeling was  
22 that that step-back, particularly now that there is the  
23 park here, was relevant. I've changed my mind  
24 completely from that opinion. I wasn't driving that  
25 conversation.

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1 My opinion was this is a building that's  
2 so visible from the park, from far away, by the way,  
3 that a concern of keeping that at the height level of

4 Town Hall, the Town office building, so it wasn't the  
5 one building that was taller than everything else and  
6 competed with the steeple and the Board of Ed combined  
7 with a general citizen discomfort with height  
8 outweighed any architectural changes. If you wanted to  
9 demand on us to add a floor on that building, we would  
10 be happy to consider it.

11 MS. McCLAY: No, I just wanted it  
12 explained to everybody.

13 MR. HEAPES: Does that explain it for  
14 you?

15 MS. McCLAY: Yes, I understand it much  
16 better.

17 MS. MECK: Thank you, Ms. McClay. I  
18 believe, Mr. Daniels, you indicated that you have a few  
19 questions.

20 MR. DANIELS: I have a few. I, too,  
21 agree that the name issue is very important and  
22 probably would require significant amount of time to  
23 think about. It's just worth noting that it's already  
24 out there. This newsletter goes to people, the  
25 headline says Blue Back Square. At the bottom there is

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1 a website that says Blue Back Square.com. I don't know  
2 what happens when you go to Mapquest, but I'll bet,  
3 bet, if we don't do something about it, it will say  
4 Blue Back Square's directions. So it's something, if  
5 we think it's important that we may want to think about

6 being very precise about it.

7 I have a couple of questions. There has  
8 been a lot of discussion about the changes that are  
9 going to happen, and change is just constant, and it's  
10 going to happen anyhow, and there has been a lot of  
11 discussion of the impact and density of the proposal.  
12 I want to ask a question about what happens if you  
13 don't have it approved. I think the proposal is about  
14 4.6 acres or a little less than a quarter of this  
15 property is in private hands.

16 My first question, and I'm not sure to  
17 who through the chair, is: What control do you  
18 presently have of those seven parcels in that 4.6  
19 acres?

20 MS. MECK: I think there was actually  
21 two questions, Mr. Daniels, one for Town staff and one  
22 for Mr. Heapes. I think the question for Mr. Heapes  
23 is: What happens if this isn't approved in this  
24 version on their part? The other question I think is a  
25 question through you, Mr. Feldman, for the Town

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1 Planner, and that's if nothing happens here, what can  
2 be built by right on this spot? And I think that it  
3 would be a good reminder for us both, so perhaps we can  
4 start with the Town on that question, Mr. Daniels, and  
5 then refer to Mr. Heapes.

6 MS. LIMSON: Madam Chair, through you,  
7 Mila Limson, Town Planner. I believe I understand the

8 question to be that currently with the underlying zone  
9 what in fact can be done with the parcels that are  
10 there? The parcels that are there are currently zoned  
11 commercial, a CBDH zone, which means that somebody, any  
12 developer, any interested party, can in fact submit a  
13 site plan to our office for any use that's permitted in  
14 that zone. That site plan, if it meets all of those  
15 regulations in fact would be approved through  
16 administrative approval. That includes, again, any use  
17 in that zone.

18 MS. MECK: Ms. Limson, actually if I can  
19 just add to that, can you give us examples for that  
20 zone?

21 MS. LIMSON: Madam Chair, through you,  
22 yes, the permitted uses in that zone, they go anywhere  
23 from retail use, office use, theater use, same type of  
24 uses that we are talking about, but again, those uses  
25 have to in fact comply with parking requirements on the

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1 site and all of the other regulation standards.

2 MR. DANIELS: The other part of the  
3 question was to the applicant.

4 MR. HEAPES: I don't really like to  
5 answer theoretical questions. Let me just give you  
6 some facts, and you can draw your own conclusions. As  
7 of this hearing, we've spent approximately close to 7  
8 million dollars in soft costs, studies, the things that  
9 are required to bring this proposal to you. We are 100

10 percent completely committed to building this new  
11 neighborhood in this location. We haven't studied exit  
12 plans. We don't have an alternative plan that we are  
13 looking at, but I can tell you what the market says.  
14 The market says that that site by itself, without a  
15 public space, is not a site for a residential  
16 condominium project as a stand-alone. Hartford  
17 Hospital will tell you, I don't need to tell you, that  
18 they weren't prepared to come to that site by  
19 themselves, that their attraction is to be part of the  
20 Center, and of course the Board of Ed connection, that  
21 would not be the case.

22                   The highest and most likely use there  
23 would be retail. It will not be small shops, and I  
24 think it's safe to say that under the assumption that  
25 this was not approved, the strategy would be an

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1 as-of-right strategy. I can't imagine that anyone,  
2 yourselves included, would want to go through another  
3 process of reconsidering. But I think the story is  
4 Blue Back Square Development doesn't go away. We have  
5 a lot invested in it. We want to be in this Town, and  
6 we have studied as-of-right simple strategies and seen  
7 what the market is. We have not done that, we are not  
8 interested in doing that. This is what we want to do  
9 and this is what we are committed to doing.

10                   MR. DANIELS: As a follow-up, so as part  
11 of that 7 million, do you own or control all of those 7

12 parcel s?

13 MR. HEAPES: We have the right to all  
14 those parcels with stipulations. I don't get access to  
15 the American Legion without the American Legion having  
16 a new facility. But that decision is ours through our  
17 existing contracts.

18 MR. DANIELS: My second question has to  
19 do with the very clear picture you provided of how you  
20 would maintain a positive environment and control over  
21 the entire site and your relationship to the other part  
22 of the Center.

23 My question is, and maybe this is in the  
24 material and I just didn't see it, when you are  
25 finished in the development phase, who actually runs

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1 it? What entity runs Blue Back Square? Is it you, is  
2 it Street-Works?

3 MR. HEAPES: Just so you understand,  
4 Blue Back Square Development is a partnership of three:  
5 JDA, the local; Street-works, really the development  
6 manager; and Ronus, Inc., the financial partner. We  
7 are fully intending to be long-term owners, that is  
8 Ronus' profile, that is our profile, and we will manage  
9 the project ourselves.

10 MR. DANIELS: "We" is the triumvirate?

11 MR. HEAPES: "We" is Blue Back Square,  
12 LLC.

13 MR. DANIELS: I am trying to understand

14 where you fit in in terms of the management.

15 MR. HEAPES: Me personally?

16 MR. DANIELS: Yes.

17 MR. HEAPES: You would not want me  
18 managing the project, so that is the good news. I am a  
19 partner in Blue Back Square Development, and my  
20 intention is to own this many, many years and be  
21 involved with it at the partnership level. We will  
22 hire local people to manage it. I guess really the  
23 question is: When there is a problem and someone at a  
24 condominium has to call somebody, our expectation is  
25 that they will call us, not the Town. That will be our

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1 experience.

2 MR. DANIELS: We can expect a successor  
3 group of individuals under the current triumvirate of  
4 ownership?

5 MR. HEAPES: Yes. Within that  
6 partnership, Ed Ronus, for example, there are active  
7 retail managers, office managers, residential managers,  
8 et cetera, and that partnership will be the same  
9 ownership now.

10 Another reason I say you wouldn't want  
11 me doing it, I really don't do very good with my  
12 checkbook, never mind anything else, but this  
13 partnership that is developing it is the owner of the  
14 property. We are not getting a fee and going away.  
15 You are talking with the owners of the property long

16 term. That is me, and my partner sitting here.

17 MR. DANIELS: That's what I was trying  
18 to elicit, that clarity.

19 MR. HEAPES: Absolutely. And I should  
20 say, which is important, this is private investment  
21 money. This isn't institutional so we will use  
22 institutional money to fund construction, et cetera,  
23 but all of the money we are talking about is private  
24 investment capital, run and managed by private  
25 individuals, not some big corporate structure or

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1 anything else.

2 MR. DANIELS: On the issue of mixed use,  
3 of late the zoning commission has been faced with --

4 MS. MECK: Mr. Daniels, if I can just  
5 stop and interrupt you for one second. We are going to  
6 talk about mixed use in the second subset after our  
7 break, so is this a question that relates directly to  
8 design and density, or can it wait for the mixed-use  
9 question?

10 MR. DANIELS: It really followed his  
11 piece, but I'll say what it is and you tell me whether  
12 it's related. We've been dealing with outdoor dining  
13 lately, and you've been talking about the environment  
14 in terms of the density and mix and how people relate  
15 to that. Is that for now or later?

16 MS. MECK: I'd like to do that later  
17 when we talk about mixed use and the specifics that are

18 proposed.

19 MR. DANIELS: I had one more question  
20 and it had to do with the library. Could you give me a  
21 sense of how more intense the use will be with the  
22 expansion? I think it's 50,000 square feet.

23 MR. VAN WINKLE: Ron Van Winkle. More  
24 intense. It's going to be our public library, our main  
25 library. If we draw more people, they will take out

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1 more books, more children to come to discussions that  
2 would be --

3 MR. DANIELS: I'm not being negative, I  
4 just want to know how much more.

5 MR. VAN WINKLE: The building itself is  
6 12,000 square feet larger. It is going to have more  
7 space, more friendly space, but there is not a new  
8 100,000 square -- 100,000 books going in, not specific  
9 new programs. I would assume that the library will be  
10 more efficient, better and attractive and would draw  
11 some more people, but I wouldn't use the word  
12 "intensity" here.

13 You remember we identified a library  
14 parking demand of about 69 spaces. That's probably  
15 what we'd be looking at on a good day. When they are  
16 busy, they will have 69 cars coming to that library.  
17 Most of the day, as you know it, the mornings are more  
18 children library time. The afternoon is a little  
19 older. The evening is perhaps teenagers. So active

20 use, but I wouldn't describe it as intense.

21 MS. MECK: Thank you. At this point  
22 what we are going to do is we are going to take a short  
23 break. When we come back, we are going to do two  
24 things, one is our esteemed mayor gets to ask his  
25 questions and play cleanup, and I know that the

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1 questions on this issue are going to take us into our  
2 second area which is the proposed mixed uses.

3 I do want to say that these are the two  
4 largest items that are sort of all-encompassing on this  
5 agenda, that's why we started with them. I certainly  
6 do not expect every single item on this agenda to take  
7 as much time, but I do want you to know that we are  
8 trying to do the two larger pieces up-front, and we  
9 will continue on in that order. We will break for ten  
10 minutes.

11 (Recess taken from 8:49 p.m. until 9:16 p.m.)

12 MS. MECK: I'd like to reconvene this  
13 public hearing, please. Will everybody please take  
14 their seats. At this point, I would like to call upon  
15 Mr. Harris, who has some questions on the number 1 item  
16 on our agenda, which is size, density and design.  
17 Mr. Harris.

18 MAYOR HARRIS: Thank you, Madam Chair.  
19 When we began the discussion on density awhile back,  
20 one of the things that you said, Mr. Heapes, was that  
21 density was related to success, or the lack thereof. I

22 want to kind of go into that a little bit, in  
23 particular with the idea of how land acquisition costs  
24 affect density in these types of developments.

25 Now, when you think of success, I guess

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1 there is two layers of that: One, the developer, the  
2 profit motive of a developer and that piece of success  
3 from your investors, and two, the community, what the  
4 community is left with. I think, first of all, these  
5 things are not mutually exclusive, obviously, but we  
6 will start with the developer and treat him separately.

7 Now, this is in essence -- although  
8 people have come to all of us at times and say how  
9 could the Town do this -- this is in essence a  
10 private land transaction, is that correct?

11 MR. HEAPES: That is correct.

12 MAYOR HARRIS: And the primary owner,  
13 the largest piece of property here, is the Crowley  
14 site, Mrs. Grody?

15 MR. HEAPES: That's correct.

16 MAYOR HARRIS: And it's my understanding  
17 that historically, and perhaps Mr. Feldman or somebody  
18 from the Town could give us some definition on this,  
19 but that Street-Works, what I'll say is Blue Back  
20 Square right now, was not the first entity or person,  
21 developer that tried to purchase this from Mrs. Grody;  
22 is that correct?

23 MR. FELDMAN: Mr. Mayor, Madam Chair, I

24 don' t know, unless Ron knows.

25 MR. VAN WINKLE: No, they were not the

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1 first. Over 30 developers were contacted, had  
2 discussions with the property owner before the  
3 agreement was struck with Blue Back Square.

4 MAYOR HARRIS: Thank you, Mr. Van  
5 Winkle. Through you, Madam Chair, do you have any  
6 knowledge based on your negotiations, Mr. Heapes, why  
7 nobody else was successful? I mean, I know you weren' t  
8 in the room, but from your negotiations, do you have  
9 any idea about some of the issues with this site?

10 MR. HEAPES: There is probably three  
11 things: Number 1, I think we had some advantages over  
12 developers because of the way we look at property and  
13 at towns, we are so familiar with towns. We didn' t  
14 just look at the property and say, jeez, there sits a  
15 piece of property, I wonder what I would put on that  
16 property. We can' t help, when we see property, but see  
17 how it relates to other things.

18 Secondly, because we could see that, I  
19 think we saw a way to pay Mrs. Grody what she was  
20 expecting in the marketplace. There is no mystery why  
21 it wasn' t sold before. I don' t think she was offered  
22 enough money. I would combine that, though, and I' m  
23 quite serious about this, with a vision that she felt  
24 she could be proud of and wanted to be a part of. Now,  
25 what' s interesting when you talk about how is it that

1 we could see a way out that the other developers  
2 couldn't. Realize that there are costs associated with  
3 this property that are fixed. I don't care who  
4 develops it or what you put on it. And we will talk  
5 about it later, it is not an environmentally clean  
6 piece of property, and those contaminants are there,  
7 someone pays for them. It doesn't matter who, but that  
8 comes out of the cost of the deal, and the development  
9 that goes on there has to find a way to pay for that no  
10 matter what the price of the land.

11                   There are other issues relative to  
12 infrastructure, so the traditional developer, looking  
13 at a single use, probably couldn't see the way out.  
14 You are not going to stack retail eight levels high  
15 even though you have that height limit, couldn't really  
16 see the financial way out. I think that's the power of  
17 mixed use as an approach.

18                   MAYOR HARRIS: When you say, through you  
19 Madam Chair, that they couldn't find a way out, they  
20 couldn't figure out a way to generate enough income off  
21 that property to pay for the acquisition and those  
22 other fixed costs?

23                   MR. HEAPES: Correct. And I think, as  
24 Ron mentioned the other night, their strategy was to  
25 say, jeez, the Town will help us. We will take some of

1 the tax, we will get a little help on the tax. All of  
2 that compensates towards the revenue. That was their  
3 way to figure out how to do it, we will reduce our  
4 costs by partnering with the Town, by having them  
5 reduce our taxes or condemn some more property or  
6 whatever else. But at the end of the day, those are  
7 fixed costs no matter what development you put on  
8 there. And it probably wasn't worth it.

9                   MAYOR HARRIS: Thank you. Through you,  
10 Madam Chair, now you take the cost of that land, which  
11 as the experience with the 30 developers shows was not  
12 a cheap parcel, most likely. I mean, if it was, then  
13 probably someone else would have come to a deal first.

14                   MR. HEAPES: Correct.

15                   MAYOR HARRIS: There are other pieces of  
16 the puzzle here, the American Legion, the houses, the  
17 condos, the apartments down on the corner of Memorial  
18 and Raymond. What effect did the price of that initial  
19 parcel have on the pedestrian and the ultimate price of  
20 of those other parcels?

21                   MR. HEAPES: As you can imagine, one of  
22 the Town's first statements to us was very clear, we  
23 are not condemning property to help you put this  
24 together. Now, of course, as everyone knows, Blue Back  
25 Square has been under conversation, or whatever, in the

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1 marketplace for quite a while. People ask me, well,  
2 what have you guys been doing for two years? There  
3 were 12 condominium owners that we had to collectively  
4 get to agree to sell their units. One short and it  
5 wouldn't have been much use to us, and I don't think  
6 it's probably much mystery what our strategy was. You  
7 have to pay a lot of money to consolidate that much  
8 land. The Legion was an entirely different situation.  
9 It's really accommodating their needs into the future.  
10 So in order to get a piece of land this size, you have  
11 what I would say excessive market rates, meaning that  
12 we made the new market, and it was -- it's the most  
13 expensive land in the Center without a doubt. We  
14 believe it's valuable because the Center has that  
15 value. As a standalone parcel, it probably doesn't  
16 have the same land value.

17                   MAYOR HARRIS: Thank you. You kind of  
18 described some of this before, but it's kind of my  
19 understanding from the way you said it that you have  
20 options to these parcels kind of contingent upon this  
21 development.

22                   MR. HEAPES: We have closed on three of  
23 the condominiums. We have contracts on each piece of  
24 the land of which -- the way an option works is you pay  
25 X amount of money, the operations will run out, at

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1 which time you purchase the property. We have the  
2 right to back out of that for any reason. We've

3 already put a lot of money into the property. We have  
4 not closed on it however, but we control whether we own  
5 or do not own those properties at the end of the day.

6 MAYOR HARRIS: But at the end of the  
7 day, if this doesn't go, you know, go forward in some  
8 way, shape or form or if you don't have success at  
9 another piece, you could walk away from that?

10 MR. HEAPES: I think my partners are  
11 here. We can take a vote in front of you as to whether  
12 we should walk away from 7 million dollars. I'll  
13 safely say we are not going to do that. We would close  
14 on the property and then decide what it is we could do  
15 to at least minimize our investment and try to get the  
16 money back.

17 MAYOR HARRIS: You could also sell the  
18 property to someone else; I would imagine that's an  
19 option?

20 MR. HEAPES: Yes, the same kind of deal,  
21 if you would, that Mrs. Grody had. The marketplace  
22 wouldn't have changed. We would be asking a lot of  
23 money for the land, and it would have the same  
24 requirements, to remediate the dirty soil, et cetera,  
25 so we'd be in the same boat as Mrs. Grody. Since we

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1 are developers, I would be surprised if that would be  
2 our strategy.

3 MAYOR HARRIS: But nonetheless that's an  
4 option?

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5 MR. HEAPES: It's a possibility.

6 MAYOR HARRIS: What I'm trying to get,  
7 to understand better and to kind of help other people  
8 understand, because this is a question that we've got,  
9 again, not a Town deal, and somehow, well, why can't  
10 you just do something that's just putting up something  
11 small in here, or do it in phases and all these things.  
12 I'm just trying to figure out, a lot of it is, there is  
13 economics at play here.

14 MR. HEAPES: Absolutely. I think there  
15 is a couple of really important things to say. We  
16 didn't feel it was appropriate to come to Town and say,  
17 jeez, we see you've got a whole area over there that  
18 we've got a lot of great ideas on. We controlled the  
19 property first, came to the Town and asked what their  
20 vision was over there. I didn't expect them to pull  
21 out a model and show me that they've been thinking  
22 about it for 20 years, but that was the process. We  
23 controlled the property first and came into the Town.  
24 So we took the risk with the property first, negotiated  
25 with Mrs. Grody.

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1 I think the second thing is that the  
2 value of that property, in terms of the price we paid,  
3 was based on us participating in a larger strategy and  
4 around creating one Center. As you well know, and  
5 people have disagreed with me a little bit in Town,  
6 right now I don't believe, based on land use, that

7 there is one Center. There is the historic west side,  
8 perfectly great, we all love it. And there is the east  
9 side which I would call the service part of the Center.  
10 It doesn't make it bad, but that's where the car  
11 dealerships were and all the things you would need to  
12 have a service part of the Center. That would likely  
13 be as of right, it's contingent use in perpetuity.  
14 Whole Foods cuts both ways. You know, it essentially  
15 is a service-type user, but it's a single as-of-right  
16 use. So from our mind, the value was based on the  
17 ability to do a mixed-use project that connected to the  
18 Center. That's why we were able to pay more. In fact,  
19 we can't do that, then there will be a loss, loss in  
20 money. It will be on our side, but we will recapture  
21 as much as we can.

22                   MAYOR HARRIS: I think that this has  
23 been asked before, but I don't know if in as much  
24 detail, is the answer on your part that, no, this is  
25 it, this is all that you can do, or are there any other

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1 options to move things around, change some size? I  
2 know we had one suggestion from DRAC on a design  
3 aspect, but what about on square footage and other  
4 aspects? Is there any room?

5                   MR. HEAPES: Let me answer it this way,  
6 because this is a little bit of an unusual process.  
7 We're here together. Normally I suppose most people  
8 would expect a developer to load something up, bring it

9 to the public realm, with the expectation that the  
10 public realm would knock a little bit off the top,  
11 everybody would be happy, and you all go home.

12 Because we have been in partnership with  
13 the Town and the economics of both sides of the deal  
14 are so intertwined, we have been open book with the  
15 Town for two years. They know what our numbers are,  
16 what our returns are, what our thresholds are to get  
17 investment capital and pull this deal off. There  
18 hasn't been a kind of shell game going on here. We've  
19 also known very clearly what their desires were  
20 relative to -- and what they cost, and that's why we  
21 could commit to them.

22 So unless you are going to change both  
23 sides of that equation, we can't reduce the project.  
24 The Town has the option to change their side of the  
25 equation in a lot of ways. They want to do tax

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1 abatement and all those things that none of us ever  
2 wanted to get into, and I don't believe we want to get  
3 into, that could happen and we could respond. But  
4 unilaterally, can we reduce the size of the thing? No.

5 I will be very honest with you, this is  
6 the right size for this market. I can't do half the  
7 retail because if I do half the retail, I can't afford  
8 to bring the stores that the Center needs now. The  
9 movie theater isn't paying a lot of money, the large  
10 retailer isn't. It's our little stores that are paying

11 their way. Hartford Hospital is a certain size. I  
12 can't go to Hartford Hospital and say, you know what,  
13 let's do half a pool. I guess you can do half court  
14 basketball, but that's about it. I can't do half a  
15 weight room. I can't say how about you bring half the  
16 doctors you thought. These aren't spent buildings just  
17 built empty and see if they fill up. These are for  
18 real businesses with real needs. The hospital has real  
19 needs, and I can't cut the residential in half and make  
20 them all one bedrooms instead of two bedrooms. I know  
21 that's not what people want to hear, but that is just  
22 the cold, hard facts.

23 MAYOR HARRIS: Thank you. One last kind  
24 of line of questioning, and I want to go to the -- I  
25 believe what you are saying as far as that you are not

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1 going to walk away. Your fixed costs, your sunk costs  
2 at this point are high enough that it's not something  
3 that you would do, and we can all understand that from  
4 other aspects of our lives, but let's just assume for  
5 whatever reason, circumstances among the partners, you  
6 decide, you know something, we are not throwing good  
7 money after bad, that's it, we are walking away. The  
8 property is Mrs. Grody's still, correct, if you walk  
9 away?

10 MR. HEAPES: Technically, yes, if we  
11 walk away from that contract, that is correct.

12 MAYOR HARRIS: And the reason I ask that

13 is --

14 MR. HEAPES: That's not true with the  
15 condominiums.

16 MAYOR HARRIS: The reason I ask is  
17 because I wanted to kind of explore quickly with the  
18 Town administration, I have some experience, you know,  
19 the Grodys have been excellent corporate citizens,  
20 excellent citizens in this Town. It's their private  
21 property. Just as I couldn't tell who to sell their  
22 house to and stuff, obviously we don't have control,  
23 that's our system, but I had experienced some other  
24 examples similar to Mrs. Grody, one in Newington that I  
25 think Mr. Davidoff has had some experience with, where

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1 the property -- since the price wasn't met, the  
2 property lay fallow for years and years and years. In  
3 fact, I think it still is today.

4 So going beyond this owner as a specific  
5 example, I just want to know from the Town  
6 administration, have we experienced in this Town that  
7 unfortunate, what is now a hypothetical, where things  
8 just, because of economics, lay fallow? Mr. Feldman.

9 MR. FELDMAN: Madam Chair and Mr. Mayor,  
10 yes, we've had the experience that there is property  
11 owned by this particular family that has not been  
12 developed or redeveloped, but they are not the only  
13 ones. I can reference the former middle school, the  
14 former Ames Department Store that has been sitting

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15 vacant for a number of years, too, so it's thankfully  
16 not a lot, but there are certain examples you can point  
17 to quickly where land that could have been developed  
18 and brought back for good private or public use has sat  
19 fallow for a number of years.

20                   MAYOR HARRIS: Thank you, Mr. Feldman.  
21 The reason I say this is not because I think it's going  
22 to happen or to try to scare anybody, but we as the  
23 decision makers have the responsibility to examine the  
24 range of options and the range of risk, and if that's  
25 even a half a percent risk, it's important that we take

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1 some of those things into account with the players that  
2 we are dealing with and prior experience in making our  
3 decision.

4                   MR. HEAPES: To that issue, I think it's  
5 a fair assessment to say, for whatever reason it didn't  
6 get approved, the likelihood that you would be applying  
7 your SSD process to this property would be zero. There  
8 is no one that I know who having watched this would  
9 underwrite the risk on property as anything but as of  
10 right. I mean, that's not to say it couldn't happen,  
11 but that's hard to imagine. So I think you'd be  
12 looking at an as-of-right deal. It's not good or bad,  
13 it's just that would be the expectation.

14                   MAYOR HARRIS: And that at the end of  
15 the day might be what we do. The bottom line is we  
16 have to weigh all these things, and we shouldn't do

17 something bad just because something bad also could  
18 happen if we don't do that bad thing.

19 MR. HEAPES: Absolutely.

20 MAYOR HARRIS: If that makes any sense,  
21 but again, I just wanted to try to understand the risk  
22 because I was a little confused on some of those  
23 things. Thank you, Madam Chair.

24 MS. MECK: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. At  
25 this time, what I would like to do is move on to our

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1 second agenda item of questioning. Mr. Slifka, did you  
2 have a follow-up question on this item?

3 MR. SLIFKA: I did. I don't mean to  
4 belabor the proceedings, but I kept my scope awfully  
5 limited when I was first up, and I just had a follow-up  
6 based on a couple of questions.

7 MS. MECK: Is the scope within this  
8 first agenda item?

9 MR. SLIFKA: It is.

10 MS. MECK: Please proceed.

11 MR. SLIFKA: Is that okay?

12 MS. MECK: Yes.

13 MR. SLIFKA: First I just have a  
14 clarification. Since Mr. Spada had used up his time,  
15 he wanted me to add that he was not necessarily opposed  
16 to Hooters coming to Town. Is that correct?

17 MR. SPADA: No comment.

18 MR. SLIFKA: That wasn't my topic,

19 Ms. Meck, I'm sorry.

20 MS. MECK: You are using up your time.

21 MR. SLIFKA: Duly noted. Mr. Heapes, we  
22 had talked -- I had asked you initially about Bethesda  
23 Row and a couple of other Councilors and TPZ members  
24 got into the issue of integration between the Center  
25 and Blue Back Square. And I'm aware that in Bethesda

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1 Row, which you said was the most similar of your past  
2 projects to this one, there is something called  
3 Bethesda Triangle.

4 MR. HEAPES: Correct.

5 MR. SLIFKA: That is, I don't know if it  
6 would be right calling it abutter, because I think it  
7 is a little bit of a distance away from Bethesda Row  
8 property.

9 MR. HEAPES: The Woodmont Triangle.

10 MR. SLIFKA: The Woodmont Triangle,  
11 thank you. But it is the closest, I guess facsimile we  
12 have to the Center, the existing Center in that  
13 project.

14 MR. HEAPES: Yes. It consists of one  
15 and two-story, I hate to call them historic, but older  
16 buildings that really was the source of most of the  
17 restaurants.

18 MR. SLIFKA: My understanding also is  
19 that for better or for worse the triangle has struggled  
20 somewhat, if not -- I don't want to overcharacterize

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21 and say it's limped along, but it's not doing as well  
22 as Bethesda Row, since Bethesda Row has come in. I  
23 don't know how well it was doing at the time. I'm  
24 under the impression it was also limping along a bit at  
25 the time you entered the market.

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1 MR. HEAPES: Right.

2 MR. SLIFKA: To the extent there is any  
3 fair comparison between the links between Bethesda Row  
4 and Woodmont Triangle and what you plan for Blue Back  
5 Square and the existing Center, I was wondering if you  
6 could explain, number 1, if there is any differences  
7 that would explain why the Woodmont Triangle has not  
8 thrived with Bethesda Row abutting it, and also if  
9 there is any lessons you've learned in that  
10 relationship that you are applying to this plan,  
11 because since I know, I want to look beyond for a  
12 second to what the universe would be if you did pass  
13 Blue Back Square as you've requested and what the  
14 government might be asked to do in the future, and my  
15 understanding again is that now the Bethesda government  
16 is in the process of doing a lot of work to enhance  
17 Woodmont Triangle. Bethesda Row is thriving, it's on  
18 its own, the plan is working as proposed, but now the  
19 government is stepping in to help another section of  
20 Town. And I'm sure we would want to avoid having to do  
21 something like that in the future.

22 MR. HEAPES: I think that's a good

23 question. I don't know who you've been talking to, but  
24 I think you have the story essentially correct. Now,  
25 Woodmont Triangle is, believe me, nothing like the

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1 existing Center. It has eight-foot sidewalks. It's  
2 really a bunch of little houses. There is no big  
3 trees. There is no character there, and it is not  
4 contiguous with Bethesda Row. There is probably a good  
5 mile-and-a-half separation between the two. Secondly,  
6 it wasn't the historic part, that's another district in  
7 Bethesda, but this is pretty big relative to the Center  
8 in downtown Bethesda.

9 I think the important comparable is that  
10 the retail, the residential, the office around Bethesda  
11 Row has been doing spectacularly, and what Bethesda Row  
12 added that Woodmont Triangle didn't have was any kind  
13 of pedestrian environment. All Woodmont Triangle had  
14 to offer was a staggering amount of market share. I  
15 got in trouble once saying that there were more  
16 restaurants in Bethesda than all of the state of  
17 Colorado, which was an interesting statement to say,  
18 and of course the Denver Post picked that up. I got to  
19 be in this big argument about, is it true? It turns  
20 out that in Bethesda, and this is an interesting thing  
21 in terms of lessons learned, in an area the same size  
22 of the Center almost, there are 178 restaurants.  
23 Pretty amazing, isn't it? It's a restaurant district  
24 is really what it is, not good parking, no street

25 activity; there is no shopping in Woodmont Triangle.

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1 It does show how you could have a regional position  
2 that is really very, very strong. What hurt Woodmont  
3 Triangle was that we had had cafes on the sidewalk,  
4 because we made big sidewalks, we had big trees. All  
5 the things that the Center has today that you know very  
6 well work, the cafes on the sidewalk, that's really  
7 what we had that Woodmont Triangle didn't have. I  
8 wouldn't really comment on whether it struggled or not.

9 I think this issue of synergy between  
10 two centers is probably better examined at Mizner Park,  
11 even though that's not the example, because those were  
12 an existing Center and a new Center that were  
13 coterminous to each other where you could walk back and  
14 forth. There was a little district in between. Those  
15 have both increased in value tremendously.

16 The Woodmont Triangle would be like  
17 having Bethesda Row, I don't know, at Bishop's Corner  
18 and having the Center. I would tell you if we were to  
19 do Blue Back Square at Bishop's Corner, just put all  
20 that land together and do a great neighborhood with  
21 restaurants, that would hurt the Center. They would  
22 compete with one another, I believe, and that's really  
23 more the analogy. They'd have no reason to be  
24 coterminous. You tend to make a trip to one or the  
25 other, and that's what's happening at Bethesda Row.

1                   Secondly, I think what's interesting is  
2 we -- one of the things we learned at Bethesda was  
3 trying not to compete with what was already up on  
4 Wisconsin Avenue. For example, they have a United  
5 Artist eight-plex movie theater there, so you like to  
6 have some movies there, that's when we came to the art  
7 center. There are ways to add to the mix. Bethesda  
8 has probably 12 restaurants, and that did hurt Woodmont  
9 Triangle because you could sit outside and eat. I view  
10 it as that simple, but the comparison, I'm not sure  
11 Woodmont was really working that well at all. That's  
12 another interesting comparison, not to keep harping on  
13 Blue Back Square as a name, but the Town of Bethesda  
14 did, at the end of the day, finally name their  
15 neighborhoods. That's why you know it's called  
16 Woodmont Triangle. Bethesda Row was a name. The Core  
17 was another name of Wisconsin. That was by the  
18 citizens to help people understand where to park, and  
19 to remember where they parked. So rather than say I  
20 was in parking garage A, they said, oh, we parked in  
21 the Woodmont east parking garage or the Bethesda Row  
22 parking garage. So it was actually a town way of  
23 organizing how you get around their town. The center  
24 is not that big, but although I said Bethesda was the  
25 comparable, relative to this issue, I don't think it

1 is. The redevelopment around that center though has  
2 been spectacular.

3 MR. SLIFKA: Thank you very much.

4 MS. MECK: Thank you, Mr. Slifka. We do  
5 actually have one last follow-up question on size,  
6 density and design, and it has to do with materials.  
7 Mr. Harris.

8 MAYOR HARRIS: Thank you, Madam Chair,  
9 through you, this is really a technical question,  
10 probably for Mr. Alair, Mr. Feldman. One of the things  
11 that was spoken about in the presentation by the  
12 developer and one of the, I think a very important  
13 piece, as far as the ultimate look if this ever occurs,  
14 is the materials. We saw pictures of Bethesda, and I  
15 actually was there awhile back, and it does look  
16 seamless, and it looks like all different types of  
17 buildings, even though it's one development, and it  
18 integrates with the neighborhood, and I think a lot of  
19 that has to do with the quality and the variation of  
20 materials.

21 We've been given a book of materials.  
22 When we do SDDs, we have conditions. Is this book  
23 going to be incorporated or can we incorporate it as a  
24 condition of the Special Development District? Is that  
25 how we guarantee that?

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1 MS. LIMSON: Through you, Madam Chair,  
2 Mr. Mayor, you are absolutely correct. What we do with  
3 Special Development District, every item, including  
4 architectural materials are part of the submission of  
5 the plan set. What is on that plan set is what is  
6 approved by this body.

7 MAYOR HARRIS: Thank you, Ms. Limson and  
8 Mr. Alair.

9 MR. ALAIR: To follow up, to be  
10 completely precise, you asked if it needed to be a  
11 condition. I think what Ms. Limson was suggesting is  
12 it doesn't need to be a condition, it's part of the  
13 application. But certainly should you wish to belt in  
14 suspenders the issue, you could emphasize it with some  
15 form of a condition, yes.

16 MAYOR HARRIS: But if passed, these  
17 materials become requirements?

18 MR. ALAIR: Yes.

19 MAYOR HARRIS: And just on that note  
20 also for people around the table, I know some people  
21 have been thinking about to the extent that anyone has  
22 any ideas of conditions that we might want later, they  
23 should jot them down so we have them at the end and not  
24 rely on memory through these hours. Thank you.

25 MS. MECK: Thank you, Mr. Harris. The

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1 next item that we had talked about was the proposed mix  
2 of uses, specifically the residential, the

3 professional, the retail space, the open space, and/or  
4 public space, and the municipal use component. We've  
5 talked a little bit about this as we explored, you  
6 know, the first part of the SDD, but there were some  
7 particular questions that I asked to be deferred until  
8 this time. I'm sure there are some remainder questions  
9 under this area, and we are going to go through it, and  
10 we are going to start to my left. I just wanted to  
11 mention that it is entirely appropriate, as we talk,  
12 reflecting on Mr. Slifka's question, that in all of  
13 these items there is a component as to impact, impact  
14 on the existing Center, and it's perfectly acceptable  
15 to work those in as we go through these different  
16 agenda items.

17 I will also, before we begin, just point  
18 out to everybody that under this agenda item, I have  
19 included the Special Use Permit applications of the  
20 American Legion and the theater, so now would be the  
21 time, if you have specific questions regarding those  
22 Special Use Permits, particularly for the Town Plan and  
23 Zoning Commission, but if you have questions on those  
24 buildings, this would be the appropriate time to ask  
25 that as well.

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1 And with that, I'm going to start down  
2 at the very end to my left with any questions,  
3 Mr. Daniels.

4 MR. DANIELS: Thank you. So this is the

5 time to ask my question.

6 MS. MECK: You are on.

7 MR. DANIELS: So if I can repeat my  
8 question, the Town Plan and Zoning Commission has been,  
9 I wouldn't say besieged, but we've been busy with  
10 applications for outdoor dining in the Center, and of  
11 late there has been the issues where it does interact  
12 with residential settings. It becomes both a conflict  
13 and significant issue, and you've got mixed use. You  
14 had talked about wide sidewalks with outdoor dining,  
15 and I realize obviously the Town is still going to have  
16 some control over that, but what did you have in your  
17 head as to how you were going to accommodate those  
18 mixed uses and everybody being happy.

19 MR. HEAPES: Help me a little bit. Are  
20 you referring to the uses other than the dining, the  
21 impact on those uses?

22 MR. DANIELS: I'm specifically referring  
23 to having restaurant use outdoors and the sometimes  
24 inevitable juxtaposition of that is interaction with  
25 residents, with residences, whether they are condos or

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1 et cetera.

2 MR. HEAPES: Specifically the  
3 residences, of course, not such an impact with the  
4 office user, which brings up a point about, what is the  
5 characteristic of this residential? I think it's  
6 really important and a bit of a new thing in this

7 marketplace to have for sale residential that really  
8 requires a lifestyle decision. As you well know, there  
9 are plenty of people who are making that decision today  
10 by deciding to live next to the Center, because they  
11 want to be able to walk to the Center. We are  
12 obligated to make it quite clear in our documents and  
13 in our marketing of the condominiums that this is a  
14 decision to live in this kind of environment. I'm not  
15 concerned that there is not a market for that; I think  
16 there is quite a strong market for that. But that's --  
17 there is a bit of a rub on that.

18 We are prepared, really, to live under  
19 essentially whatever guidelines are emerging from your  
20 experience. I will tell you our experience, which is  
21 kind of unusual. A good experience is at Mizner Park.  
22 We expected the units at the top of the building with  
23 the best view apart from the street activity to go  
24 first, and they would work their way down the building  
25 to the units right above the retail. We were scared to

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1 death of putting a restaurant under a unit, so we  
2 didn't really do that much. Our experience was quite  
3 the contrary. People making a decision to live in this  
4 environment actually want to be integrated with it and  
5 feel like they are part of it. That would be our  
6 expectations here, is that the second floor units would  
7 be the most desirable because you are truly in the mix  
8 as if you were living in the Center.

9 We don't believe that this residential  
10 will be attractive to people trying to get away from  
11 the interest and activity in the Center. I don't know  
12 if that answers your question, but we don't see the  
13 conflict functionally as much as you might expect.

14 MR. VAN WINKLE: Madam Chair, if I can  
15 clarify one point.

16 MS. MECK: Yes, Mr. Van Winkle.

17 MR. VAN WINKLE: The application before  
18 you actually doesn't have an application for outdoor  
19 dining in it. Although we talked a lot about it, and  
20 it's certainly in the plan, they elected not to submit  
21 those because they don't have the restaurants lined up  
22 and the nature of the dining, so that although outdoor  
23 dining is part of the concept at some point, the  
24 applicant is going to be coming back to the TPZ for  
25 permits for all that use.

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1 MR. DANIELS: I have a follow-up. Do  
2 you have a sense of how many restaurants you might have  
3 and would all of them have the prospect of outdoor  
4 dining?

5 MR. HEAPES: Not necessarily. We are  
6 probably looking anywhere from five to maybe as many as  
7 eight restaurants. People define restaurants  
8 differently. There are some holes in the marketplace  
9 that at least I've identified from living here. With  
10 all due respect to the Center, I can't find a great

11 breakfast. Maybe I don't know where it is. There is  
12 the opportunity for some family places, where the kids  
13 can just make a lot of noise and get a burger and  
14 fries, not to say that's not available here, but there  
15 are some dining things. For the quick, healthy meal,  
16 all we have is subway, where you don't have to go in.  
17 I don't want to categorize things so broadly, but there  
18 are restaurant types that we think could be here and  
19 could add to the mix of the Center. Do all of those  
20 require outdoor dining? Certainly not. But our  
21 druthers would be to have the sidewalks, have the same  
22 interest, character, livelihood as the other side of  
23 the Center, and we think dining really helps that, so  
24 we would always advocate at least a couple of chairs  
25 out under the tree no matter what the restaurant was,

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1 because you should be out enjoying the public space.

2 So our kind of notion would be, the more the merrier.

3 MR. DANIELS: And you would be expecting  
4 the Town to have some kind of criteria or guideline to  
5 help that?

6 MR. HEAPES: Absolutely.

7 MR. DANIELS: Maybe a note for the  
8 future in terms of what we do in terms of this  
9 application.

10 MR. HEAPES: I think the real difference  
11 from our account, and this is second only to the trees,  
12 is we really want to be able to have the cafe zone

13 disjointed from the storefront. I don't expect that to  
14 happen at the Center. There is different land  
15 ownership issues over there, but that is a really,  
16 really fundamental issue for us about having the  
17 successful walking district, and we would work with you  
18 to figure out how to do it in the Center, if you so  
19 desire, but that's an issue we would like to have come  
20 before you at the time that we can be specific about  
21 where we want to do that when we have a real restaurant  
22 wanting to do real seating.

23 MS. MECK: Thank you, Mr. Daniels.  
24 Thank you, Mr. Heapes. Mrs. McClay.

25 MS. McCLAY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I

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1 only have one question on this topic, and it's open  
2 space, so we are back to the park area.

3 MR. HEAPES: Okay.

4 MS. McCLAY: I'd like some  
5 clarification. I know you had mentioned at one point  
6 that you were going to have a fence put up probably on  
7 the Trout Brook side of it. Exactly, is the fence  
8 going to be just on that side? Do you have an idea of  
9 where that fence is going to be? Is it going to  
10 surround the park?

11 MR. HEAPES: Good question.

12 MS. McCLAY: Will there be on Raymond  
13 Road easy opportunity for kids to just run across the  
14 street at any point instead of at the cross-section? I

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15 was just curious about the fencing.

16 MR. HEAPES: The fencing was really, if  
17 I can use my little laser, the fencing was really at  
18 the point -- and when you go over there and look at it,  
19 the slope falls precipitously. So there is a ridge of  
20 trees there now which is essentially right about here,  
21 and this side of the slope really falls off steeply  
22 into Trout Brook. The notion that we don't want  
23 somebody to kick a ball or any of that stuff and the  
24 thing go flying over and in any way encourage people to  
25 interact with that slope. They can get down there

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1 through the sidewalk and the other thing so it was  
2 really a safety measure, particularly at night, et  
3 cetera. We did not anticipate any fence along Raymond  
4 Road or any kind of sense of walling off the park. The  
5 park is big enough, I suppose people could still run  
6 out onto Raymond. But it was a safety issue and just  
7 so people knew that there was a slope there, as there  
8 is on the other side.

9 MS. McCLAY: So the fence would be  
10 behind the strand of trees?

11 MR. HEAPES: We are taking some of those  
12 trees down. We want to be able to see that park and to  
13 see the Center from that park. They are not in good  
14 shape.

15 MS. McCLAY: No, I mean the trees on the  
16 side of Trout Brook.

17 MR. HEAPES: Yes. Essentially yes. And  
18 we are not proposing an eight-foot tall fence with  
19 barbed wire. We are proposing the kind of fence you'd  
20 put around a swimming pool, open air, metal, so you can  
21 see through it, but it just prevents anybody from  
22 accidentally running down and tumbling down that slope.  
23 I do not believe you can walk down that slope. It's  
24 quite steep.

25 MS. McCLAY: Yes. Thank you. By the

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1 way, the Center Squeeze has a wonderful breakfast.

2 MR. HEAPES: Thank you very much, very  
3 much.

4 MS. MECK: Thank you, Mrs. McClay.  
5 Continuing, Mr. Verrengia, do you have a question?

6 MR. VERRENGIA: I just have two, yes.  
7 One is for Mr. Heapes with respect to the condos. Has  
8 there been any sort of market analysis done with  
9 respect to the condos?

10 MR. HEAPES: There was some initial  
11 analysis, and we are doing market analysis now. My own  
12 little private analysis is I can't have a meeting on  
13 Blue Back Square without ten people asking me how they  
14 are going to get a condo. It doesn't mean that they  
15 will pay the rate or whatever. We believe there is  
16 huge interest in the condominium, but we are conducting  
17 a more detailed market analysis now to determine  
18 exactly what the product is, because we are assuming

19 most of the condo owners will be making a lifestyle  
20 choice out of a single family house, so market testing  
21 goes on at different layers.

22 MR. VERRENGIA: Can you give us any  
23 indication as far as the range of the condos, at least  
24 an initial range?

25 MR. HEAPES: Yes. I think the condos

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1 would be largely two bedrooms plus library,  
2 dens/office. We won't be doing studios. We may be  
3 doing some one bedroom pluses and some three bedroom  
4 pluses. These would be market rate condominiums which  
5 we expect to be between 300 and 400,000 dollars.

6 MR. VERRENGIA: Thank you.

7 MR. HEAPES: I wonder if I can -- I'm  
8 sorry to interrupt, but I did want to clarify something  
9 relative to your last question that I think I may have  
10 left some confusion on, about managing the project and  
11 ownership of the project. I wanted to make it clear  
12 that within BBS Development, we have in-house through  
13 Ronus or Street-Works every service it takes to manage  
14 the project as well as own it. Ronus manages actively  
15 mixed-use communities, but I wanted to make -- so we  
16 are not going away as owner-managers, but I did want to  
17 make it clear that we are not managing the project from  
18 some far away place, that our management people will be  
19 here in West Hartford. So that's what I meant by a  
20 local presence. They will be on the ground here, not

21 located in some office building. But it is managed by  
22 the partnership of BBS. I don't know if that was clear  
23 or not, but I just wanted to make that clear.

24 MR. VERRENGIA: I would love to take  
25 ownership of that question, but the credit goes to

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1 Mr. Daniels, he asked that question.

2 MR. HEAPES: Well, it was brilliant.

3 MR. VERRENGIA: It was a good one. Just  
4 a follow-up to that point, the question that he had  
5 asked was what personal interests are you going to have  
6 in this development after this is built. Just a  
7 follow-up to that question is: With respect to the  
8 projects at Boca and Bethesda Row, do you still have an  
9 interest in those?

10 MR. HEAPES: More specifically a  
11 personal interest. I sit on the board of the Boca,  
12 it's called Champs Concert Hall at Mizner Park, which  
13 was created to bring arts and entertainment to Boca as  
14 a response of creating that public space. As many  
15 people know here, that involved a personal interest,  
16 and I'm down there probably every other month and  
17 events are organized around the public side of that  
18 project, not just the private side. So for better, for  
19 worse, I guess I could say that if you turned us down,  
20 I may have to live in one of the condominiums, so it's  
21 really up to you.

22 MR. VERRENGIA: Thank you. Just one

23 last question for the Town. There is obviously some  
24 public areas with respect to this project that the Town  
25 is going to assume some cost with respect to

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1 maintaining it, in particular I believe the easement  
2 between the Board of Ed and the library and some of the  
3 other public areas.

4 Do we have any idea of the financial  
5 impact to maintain the public space with respect to  
6 this project?

7 MR. VAN WINKLE: Ron Van Winkle.  
8 Obviously we already snow plow the whole Board of Ed  
9 property, clean off the sidewalks, clean off the steps  
10 that are there, so the increased area will be somewhat,  
11 but actually, given the whole size of the area, that  
12 the Board of Ed will no longer be under our purview,  
13 would be smaller. The piece that we are cleaning off  
14 is the plaza in front of the library, the steps going  
15 down and then the plaza at Isham Road. So the impact  
16 would be marginal. There will be some impact, but it  
17 would be marginal.

18 All of the stores clean their own  
19 sidewalks, just like they do in the Center, the small  
20 parking lot is cleaned by the property owner. So to  
21 the degree that there is a big impact, the front lawn  
22 in front of the Board of Education building no longer  
23 becomes ours. It's pretty much a wash. I started to  
24 do some numbers on this, and I was dealing with

25 hundreds of dollars when I got done, so I didn't bother

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1 to kind of pursue something there.

2 MR. VERRENGIA: It's interesting that  
3 you mentioned snow plowing. Does the Town provide the  
4 cleaning of the Center during or after a snowstorm? Do  
5 they incur the cost?

6 MR. VAN WINKLE: No, we don't. The  
7 sidewalks in West Hartford are the property owner's  
8 responsibility to remove the snow from.

9 MR. VERRENGIA: Are there not night  
10 operations from the Town that clean the sidewalks,  
11 especially the metered area?

12 MR. VAN WINKLE: In West Hartford  
13 Center, where we plow the snow off from the streets and  
14 and pile it at the meter, in the winter we go in and  
15 remove that snow so that we can make the money out of  
16 the meter, so there will be that kind of operation.  
17 That additional work will occur also down here.

18 MR. VERRENGIA: So in that analysis, I  
19 would think that to clean that Center it's a big job,  
20 and it's probably more than 100 dollars, and I don't  
21 need a quote. But my point is, maybe you answered the  
22 question because you said you were going to do the same  
23 at the new Center, and I just want to make sure that  
24 those costs are factored in, because I believe the  
25 amount to do that is in the thousands of dollars, if

1 I'm not mistaken.

2 MR. VAN WINKLE: Certainly from that  
3 perspective, the removal of snow from the sidewalks  
4 that's plowed off from the streets would be something  
5 that we would be doing in this area, and it would be  
6 additional cost to that.

7 MR. VERRENGIA: Okay. Thank you.

8 MS. MECK: Thank you, Mr. Verrengia. At  
9 this point, we are going to pause for a moment so that  
10 Channel 5 can change their tapes, but don't go anywhere  
11 because we are going to continue with this line of  
12 questioning in about a minute.

13 (Pause.)

14 MS. MECK: Okay. Thank you. We are  
15 back on tape. At this point, we will continue our  
16 questions. Mr. Spada.

17 MR. SPADA: Thank you, Madam Chair, so  
18 the camera is on. Good evening again, and I only have  
19 a few questions. Thank you. So the price was 300 to  
20 400,000?

21 MR. HEAPES: Yes, essentially.

22 MR. SPADA: That tells me the Spadas  
23 will be staying at Westbrook Road for the foreseeable  
24 future. I guess the question that I had was that  
25 number 70, I'm sure there was some science around that

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1 number. I'm sure it wasn't an arbitrary number, and  
2 I'm not necessarily concerned if it's the right or the  
3 wrong number, but I guess maybe for Pat, too, is there  
4 flexibility in the deal where, let's say for whatever  
5 reason the condo piece took off and the retail was  
6 stagnate, can you go to 90 and -- I'm not sure how that  
7 would work or if that could work. I guess the question  
8 is: Are you locked down on 70?

9 MR. ALAIR: If the question is: Does  
10 the Master Agreement have -- is the microphone picking  
11 me up? If the question is: Does the Master Agreement  
12 spell out a number, I believe that the number is at  
13 approximately 70. There are really two different  
14 issues, one is the Master Agreement, are we locked in?  
15 And the answer is, I think we have made it clear  
16 throughout the process that the more residential you  
17 put into this project, the happier you have made, at  
18 least the administration.

19 From a zoning perspective, the  
20 application before you is fairly specific in terms of  
21 number of units, in terms of the number of parking  
22 spaces associated with those units. If they wanted to  
23 put in more units to add units to another building, for  
24 example, I'm fantasizing here, but I'm just giving you  
25 an example, they would have to come back to you. So

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1 there would be another zoning piece to that, but the  
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2 Master Agreement does not limit them to 70 units and no  
3 more, no less. We've made it clear all along we'd  
4 prefer to see more residential.

5 MR. SPADA: The last question for  
6 Mr. Heapes. From a marketing perspective, maybe it  
7 would be premature because we haven't voted on this  
8 yet, but have you begun to market this? And if not,  
9 when will you? And then I guess the real part of my  
10 question I'm most interested in is: What's the tail  
11 for selling 70 units? Is that something that is in  
12 four years after the completion of the last one? I  
13 don't know if you have any sense of when the last one  
14 would be sold or you probably have guesstimates I'm  
15 sure.

16 MR. HEAPES: That's a good question.  
17 One of the things that faces us on residential, one  
18 important concept is to understand that we don't get  
19 the money to build buildings empty. You know, there is  
20 no build it and they will come here. We have  
21 preleasing requirements, not only from our investors,  
22 but from banks that will loan us the construction  
23 money. They vary by use type. Obviously with the  
24 retail, I can go assign a certain amount of lease, the  
25 same with the office space. The condominiums are a

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1 little bit different. They need to be marketed  
2 different. They need to be targeted different. But we  
3 will have a requirement to prelease a certain amount of

4 those units. We are going to learn a lot through that  
5 process. We have been taking interest, interesting  
6 parties who frankly may or may not be interested in  
7 Blue Back Square, but who are very interested in these  
8 condominiums, having conversations with that. I didn't  
9 think it was right to be presumptuous and jump out and  
10 start marketing fabulous condos on the Town's property.  
11 And in fact our marketing plan really begins  
12 postapproval under that assumption. It will be very  
13 strong. We will prelease. We will determine what the  
14 market desire is and complete the design based on that.  
15 These really need to be targeted to the specific  
16 market, not some generic customer. We need that market  
17 feedback. But we will start that almost immediately as  
18 soon as possible. We have the structure in place to do  
19 it. We have the people in place to do it, and we are  
20 just kind of waiting for permission to do it, if you  
21 would put it that way.

22 MR. SPADA: Thank you, Madam Chair.

23 MR. HEAPES: I realize we have to take  
24 the word "Blue Back Square" off the residential  
25 brochure so we are at least three weeks away.

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1 MS. MECK: Thank you, Mr. Spada.

2 Mr. Davidoff.

3 MR. DAVIDOFF: Thank you, Madam

4 Chairwoman. I have a laundry list of questions that  
5 will deal with the special use applications so that I

6 can get a better understanding in order to render  
7 either conditions approvals, denial on things, and  
8 that's why I need to ask them.

9 I'd like to begin by asking: Would you  
10 characterize Mizner Place as a family-friendly  
11 mixed-use community, and if so, why, and how that would  
12 be judged against your current proposal? And I did  
13 visit Mizner Place several times last summer.

14 MR. HEAPES: I would consider it a  
15 people-friendly place which would include elderly  
16 people and children and families. As you know, the  
17 residential at Mizner is rental, not for sale, because  
18 it's on a leased parcel. You can't really have for  
19 sale on a lease, but the key to Mizner Park, which is  
20 very similar to this, is the Town owns and operates  
21 what happens in that public space. So it's really a  
22 blank slate for the Town to do whatever they want with.  
23 They have circuses there. They have art shows, the  
24 full gamut. It's family friendly, because the range of  
25 restaurants includes very high-end restaurants on one

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1 side, Macaroni Grill, Ruby Tuesdays, deli, ice cream  
2 store. It's not targeted towards one demographic.  
3 It's got a very broad, diverse mix of options there.  
4 It is where all the -- where their equivalent of  
5 celebrate West Hartford happens. Yes, we had a movie  
6 theater there which was somewhat attractive to  
7 teenagers. I didn't view that as a negative

8 necessarily. It's now flipped into more of an arts  
9 screen program, so it's not as teenage friendly. I'm  
10 not going to judge whether that's good or bad. We had  
11 the cartoon museum there. We had a museum. I wouldn't  
12 specifically say it was family friendly. It was people  
13 friendly and gathering friendly.

14                   It was up to the Town of Boca how they  
15 wanted to use that public space. I would say the same  
16 thing here, I have high hopes that this new library  
17 with its addition, with its increased children's area,  
18 with the increased access to computers, can really be a  
19 place where kids can be let go a little bit and not  
20 have to be, you know, on a tether for fear that they  
21 will run out in the traffic. I have high hopes that  
22 that park will be friendly to the neighbors at Burr and  
23 Boulevard and be a place where they can do things. But  
24 at the end of the day, a lot of that has to do with the  
25 Town's vision for that public space. I can't make the

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1 Town have a national gallery being there, but I really  
2 think it would be fantastic.

3                   So in a certain way, it's up to the Town  
4 to occupy that nameless square and that nameless park  
5 to make it -- West Hartford is a family place, so I  
6 have every assumption that those public spaces would  
7 drive around family-friendly activities.

8                   MR. DAVIDOFF: Would it be fair to state  
9 for the record that the major difference between Mi zner

10 and your proposal is that there is complimentary  
11 parking along the streetscape as well as in the parking  
12 garage?

13 MR. HEAPES: I don't understand the  
14 question. We have that in both places.

15 MR. DAVIDOFF: If one was to park along  
16 the streetscape at Mizner in front of the shops, there  
17 is no metered parking; is that correct?

18 MR. HEAPES: That is correct. All the  
19 parking in Mizner is free.

20 MR. DAVIDOFF: If one has to park in the  
21 parking garage, the parking is free?

22 MR. HEAPES: All the parking in Boca  
23 Raton is free.

24 MR. DAVIDOFF: Thank you. My next issue  
25 deals with the movie theater. Are you proposing any

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1 locations where people could drop off parties or pick  
2 up parties in a particular location, either it be in  
3 front or in the back area of the project?

4 MR. HEAPES: I don't know that we've  
5 gotten into that amount of detail yet. One of the nice  
6 things about Isham Road is that the traffic on Isham is  
7 really specific to kind of internal to that  
8 neighborhood. On its way to the garages or driving  
9 through the road, we have anticipated the ability to  
10 have a valet parking spot, which is similar to a  
11 dropoff at Blue Back Square because it's out of the

12 traffic, everyone will know where it is, and it will be  
13 convenient, but we have not gone in any further detail  
14 there. It doesn't seem to answer your question.

15 MR. DAVIDOFF: No. Do you anticipate  
16 having that answer prior to the conclusion of the  
17 public hearing?

18 MR. HEAPES: We can if you would so  
19 desire.

20 MR. DAVIDOFF: That would be helpful.  
21 Thank you.

22 With respect to the American Legion  
23 portion of the project, what would be the number of  
24 spaces that the Legion would be entitled to in the  
25 parking garage? I would assume those would be offered

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1 to them.

2 MR. HEAPES: I don't know the specific  
3 number of the deal. Do you want to help me on that,  
4 Kenny?

5 MR. NARVA: Forty.

6 MR. HEAPES: Forty.

7 MR. DAVIDOFF: Okay, thank you.

8 MR. HEAPES: We are paying for them.

9 MR. DAVIDOFF: I'm sorry?

10 MR. HEAPES: This is my partner Ken  
11 Narva. Ken was specifically negotiating the agreement  
12 with the Legion. That's why I don't want to speak out  
13 of turn.

14 MR. NARVA: Good evening, Mr. Mayor,  
15 Madam Chair. There are 34 parking spaces within the  
16 Blue Back Square Building B. That will be used by the  
17 American Legion in the evening. And there are 34  
18 parking spaces in the North Garage that we will be  
19 leasing from the city, from the Town, excuse me, of  
20 West Hartford, for the Legion to use during the day  
21 Monday through Friday from opening till about 4:30 in  
22 the afternoon.

23 MR. DAVIDOFF: Designated that they are  
24 only for Legion business; is that correct?

25 MR. NARVA: That's correct.

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1 MR. DAVIDOFF: What is the anticipated  
2 hours of operation for the retail establishment as well  
3 as the movie theater?

4 MR. HEAPES: I'm sorry, could you repeat  
5 that?

6 MR. DAVIDOFF: What is the anticipated  
7 hours of operation for the retail portion as well as  
8 the movie theater?

9 MR. HEAPES: Our anticipation is to  
10 follow whatever guidelines and codes are in place now  
11 in the Center.

12 MR. DAVIDOFF: A question to the Town  
13 Planner through you, Madam Chairperson, what would be  
14 the suggested guidelines with respect to a movie  
15 theater and hours of operation?

16 MS. LIMSON: Madam Chair, through you,  
17 that's a difficult question. I think what you need to  
18 do is perhaps pose a question to the applicant  
19 regarding an anticipated operator for that theater and  
20 what types of hours they would anticipate from a user.  
21 Hours of operations for retail use of course vary in  
22 the Town Center. I'm assuming that your question is  
23 strictly directed to the theater.

24 MR. DAVIDOFF: More so with the theater.

25 MS. LIMSON: Madam Chair, again, to Mr.

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1 Davidoff, I will certainly pose that question to the  
2 applicant.

3 MR. DAVIDOFF: Through you, Madam  
4 Chairwoman, I would ask the applicant if we could  
5 receive some information prior to the close of the  
6 public hearing as to the anticipated hours of operation  
7 for the theater. I think it is an integral part of  
8 what the community would expect in terms of that use  
9 there.

10 MR. HEAPES: We certainly aren't opposed  
11 to being clear about hours of operation. I must make  
12 clear that we are in negotiation with a number of  
13 theaters, and I would ask you not to tie our hands in  
14 those negotiations without understanding who the  
15 theater operator is, what the program is, what the  
16 program for movies are, and let us come back and make  
17 that clear. Right now it would be a shot in the dark

18 that might not be beneficial to the Center and the  
19 operation of that theater.

20 Our intention, obviously, is to bring  
21 the best movie theater operator to the Center, so I  
22 would ask that we find a way to have some input on that  
23 and either get that as a condition, et cetera. Let us  
24 have that flexibility. That goes for the retail as  
25 well as the theater, so that we can do the best theater

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1 possible for the Center.

2 MR. DAVIDOFF: Fair enough. With  
3 respect to the condo units, parking by visitors, would  
4 that be done by permit or would that be on a  
5 pay-as-you-visit scenario?

6 MR. HEAPES: We would expect the  
7 visitors to the condos as well as the office or anybody  
8 else to park in the public facility, on the street, or  
9 in the garage and pay a full rate that you would  
10 expect. The only parking dedicated to the residential  
11 are specifically dedicated to occupants of those units.

12 MR. DAVIDOFF: So if somebody had  
13 someone visiting for a week period, they would just pay  
14 whatever the daily posted rate is, is that your  
15 testimony this evening?

16 MR. HEAPES: That's correct.

17 MR. DAVIDOFF: You mentioned earlier  
18 with respect to valet, would that be a prominent piece  
19 of your equation? And if so -- well, you mentioned

20 that you are going to have it. Where would the valet  
21 parking vehicles be parked in these garages?

22 MR. HEAPES: I don't want to say that we  
23 will absolutely have it, but I will say that it is an  
24 excellent device to maximize the use of parking. If  
25 you look at Mizner Park, it's an interesting scenario.

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1 We have 2,000 spaces at Mizner Park, and if you were  
2 there, you saw a very active valet program. What's  
3 interesting about valet is they park those cars at  
4 different places at different times of the day based on  
5 what's available. So there may be a program where on  
6 weekend nights they will valet some cars over to the  
7 Town property to loosen up the spaces in the garages.  
8 There may be times where parking on the north or south,  
9 one garage. We estimated that at Mizner Park over the  
10 course of an average day, on 2000 spaces, we actually  
11 gained 400 spaces by being able to efficiently use and  
12 park. It's a very organic, dynamic thing that you kind  
13 of figure out where people park and why, at what times  
14 of day. There is no rhyme or reason to it.

15 We are not proposing that we are doing  
16 it, but it is a really effective way to maximize the  
17 parking revenue and efficiency and a number of other  
18 things, so we will certainly want to consider it with  
19 you.

20 MR. DAVIDOFF: The way the valet program  
21 would work would be that the Town would still receive

22 that revenue, or would that stream through your  
23 management company?

24 MR. HEAPES: I don't have an answer to  
25 that. The way it works at Mizner Park, it is a

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1 concession by the Town, no different than an ice cream  
2 store on the beach, and it is a cost-free deal at  
3 Mizner Park, meaning the concessionaire pays for all  
4 the infrastructure, manages it, and it's at no cost to  
5 the Town. Since we haven't proposed it, I think it  
6 would take a lot of study, and we would have to do that  
7 together. Remember the parking system is yours, so it  
8 would be a device to increase revenue to the parking  
9 system. That would be its purpose.

10 MR. DAVIDOFF: Through you, Madam Chair,  
11 to the Town Planner, I guess then I would need to get a  
12 response from the Town as to whether or not the Town is  
13 going to engage in valet parking. I need not get an  
14 answer this evening but --

15 MR. FELDMAN: Madam Chair, that's an  
16 interesting question. The concept is intriguing. I  
17 must tell you that we did try once several years ago,  
18 if I recall around the holidays. It was a fabulous  
19 flop, but your suggestion, Mr. Davidoff, is good and we  
20 haven't gotten that far in our own thinking, and I'm  
21 glad you did, so allow us to think about it and we will  
22 try to respond to you.

23 MR. DAVIDOFF: Thank you. I have two

24 further questions, the first is with snow removal on  
25 the top of the garages, where would that snow be

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1 located after a snowstorm? Would it be removed  
2 off-site?

3 MR. FELDMAN: Madam Chair, I think  
4 that's our question, and that is one that we have  
5 anticipated, and we are looking at a variety of  
6 equipment. We will either truck it off or, believe it  
7 or not, we are actually looking at a piece of equipment  
8 that could melt it off, so we are looking into the  
9 different options, what's the most efficient and  
10 economical way to do it.

11 MR. HEAPES: I think it is important to  
12 recognize that the cost of that was included in those  
13 operating costs that we talked about last night.

14 MR. DAVIDOFF: My last question, Madam  
15 Chairwoman, which will help me make a decision on the  
16 Special Use Permit is: What is the applicant's  
17 timetable if the project was to be approved, there  
18 being no lawsuits, and we are at that closing date,  
19 start to finish, when would one be able to walk this  
20 site and say, wow, we've got a new Center here?

21 MR. HEAPES: I think there is a couple  
22 of really important points: Number 1, it will take us  
23 about 24 months start to finish to build it. We are  
24 going to build essentially the whole project in one  
25 phase. I don't think anybody here wants to live

1 through ten years of phase by phase by phase by phase.  
2 We will do it in 24 months. We would expect to start  
3 construction in the fall, then open in the fall of '06.  
4 There are a couple of little toggles on that. Hartford  
5 Hospital, for example, could open early. One of the  
6 residential buildings could open early, but the  
7 sidewalks, but the storefronts and where you walk  
8 through the whole Center would be in two years.

9 MR. DAVIDOFF: Thank you for your  
10 answers.

11 MS. MECK: Thank you, Mr. Davidoff.  
12 Mrs. Carpenter.

13 MS. CARPENTER: Yes. I have a question  
14 about mixed use and its connection to the Center.

15 In your discussion you mentioned your  
16 intention to complement and not compete with the  
17 established Center; however, when I think about it, the  
18 competition still appears to be inherent, and I think  
19 the similarities are certainly still there. There  
20 would be competition in retail; there would be  
21 competition in terms of restaurant, office space, and  
22 even the health club. Even though Healthtrax is a  
23 wonderful facility, there are two small health centers  
24 that are in the established Center. I'm trying to  
25 understand the connectedness. I'm trying to remove the

1 competition, and so there could be more of a  
2 complement, but I'm still not real comfortable with  
3 that whole concept in your explanation, so if you could  
4 please further explain that to me, I'd appreciate it.

5 MR. HEAPES: Sure. Let's walk through  
6 the uses, and what they are. Approximately a third of  
7 the square footage is in new West Hartford residence  
8 called condominiums. It doesn't matter where they came  
9 from, but a third of it are new people living in the  
10 Center who will need banking services, food,  
11 restaurants all of the services that are there in the  
12 Center today. So that third is a market specifically  
13 generated to use all the assets of the Center.

14 Another third is the hospital medical  
15 office space, which is the bulk of the medical office  
16 space. As you may or may not know, that is a different  
17 kind of structure. It is specifically for a tenant who  
18 there is no space for now in the Center. I think I  
19 mentioned that you can imagine how many of the doctors  
20 in Hartford Hospital are actually West Hartford  
21 residents, many of them, but those are new customers  
22 and new employees that are coming to the Center who  
23 cannot come to the Center today. They need almost  
24 100,000 square feet. That's not available in the  
25 Center today.

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1 Healthtrax is part of that wellness  
2 center. It is fundamentally a different choice than  
3 the existing fitness centers. One is not better or  
4 worse, one has a much higher dues, it's associated with  
5 the hospital, with their therapy. There is not a  
6 swimming pool in the Center, for example, associated  
7 with health, so, yes, they are the same use, but they  
8 are fundamentally different decisions in the  
9 marketplace. I don't think you would choose between  
10 one or the other. You are going to make a certain kind  
11 of choice, and that's driven by the wellness component  
12 of the hospital. That is two-thirds of the project.  
13 New residents and new people doing new things in the  
14 Center. It would be fabulous to be able to walk to  
15 health wellness services in the Center.

16 Let's take the retail. A good chunk of  
17 our retail is specifically designed to attract or keep  
18 existing customers in the Center longer. A movie  
19 theater alone will probably drive -- you know, if you  
20 use the ratio of one meal for every four visitors,  
21 which is the average that we see, that could drive many  
22 thousands of new meals to the Center that aren't just  
23 coming into our restaurants, they are going to all the  
24 restaurants. The same thing with a larger retailer.  
25 The visitor to that retailer isn't then just going to

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1 our shops, he is going to all the shops. That is 80

2 percent of all the uses that we are proposing, which  
3 directly drive new shoppers, new occupants, new workers  
4 to the Center today.

5                   The other 20 percent is so that we  
6 behave and act like the Center. The last thing we need  
7 to do is send a message to the marketplace that there  
8 is one kind of Center over there and one kind of Center  
9 over here. I cannot emphasize strongly enough that  
10 unless we have small, charming, unique storefronts in  
11 this part of the Center as you have in that part of the  
12 Center, it will not behave as one Center.

13                   Whole Foods is another great addition.  
14 There is a food store in the Center in perpetuity. One  
15 time there were four of them. That's a fabulous anchor  
16 that adds to what it's like to live in the Center. We  
17 highly support that. We almost think of it like our  
18 own anchor. So, yes, could you find two pieces of  
19 square foot that are the same in both sides?  
20 Absolutely. I would remind you to think about  
21 competition differently. You are competing. Today's  
22 Center is competing with Avon and Canton and Buckland  
23 Hills and that big mall in downtown Hartford. There  
24 are two ways to understand competition and the Center  
25 needs help in competing with that. Those places are

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1 not standing still. They are after your customer just  
2 as much as anybody else, so think of competition two  
3 ways, it is a two-way thing. We believe that 80

4 percent directly help the Center with no competition  
5 and the rest can supplement it.

6 I will tell you a couple of interesting  
7 stories. We talked to a lot of tenants. There is a  
8 lot of tenants that are bigger than the shop sizes that  
9 are existing in the Center today. Store sizes in the  
10 Center tend to be 1500, 2,000 square feet, even  
11 smaller. It's going to be rather small when they  
12 become available. There are a lot of merchants who  
13 would like to be here, who would love to be here, who  
14 can't be here. They are going to go somewhere. And we  
15 are not trying to attract the same small stores. We  
16 are trying to find places for those people who want to  
17 be here, who want to be here for a long time so that  
18 the complement of services is complete. I think it's a  
19 very strong case that we are helping the Center  
20 competitively. It's not neutral. We are helping this  
21 competition level, we are making it stronger.

22 MS. CARPENTER: My follow-up question  
23 would be, again, right along competition, do you  
24 believe that the Greater Hartford area can support this  
25 project? I mean, now we have West Farms, you mentioned

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1 Avon, Buckland hills, and the potential of Adriaen's  
2 Landing, and my question is: Are we treating business  
3 volume really eventually from one location at the  
4 expense of another location? I don't know how much we  
5 can saturate this small area, the Greater Hartford

6 area, in terms of retail and business and the other  
7 proposal.

8 MR. HEAPES: That was a fair assessment.  
9 If I were Canton, I might be worried about it. You  
10 have a market position now based on your history, your  
11 heritage, your location, that is extremely strong. I  
12 don't actually look to us to decide that question, we  
13 look to the retailers themselves, some who are very  
14 sophisticated relative to catalog sales and  
15 understanding of the market. They believe this is the  
16 number 1 place in the market. It's really important to  
17 remember, we are not going to build empty buildings and  
18 wonder if the market is coming. We are not going to  
19 get a construction loan unless there is a significant  
20 amount of real retailers with a track record and their  
21 own financing who have signed a lease to come. This is  
22 not build it and they will come. The same thing with  
23 the office. We have a very high threshold, and so the  
24 market will tell us that. I can tell you right now  
25 from national tenants to local tenants, the interest in

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1 this Center, not because of us or Blue Back Square,  
2 couldn't be stronger.

3 MS. CARPENTER: Thank you. I just have  
4 one final question, and actually this has to do with  
5 the proposed public park, and I drive by there often, I  
6 walk by there, and I'm trying to envision that as a  
7 public park, and I understand the reasoning why it's

8 going there and the whole green space and the  
9 development of Trout Brook, but I'm trying to envision  
10 children playing there. That's another whole concept  
11 for me, and as I look at the earlier question about  
12 density in the area, in the square, in Blue Back  
13 Square, and whether or not there could be a swap  
14 between one of the buildings to the proposed park area  
15 so that there would be the open space that would be in  
16 the square, which would make a wonderful park and area  
17 for people who do go to Blue Back Square, as I look at  
18 the density, my feeling was, would there be any  
19 potential of using one of those buildings, eliminating  
20 some of the density, you know, and putting something  
21 there rather than using that as a park? I just -- that  
22 seems kinds of natural to me.

23 MR. HEAPES: The park was never in the  
24 equation with the Town to have development. I remember  
25 I asked, what are you going to do with that corner the

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1 first time we met, and their response was pretty clear,  
2 it's none of your business. It's Town property. It's  
3 an asset to the Town. I would respectfully submit that  
4 the application is the application. It's what we want  
5 to do, it's what we have the money to do, so it's what  
6 we are committed to do at that highest level.

7 Blue Back Square is a fantastic place  
8 for children. There is not a lot of cars in there.  
9 They can run around. It's at the foot of the library.

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10 It is the right size for a public room. It's different  
11 than an open green space. I'll be very honest, that's  
12 not the open green space that I would have cooked up,  
13 but I have a more urban sensibility. What the citizens  
14 told me they want for open space is lots of lawn, some  
15 big trees, open sky, not surrounded by buildings. You  
16 know, that's the lesson I learned from listening to  
17 them, and I have confidence that that park will do it.  
18 You need to realize something when you look at that  
19 piece of property. Right now you see it and it kind of  
20 falls down into something, and then it falls in again,  
21 and it's got parking in there, and it's got all the  
22 scrubby trees. You can't see the brook; you can't see  
23 the school on the other side. That property will be  
24 transformed. It will be flat to the pedestrians. You  
25 are not going to go into a hole. You will be able to

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1 see the other side. If you mean you can't visualize it  
2 because of the traffic, that I could understand, and we  
3 would probably need to do some work on how you really  
4 make that work, which we are prepared to do, but I  
5 think -- and secondly, because of its size and its  
6 connection to Trout Brook, the impact of that park I  
7 think is maximized versus putting it in amongst a lot  
8 of buildings. I didn't hear one citizen say that they  
9 thought the existing green space would be better  
10 surrounded by buildings. That's just the feedback that  
11 I can give you, but they want it opened and uncluttered

12 and not in the middle of the development.

13 So that's what drove that decision.

14 Whether it's right or wrong, it's not really for me to  
15 say, but it was trying to listen and understand that  
16 that drove that park being there.

17 MS. CARPENTER: So the Town will be  
18 really -- it's developing that property. Is it part of  
19 your proposal or is it something the Town is going to  
20 be --

21 MR. HEAPES: Our proposal is to  
22 essentially donate the funds and put them in place to  
23 give the Town essentially a large green space, larger  
24 actually, in terms of what they have now. We are not  
25 proposing any uses or any function. I have offered to

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1 the Town over the course of the next 24 months as we  
2 are doing construction for Street-Works to help lead a  
3 visioning process to determine that, but I would really  
4 leave that at the Council's discretion. It's an offer.  
5 That's all I can say. We've offered it and we invite  
6 you to take us up on it if you so desire.

7 MS. CARPENTER: Thank you.

8 MS. MECK: Thank you. Mr. DeVaughn.

9 MR. DEVAUGHN: Thank you, Madam  
10 Chairperson. One question relative to the library. It  
11 seems to me that the position of the library is  
12 currently given a great deal of prominence. As one  
13 walks up South Main Street going north towards

14 Farmington Avenue, my attention is drawn to the larger  
15 than life statue of Noah Webster, and then I'm drawn to  
16 the library. After this development, if this goes  
17 through, Noah Webster's statue would be placed in  
18 another location, and there would be a theater in the  
19 mix now, and my concern is that the library doesn't  
20 lose any prominence in the new configuration.

21 MR. HEAPES: Is that a question to me?

22 MR. DEVAUGHN: Maybe it doesn't. It's  
23 just difficult for me to visualize how it's going to  
24 look.

25 MR. HEAPES: I have a photograph here.

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1 Our feeling was that the way Noah sits here right  
2 now -- and I know this is a topic, Madam Chair, that  
3 you may want to wait about talking about the moving of  
4 Noah.

5 MS. MECK: Actually I would prefer to  
6 discuss that, because we have a separate application  
7 that is particular to that issue, we will discuss it  
8 with the monumental issue, if that's okay with you.

9 MR. DEVAUGHN: That's fine, Madam  
10 Chairperson

11 MS. MECK: I just have two very brief  
12 questions to ask. One is, as it relates to Town  
13 Planning and Zoning and the Special Use Permit  
14 application that's before us, and I'm assuming that --  
15 I'm going to the theater question at the moment, and we

16 had talked about, I believe you said five screens,  
17 about 1,000 seats.

18 MR. HEAPES: I believe the Master  
19 Agreement says five or six.

20 MS. MECK: Correct. I'm assuming that  
21 that decision is based on some kind of economy scale,  
22 what makes sense, that the one movie theater, the two  
23 screen theaters no longer makes sense economically; is  
24 that correct?

25 MR. HEAPES: That is absolutely correct.

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1 MS. MECK: And then just moving on a  
2 general question, we are talking a lot about the  
3 synergy between the two centers or the two sides of an  
4 existing Center.

5 MR. HEAPES: Right.

6 MS. MECK: And things that may or may  
7 not affect that, and I know that we've talked a little  
8 bit about merchants who will or will not come into this  
9 new side of the Center, and my question really goes to  
10 retail hours, which I know that you can't tell us  
11 because that's up to the merchants and governed by the  
12 same Town principles that govern the existing Center.  
13 My question really, and this is perhaps not necessarily  
14 to Mr. Heapes, but to staff, but it also speaks to some  
15 of the experience you may have in other locations that  
16 you've been speaking to this evening. Is it possible  
17 or feasible -- I know in the Center we talked about the

18 chains that were discussed. There are a lot of moms  
19 and pops in the Center who are not open late into the  
20 evenings and not open on Sunday, and the Center has a  
21 different feel. There is more activity in the  
22 restaurants now than there used to be in the evening  
23 and weekends, but still you don't eat there and shop as  
24 you would in other locations. It seems to me that this  
25 other side of the Center has potential for that

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1 depending on who you bring in and who those retailers  
2 are.

3 So is it conceivable that we are going  
4 to have one Center that's got a certain number of  
5 hours, and then we are going to have an after-hours  
6 Center across the way? That's a theoretical question,  
7 but, Mr. Feldman, if you can just address that.

8 MR. FELDMAN: Madam Chair, that's really  
9 a very important question. I'm not sure there is an  
10 answer to that, and I think it goes to the points that  
11 have been made earlier, which is a common strategy,  
12 common marketing, common branding, common  
13 identification. I would hope common hours is in that  
14 description somewhere as well. Hours have been  
15 discussed, as I'm sure you all know, amongst the  
16 merchants in West Hartford Center for years, and  
17 perhaps there will be some agreement as to a more  
18 common hour of when they open, when they close, days of  
19 the week when they are open, when they are closed.

20 MS. MECK: Thank you, Mr. Feldman,  
21 Mr. Heapes.

22 MR. HEAPES: I will tell you what the  
23 merchants have told me because it's quite interesting,  
24 and I won't be specific, you can guess if you like.  
25 They've been experimenting with extended hours on

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1 Thursday, and what they've told me right now, with the  
2 current mix between financial services, restaurants and  
3 retail, there is not enough retail to drive shopping  
4 trips in the evening. So a particular merchant, and  
5 you would shake your head, told me in a month of  
6 Thursday openings, I guess this is going to give it  
7 away since this is jewelry, he sold one watch band  
8 because the trip to the Center after dark is for food,  
9 and you eat and you walk on the sidewalk. So one of  
10 the things that will help as we work through this is to  
11 get enough critical mass on shopping to drive, to help  
12 drive that.

13 I'll give you another interesting  
14 example in Bethesda. No one wanted an outdoor cafe.  
15 That's problematic. How do we operate it? We talked  
16 one restaurant into doing it. These are all locals,  
17 The merchants happened to think, I believe they were  
18 right, that that merchant was making more money, and lo  
19 and behold we had more cafes than you could shake a  
20 stick at.

21 I believe if there is money to be made

22 there, because there are really shoppers on the street,  
23 these are retailers, and this is a tough competitive  
24 business, I have all the faith in the world that  
25 collectively we can make that happen. The reason they

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1 resist now is they don't sell anything at night, and  
2 they don't sell anything on Sunday, and they pay a  
3 terrible personal price as a mom and pop to stay open,  
4 lose money, not be with the family. So I have faith,  
5 and I will say in our negotiations with the merchants,  
6 as many times as they asked us to do something, they  
7 looked at themselves and said, we are going to have to  
8 do something, too, so that collectively we take  
9 advantage of this opportunity. I have huge faith in  
10 their ability to do that. We are going to give them  
11 some more juice to help do that with.

12 MS. MECK: Thank you, Mr. Heapes. For  
13 the record, I will say that I am sure I am wearing that  
14 watch, and also for the record that I am not averse to  
15 dining and then shopping on either side of the Center  
16 should that be a decision that is made, but I want to  
17 make sure that we keep that in mind as we are comparing  
18 the activities in the two. That was an aside question.

19 I'm now going to call on Mr. Harris for  
20 questions.

21 MAYOR HARRIS: Thank you, Madam Chair.  
22 I want to talk a little bit about the housing  
23 situation. There are no rentals here, these are all

24 for-purchase units?

25 MR. HEAPES: Correct.

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1 MAYOR HARRIS: Are there going to be any  
2 restrictions, as you can have in the condo situation,  
3 to limit the number of noninvestor-occupied units so  
4 that someone can purchase the condo and then rent it to  
5 someone? Are you going to allow that to happen or not?  
6 I mean, are there any ideas about that?

7 MR. HEAPES: I don't have the answer to  
8 that. I'll get it for you. I haven't been part of  
9 those discussions, so I'd have to tell you the honest  
10 to God truth, I don't know the answer, but I'll get it  
11 for you.

12 MAYOR HARRIS: Thank you. And that  
13 would be, you know, pursuant to your condo documents to  
14 establish the common interest in community.

15 MR. HEAPES: Absolutely.

16 MAYOR HARRIS: The other thing is you  
17 had said I think in response to Mr. Davidoff about  
18 Mizner Park, that it's not targeted to one demographic.

19 MR. HEAPES: Correct.

20 MAYOR HARRIS: You were talking in  
21 general about the mixes, but if you look at the housing  
22 component here, what were the prices again for the  
23 units?

24 MR. HEAPES: Three to four hundred  
25 thousand dollars.

1                   MAYOR HARRIS: So that is targeting to  
2 more than one demographic. Has there been any thought  
3 about perhaps having some units that were a little less  
4 expensive? And the idea that I'm thinking about, you  
5 have people that will be working in these stores, you  
6 have a senior center that is close by. Is it possible  
7 to have some kind of housing where people could live  
8 close to where they work and go and to take cars off  
9 the road, et cetera?

10                   MR. HEAPES: We are not opposed to that.  
11 We have an active -- Bethesda has a great program like  
12 that. The issue is interestingly about this  
13 marketplace. The reason we don't have rental, we would  
14 love to have rental, the cost of mixed-use residential,  
15 when you mix the uses and the restaurants, whatever,  
16 are much higher than the rent rates in this market can  
17 afford. It's really clean and simple, we would never  
18 get them financed. We have nothing against them. We  
19 have nothing against affordable housing.

20                   In Bethesda, for example, where they  
21 have a 20 percent affordability setback, that is always  
22 linked with a subsidy. Montgomery has MOC, the  
23 Montgomery County affordable housing commission and  
24 that's who makes up the difference. And this goes back  
25 to our earlier conversation about what do you

1 subsidize, what do you pay for? We didn't have in our  
2 conversations with the Town a policy initiative  
3 suggesting that you wanted to subsidize that in the  
4 marketplace. This goes back to all the exact  
5 trade-offs. If you said to us we would like to rethink  
6 the mix of housing and put some money in the bond and  
7 find a way to do the SSD, we are not opposed to that as  
8 a program, but there is not subsidy money in our side  
9 of the deal. It barely works on the residential side  
10 now. So we are not opposed to it, but the deal can't  
11 afford it. I think it's a real issue for the Town  
12 relative to affordability, and we are very sympathetic  
13 to it.

14 I do believe, because we have  
15 residential in two locations, we can target a different  
16 demographic in the second building that may not be  
17 economically different but may be socially different,  
18 may be younger, may be more of the demographic you are  
19 speaking to, but economically we don't have the ability  
20 to subsidize nonmarket rate units.

21 MAYOR HARRIS: Thank you, Mr. Heapes,  
22 that was actually my next question. This is an open  
23 question to both sides, just you have the situation  
24 that I think Ms. Carpenter was getting to where you  
25 have an existing, we've talked about an existing

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1 driving Center and kind of an area that's being  
2 underutilized. Are there any examples from around the  
3 country that we can use to compare where you have that  
4 driving Center, and you put mixed use in an  
5 underutilized area and what's happened? It doesn't  
6 have to be answered right now, but to the extent that  
7 those comparisons can be made, it might be helpful.

8 MR. HEAPES: What happens afterwards you  
9 mean?

10 MAYOR HARRIS: Do you have any examples  
11 from other areas? The ones that you talked about,  
12 Mizner Park and Bethesda, but other developments --

13 MR. HEAPES: I can name you probably 15  
14 or 20 of what I call paired districts where there was a  
15 historic component and then a new component of  
16 significant size, so to speak, and there is no rhyme or  
17 reason to which came first, and I didn't show them to  
18 you because they tend to be in bigger cities, and so I  
19 decided not to. Boston, take Newbury Street and the  
20 Prudential, now that's a mall, but they are both  
21 servicing retail customers that do two things. The  
22 best example, forget what it looks like, is Horton  
23 Plaza in San Diego. Horton Plaza was mixed use in the  
24 middle of San Diego. It was responsible for igniting  
25 the gas lamp business because it brought the customers

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1 back. You can talk about LoDo in Denver, in Denver  
2 square. You can talk -- there is probably ten or

3 fifteen of them. They tend to be in bigger  
4 neighborhoods.

5 My favorite is in Washington, D.C. in  
6 Georgetown where there was the historic district, and  
7 then they came in and did kind of an interior thing  
8 called Georgetown Park, owned and managed by one.  
9 After that happened, they then did Washington Harbor  
10 which then unleashed some more historic districts.  
11 There is kind of four generations in Georgetown. I  
12 think there is a history of it. I don't like the  
13 comparison though because usually it was all one  
14 product type, and then a kind of urban mall or  
15 something that was really different. That's really  
16 what we don't want to do here. We want to take one  
17 product type and really expand it and strengthen it,  
18 not provide two different experiences to the consumer,  
19 slightly different, but not two options, so that's why  
20 I didn't show those.

21 MAYOR HARRIS: Thank you.

22 MS. MECK: Thank you, Mr. Harris. We  
23 are going to keep mixing up the order here and start  
24 from my far right and work our way back up, and so we  
25 will start with Mr. Doolittle.

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1 MR. DOOLITTLE: Thank you, Madam  
2 Chairwoman. Just a couple of very brief questions for  
3 the Town, and it has to do with the parking at the  
4 library. I am not comfortable that I understand

5 exactly how the library parking works. I've heard that  
6 there is 63 or 69, thereabouts, spaces reserved for the  
7 library. Is there a validation type of system? I want  
8 to know how it actually works. And my second concern  
9 is whether you think that's enough spaces because I've  
10 been at meetings in that library where there is at  
11 least 70 people in Webster Hall, and then the library  
12 functions are going on around that as well.

13 MR. VAN WINKLE: Ron Van Winkle. The  
14 number we are using, 69, is a demand number so that we  
15 can look at garage revenues, and it's meant to be an  
16 average over time. If 100 people show up in the garage  
17 and go into the library, they are going to get  
18 validated. We are not going to stop at 69 and say no,  
19 everyone else is going to have to pay for the parking,  
20 so we are talking about two-hour validation. The way  
21 these garages operate, you are going to get a card,  
22 like you do at most garages; it will have a magnetic  
23 strip on it; you are going to go into the library;  
24 they're going to run it through their meter, and it  
25 will print on it that you were in the library and the

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1 time you were there, and that will allow you to go back  
2 to the garage and get out without paying. It's a  
3 fairly simple system, and again, if we have more  
4 parkers, they will still be able to do that.

5 We estimate, though, that 69 would be a  
6 high number for a daily average for the library at any  
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7 one time, so we think we are in good shape with that.

8 MR. FELDMAN: Madam Chair, let me just  
9 go on to explain, Mr. Doolittle, there is no reserved  
10 parking for the library. In other words, when you pull  
11 into the parking garage, you won't hit a row that says  
12 "Reserved For Library Only," you park wherever you can  
13 within the parking garage.

14 MR. DOOLITTLE: Thank you very much.  
15 That answers my question on that.

16 The second question I have is with  
17 regard to the open space also for the Town regarding  
18 the park. I understand that the proposed park, I  
19 understand that now there is a parking lot there, and  
20 there is also some equipment being stored there. Where  
21 are those uses going to be shifted to?

22 MR. FELDMAN: Madam Chair, through you,  
23 Mr. Doolittle, a lot of it is public works. It will be  
24 moved to the Brixton Street, some of it actually will  
25 probably be housed -- a little bit will be housed right

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1 within the parking garages that are to be built that  
2 deal with the immediate maintenance needs within West  
3 Hartford Center.

4 MR. DOOLITTLE: So then through you,  
5 Madam Chair, I take it we are comfortable that our  
6 other Town facilities will be able to absorb those uses  
7 in a safe manner.

8 MR. FELDMAN: Madam Chair, yes.

9 MR. DOOLITTLE: Thank you. One last  
10 question, if I might, Madam Chair, and this one is  
11 directed to Mr. Heapes. We've learned a lot about  
12 Mr. Heapes through these proceedings and one thing  
13 we've learned is that he likes breakfast, and he can't  
14 get it in West Hartford.

15 MR. HEAPES: I got that message loud and  
16 clear, thank you.

17 MR. DOOLITTLE: I would ask you if  
18 you've been to Harry's Pizza?

19 MR. HEAPES: Yes, yes, it's Rob  
20 Rowson's favorite place. And I've been to Mo's.  
21 Maybe I just need to get out more.

22 MR. DOOLITTLE: I agree that you've  
23 identified a hole in the marketplace, but Harry's does  
24 have a good breakfast.

25 MR. HEAPES: I will meet you there

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1 tomorrow, I'll be there.

2 MS. MECK: Thank you. Mr. Coursey.

3 MR. COURSEY: Thank you, Madam Chair,  
4 and I think it's just about time for breakfast. I have  
5 two quick questions. The first one is for our folks at  
6 the Town, just to follow up on a couple of points that  
7 were mentioned by previous speakers about perhaps --  
8 there was a mention that down in Boca Raton there is  
9 free parking associated with that project and perhaps  
10 taking a look at changing the market structure, the

11 market rate of the housing that would be on this  
12 parcel .

13 My understanding is that those are both  
14 things that we could contemplate here, but if we were  
15 to do that, that would negatively impact the return on  
16 the SSD and perhaps would not make financial sense.

17 MR. VAN WINKLE: We looked at this  
18 issue. One of the things about the Center is that it  
19 is surrounded by housing which is relatively  
20 affordable. If you look at the condominiums around the  
21 Center and the rental housing, what the Center doesn't  
22 have is a more upscale housing. So the Center itself  
23 is a very affordable area, and this brings a new  
24 product into the Center which diversifies the market,  
25 so I think it's a nice addition.

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1 MR. COURSEY: Thank you, Madam Chair,  
2 just one more question for Mr. Heapes. I believe that  
3 probably the most important part to the project is the  
4 east district, but for it to really work and for us to  
5 have one Center, the real important piece is what  
6 happens at the Board of Ed building.

7 Could you -- and you do a good job at  
8 this, but could you paint a better picture for me. I  
9 know we have the theater and the retail use at the  
10 corner. Every once in a while you talk about Sage  
11 Allen, that brings us thoughts of back-to-school  
12 shopping, so that puts a little tear into it. But if

13 you could -- I'm more interested in the doors and how  
14 that retail experience, whether there is a theater or  
15 the retail portion, how it opens up to the street.

16 MR. HEAPES: Okay. There is three  
17 components. If you were to look at the building today,  
18 there is what you'd see on the front, the columns, the  
19 pediment, the cupola, the old Board of Ed building.  
20 Our intention is in that structure, and we are being  
21 very careful about what kind of retailer we would put  
22 in there, our intention is to put a restaurant in there  
23 and the kind of restaurant that doesn't need to stick  
24 stuff all over the building, to put it kind of calmly,  
25 so that the character of the building matches the

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1 restaurant. I'll give you an example, and it won't be  
2 a breakfast place, I'm pretty sure, but it could be  
3 something like a steak house. Tenants would want to be  
4 kind of closed and quiet, not Morton's, but, you know,  
5 not an exuberant retailer. So the character of the  
6 building is the character of the building.

7 Now, what we are proposing in front of  
8 those steps, rather than the kind of patio and planter  
9 that is there now, is what I would call -- it's not a  
10 cafe area, but an outdoor seating area, not unlike the  
11 labyrinth at the church where we would have the map  
12 working with the Webster house to kind of orient you to  
13 the history of West Hartford, so it would be a little  
14 more active in the front of it.

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15 To the left of that we do anticipate  
16 access point to the cinema, but not make a big deal out  
17 of it. That's not where we would do the big flashy  
18 marquise. That would be just kind of quiet, but the  
19 people that know about the cinema come and use that.  
20 So we are not trying to jump out and change the  
21 character of the green in any ways, but just possibly  
22 add a few things that make it a little more animated,  
23 so we would want to light the cupola up like it is now,  
24 light the portico up so that people would know this is  
25 kind of the center of activity at night, but not with

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1 colors and exposed lights and all that kind of stuff.  
2 On the corner, for the retailer that we  
3 are projecting, is a large enough presence so that as  
4 you come into Town you realize that there are things to  
5 do on both sides. You get some visibility that there  
6 is a lot happening right here at this part of Town  
7 without being, I don't know what the right word is, too  
8 retailly, I guess is the word, so we can have a building  
9 that's simple, that's modern, that's of its time. We  
10 are not going to try to do a historical facade there.  
11 It will be respectful to the existing Board of Ed and  
12 have some sense of retail with some sensibility that's  
13 on the Town green. I don't know if that describes it  
14 very well. In a sense we have a mixed message, which  
15 is there is things going on both sides of the Center.  
16 There is an old building involved, it has some

17 interesting use in it, but it's not a big sign across  
18 it. There are some conflicting messages, and we need  
19 to work very carefully so that we get the access and  
20 people understand what's going on in the Center without  
21 negatively impacting the green.

22 I don't know if that describes it, but  
23 those are the values that we are kind of working on  
24 that are a little bit at cross-purposes. I'd like the  
25 people to think of the library as an exciting place.

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1 We view it as an anchor as important as the retail,  
2 where you say let's go hang out at the library, get a  
3 cup of coffee, whatever, sit on the steps, drop your  
4 kid off and say spend some time at the library and the  
5 kid would say that's a cool thing to do. So we view  
6 the library in the exact same way that we view the  
7 retail, which is an activity center in the Center that  
8 is active eight, nine, twelve hours a day.

9 MR. COURSEY: Thank you.

10 MS. MECK: Thank you, Mr. Coursey.

11 Mr. Brown.

12 MR. BROWN: I have no questions on this  
13 matter.

14 MS. MECK: Mr. Connors.

15 MR. CONNORS: Just one question. You  
16 mentioned before just a couple of restaurant names,  
17 Macaroni Grill, Ruby Tuesdays. Is that the type of  
18 restaurant occupancy that would be in this part of the

19 Center?

20 MR. HEAPES: I think we will have a mix.

21 MR. CONNORS: It would be some chain and  
22 some maybe local?

23 MR. HEAPES: Yes. I would say it would  
24 be a mix of price points, of experience from pure sit  
25 down, to -- it would be interesting food products that

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1 aren't essentially here today. Remember at the end of  
2 the day what do we really, really want? It is good  
3 successful unique stores, that are not in the  
4 marketplace, that the people aren't going to see  
5 everywhere else that they will associate with the  
6 character of West Hartford. And it's hard not to get  
7 into this chain store discussion. I thought the  
8 Courant actually ran an excellent piece on it a couple  
9 of months ago. We want good merchants, however we get  
10 them, and unique and interesting and create that mix,  
11 with a bias towards local, if we can.

12 MR. CONNORS: Thank you.

13 MS. MECK: Thank you. Mr. Begley.

14 MR. BEGLEY: Thank you, Madam Chair.

15 One question I have is in regards to the rooftops of  
16 the buildings. Do you have any plans for leasing that  
17 space out for cellular towers or -- I call it rooftop  
18 pollution in regards to dishes and everything else?

19 MR. HEAPES: This is an interesting  
20 phenomenon, going right along with my I-sham-i-sham poll.

21 You have a huge radio tower in Town, as you know, right  
22 next to the steeple, no one even sees it. So we do  
23 have plans for one really important antenna for the  
24 American Legion, the top of the garage. It's really  
25 fundamental to their program, and that's it. Satellite

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1 antenna.

2 MR. BEGLEY: And in regards to the  
3 condominium owners putting dishes on the roof?

4 MR. HEAPES: They would be screened  
5 along with the mechanical equipment up on top. Good  
6 point. That's a good point.

7 MS. MECK: Mr. Slifka.

8 MR. SLIFKA: I don't want to break up  
9 the momentum, but I might have more than one question.

10 MS. MECK: You may be penalized later  
11 for that.

12 MR. SLIFKA: Mr. Heapes, I think earlier  
13 in the night you gave a number of between five and  
14 eight restaurants you expect to add.

15 MR. HEAPES: Right.

16 MR. SLIFKA: How do you define  
17 "restaurant?" Because I think locally when we think of  
18 the Center, we probably think of things like Bricco and  
19 Max's and think of a traditional sit-down restaurant.  
20 We don't have a lot of stop in and maybe there is  
21 seating available, but is it more along the lines of  
22 fast food?

23 MR. HEAPES: You have about eighteen  
24 restaurants today not including the four to five coffee  
25 shops.

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1 MR. SLIFKA: So when you include in that  
2 number of five to eight, do you include along with your  
3 Macaroni Grill and other traditional sit-down  
4 restaurants, do you also include like the Baja Fresh  
5 type establishment?

6 MR. HEAPES: That we would include as a  
7 restaurant.

8 MR. SLIFKA: So that is within the five  
9 to eight number?

10 MR. HEAPES: Yes, plus or minus.

11 MAYOR HARRIS: Not really parliamentary  
12 inquiry, but what is Baja Fresh?

13 MR. HEAPES: Do you want to tell him?

14 MAYOR HARRIS: In the water or  
15 something?

16 MR. HEAPES: It's a marvelous restaurant  
17 that has healthy food made while you wait, actually  
18 made while you wait, not pretending to make while you  
19 wait, somewhat Mexican, like a wraps place. We'd love  
20 to have that here.

21 MR. SLIFKA: You have them at Bethesda  
22 Row.

23 MR. HEAPES: Yes. I love them.

24 MR. SLIFKA: I just want to talk about

25 tenants for a second. Can you tell us in your

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1 experience what's happened with, to the extent that  
2 this has occurred, your second generation of retail and  
3 restaurant tenants? I guess in the sense that,  
4 especially with the Bethesda Row project, to a lesser  
5 extent with this one and to a lesser extent maybe with  
6 some of your others, that the space is almost designed  
7 around certain tenants, and when I say that, I'm  
8 thinking in particular of that central park corner area  
9 of Bethesda Row where the Barnes & Noble building is,  
10 and I have trouble visualizing -- that seems to work,  
11 very, very well. I have trouble visualizing another  
12 tenant being in that spot should that day ever come,  
13 and how if at all is this project designed,  
14 understanding you can't name them, but designed around  
15 specific tenants, and what has happened in your other  
16 projects with that second generation of tenant both in  
17 terms of type and quality?

18 MR. HEAPES: It varies widely by the  
19 merchant, as you can imagine. With the exception of  
20 the movie theater, which obviously you are designing  
21 floor slopes, et cetera, all of our merchandising space  
22 is to be quite flexible. In fact, the Barnes & Noble  
23 in Bethesda, with the exception that it has escalators  
24 in it, could be converted into smaller stores. We  
25 really look at this as infrastructure for long term

1 that needs to be flexible and accommodate different  
2 tenants, so to the extreme sense, there is only two  
3 things that are really custom built here, one is a  
4 swimming pool in Healthtrax, which I can fill in pretty  
5 effectively, and the other is the smooth floors and the  
6 movie theater. That is the only tenant-specific retail  
7 space that you will see in the Center.

8 Another is some two-story space, which  
9 is probably what you are referring to relative to the  
10 Barnes & Noble store that seems to be big. I'm really  
11 not sure how to answer that other than to say there is  
12 ways to use the two-story space with smaller tenants.  
13 It doesn't necessarily demand that because one big  
14 tenant went out, you have to have another big tenant.

15 I think the most interesting thing from  
16 our perspective about retail is that it's very  
17 interesting all the time, and it changes, and people's  
18 tastes change. I will tell you, having done this for  
19 30 years, there was a time when any Town would have  
20 killed to have a Gap on the corner and a Banana  
21 Republic. Now there is a time when if you want a Gap  
22 or Banana Republic the Town will kill you. Barnes &  
23 Noble was the last wonderful glorious thing that we  
24 had, not so anymore.

25 So retail, like restaurants, is a bit on

1 the faddish side, so that's why we want really good  
2 quality, tall ceilings, flexible, with good storefront  
3 space, and that's just the way we view the investments,  
4 and I don't think we'd be any different than the  
5 Center, if you watch the merchandising mix that changes  
6 over there. I know when I talk to people and that  
7 office desk thing that was in Town Center, when  
8 everybody went, oh, my God, what's going to happen  
9 there? What was it called? Desk top? I don't know.  
10 Workbench. What's going on? The Center is not doing  
11 well. Then Steinway Piano opens up, and from my  
12 perspective, it was wow, that's really great. So it's  
13 a dynamic mix.

14 MR. SLIFKA: When I asked that question,  
15 I'm thinking in particular with the experience I've  
16 seen with certain enclosed malls, which may not be a  
17 fair comparison, but I know with our own West Farms,  
18 there may have been a downturn in quality over the  
19 years, and I think we almost have a situation now where  
20 it's come back, but for awhile there were almost two  
21 malls. There was a new section added on, and it was  
22 the hot section with all the retailers who you wanted  
23 and the tenants on the other end. That may be more  
24 equitable more now, but obviously that's a situation we  
25 want to avoid. That seemed to be kind of a second or

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1 third generation characteristic of West Farms.

2 And similarly, I know you are very  
3 familiar with the Washington area, as am I, and I know  
4 of a particular mall down there where it was built in  
5 the boom in the late eighties, and it was great for a  
6 while, and I think this was in the Arlington area.

7 MR. HEAPES: Right.

8 MR. SLIFKA: All of a sudden the tenants  
9 disappeared and the original ones, the Gaps and such  
10 that you referred to, were gone, and they had to go to  
11 a much more cut-rate type tenant, and then it had a lot  
12 of vacancies. I take it from your answers that you are  
13 very confident of this investment.

14 MR. HEAPES: This is a unique economic  
15 investment. We want retail, we want real plexes, with  
16 long-term value, that will be around for a long time.  
17 This is a neighborhood with people living here. People  
18 are moving in and out of those condos, and whether the  
19 marriage falls apart in the afternoon, I don't really  
20 know or care. People will be living here. Hartford  
21 Hospital will be here a long time. These are real  
22 nonfad uses. People have to live here. They need  
23 wellness access to doctors, et cetera. So we don't  
24 have to do what the mall has to do, which is reinvent  
25 itself. West Hartford doesn't have to reinvent itself,

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1 it's been great for 150 years. That doesn't mean the  
2 same tenants are here that were here 150 year ago, nor

3 should they be, so it's really important to understand  
4 we are trying to add onto and sustain a real place  
5 that's so different than a mall. So we have confidence  
6 in that. And by the way, 20 percent are interesting  
7 stores and restaurants that will come and go as they do  
8 in the Center.

9 I don't know if that answers your  
10 question, but we really look at it so fundamentally  
11 different that this is underwritten on people living  
12 here, people dealing with health here and, oh, by the  
13 way, shopping here too.

14 MR. SLIFKA: There has been some  
15 questioning from several people at this table about  
16 concerns that there is a saturation in the marketplace.  
17 You may not be able to find these tenants. Obviously  
18 you feel very confident that you've either found them  
19 already or you would be in short order, should this be  
20 approved.

21 MR. HEAPES: Right.

22 MR. SLIFKA: It might be helpful if you  
23 could quantify the number of retail tenants, you know,  
24 with some flexibility, that you are expecting to have  
25 in the project. I think that might help clarify this

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1 sense of competition, because I think for some of us,  
2 there might be a disconnect between, you know, about  
3 what that universe of tenants is. We know our  
4 universe, we know who is in the area and are saying,

5 how can you possibly find anybody else?

6 MR. HEAPES: Kind of a little summary?

7 MR. SLIFKA: Yes.

8 MR. HEAPES: Today in the Center, last  
9 count, I could be wrong, fifteen to eighteen  
10 restaurants, so to speak. We are looking at four,  
11 five, six. We are looking at an increase, what is  
12 that, 30 percent. Today in the Center, nonfinancial  
13 services, there is over 120 merchants in the whole  
14 Center, retail establishments. We are looking to have  
15 between 20 and 30, so we are looking at a 15 to 20  
16 percent increase in the number of stores, not including  
17 the two or three larger things, like the cinema. So  
18 you are looking at an increase in number of merchants  
19 of 15 to 20 percent, certainly not double. Why is  
20 that? Because we have a lot of square footage. We are  
21 targeting tenants who are a little larger who would  
22 like to be here who can't be here. So it's not like we  
23 are actually taking a tenant that the Center would get  
24 if we weren't here. It's if space isn't available. A  
25 really good example is Chico's. I don't care whether

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1 you like them or not. I don't buy women's clothes, I  
2 don't know. They came here as a very small store. I  
3 you do know if they had their druthers they would be  
4 significantly larger, but they can't be. The only  
5 point is that there is market demand already identified  
6 for the Center that it can't accommodate. That demand

7 will go someplace. It's not going to not be in the  
8 marketplace.

9                   So from that perspective we have  
10 tremendous confidence. The reason I can't tell you now  
11 is because we don't want to tell you. What we want to  
12 do is get the project going, let the merchants  
13 understand it, let them start to see some of the scale  
14 and stream and lease it. That way we have our greater  
15 opportunity to have the access to the most merchants.  
16 If we had to do it now like a traditionally financed  
17 development, what you end up doing is going to do the  
18 stupid thing that everybody else does, and you end up  
19 with the Gap and Banana Republic on the corner because  
20 it's easy and silly, and that's what you need to  
21 finance. This is a really important feature of what  
22 our investment is and the fact that we have other uses  
23 to help us finance it because we are not forced to make  
24 expedient retail deals to get the thing constructed.  
25 We can hold it back and really fine-tune the tenant mix

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1 and get it right.

2                   MR. SLIFKA: I just have one last  
3 question, I swear. It's very brief. You mentioned  
4 earlier that if you were Canton, you might be worried  
5 with this project coming on line.

6                   MR. HEAPES: I didn't mean Canton  
7 specifically. But there is issues of how much retail  
8 can a market support.

9 MR. SLIFKA: And I think I'd agree with  
10 you for a variety of reasons, knowing what I know about  
11 that project, but if you were -- my question is: If  
12 you were West Farms mall, would you be worried?

13 MR. HEAPES: No. That's a whole -- we  
14 talked about what is the experience? This is a  
15 mixed-use street level experience with locals and small  
16 shops. We are not interested primarily in the stores  
17 that are there. We are not a retail experience. I  
18 view this and West Farm Mall as very complementary.  
19 What we want to do is keep West Hartford's market  
20 position. I still want people to drive from Avon and  
21 come over the bridge instead of going to Buckland  
22 Hills. I want to keep this the strongest regional  
23 retail market in Connecticut. That works hand in glove  
24 with the mall. So from our perspective, we are not out  
25 to try to make the mall better, but we don't view this

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1 as competition to the mall any more than we do to the  
2 Center. There is a regional strip base here that we  
3 want to keep forever.

4 MR. SLIFKA: Thank you. Thank you,  
5 Madam Chair.

6 MS. MECK: Thank you. With the few  
7 minutes that we have remaining tonight, I'd like to do  
8 two things. One is just say these were the two largest  
9 subset of questions that we will be exploring, with the  
10 exception of traffic and the public financing component

11 that we have at the end of the agenda. We will be  
12 handling things a little bit differently in the interim  
13 which is looking to see if anybody has a particular  
14 question on a particular issue that relates to the body  
15 of the application, and so with the remaining few  
16 minutes we are actually going to do that. I'm going to  
17 ask if anybody on the Town Plan and Zoning Commission  
18 has any specific questions about the subdivision  
19 application as it was submitted? Mr. Davidoff.

20 MR. DAVIDOFF: I just have one to direct  
21 through you, Madam Chairwoman, to the Town Planner, if  
22 there is any issues that need to be addressed that we  
23 would look at in a normal TPZ hearing that need to be  
24 brought to our forefront this evening.

25 MS. LIMSON: Madam Chair, through you,

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1 Mr. Davidoff, the subdivision application has been  
2 thoroughly reviewed by staff. I believe that you have  
3 a final comment in your packet that basically says that  
4 they have addressed all of those comments. There is  
5 nothing unusual associated with this application with  
6 the subdivision as it relates to this development.  
7 It's basically the same process that you would review  
8 any subdivision application.

9 MR. DAVIDOFF: Thank you.

10 MS. MECK: Thank you, Mr. Davidoff. Are  
11 there any other questions from Town Plan and Zoning  
12 members? Mr. Doolittle.

13 MR. DOOLITTLE: Through you, Madam  
14 Chairwoman, I understood John Plante's testimony to be  
15 that all the water draining from the municipal sites  
16 would be treated. Is there a different program for the  
17 water that's draining from the BBS portion of the  
18 project? Perhaps I misunderstood your testimony. I  
19 just wanted to clarify.

20 MR. PLANTE: John Plante. There is very  
21 limited areas that are not public spaces on the private  
22 property. Truly the only areas that are public and  
23 that aren't buildings are the, say, in Building B, the  
24 parking court and the courtyard across from Blue Back  
25 Square, and the driveway between Buildings C and D, if

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1 we look up at the board here, as it drives back to  
2 residential turnaround, Building D. Those are really  
3 the only nonbuilding areas on private property. That  
4 area drains into -- all those areas drain into the  
5 existing Town roadway system, the public system in  
6 Isham or Memorial, and that water will go into the same  
7 location as it does today through the municipal system,  
8 an outlet into Trout Brook.

9 Everything that is surface parking lot  
10 in the municipal lot really today is not treated, is  
11 now available for an upgrade to be treated because it's  
12 a municipal property. It's not a public way. And all  
13 the drainage from that parking lot will now be treated  
14 by a storm water treatment system, actually two units

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15 on the lines leaving that site. So a significant  
16 increase in water quality from today.

17 MR. DOOLITTLE: Do I understand  
18 correctly that the great majority of the water after  
19 the project is built will now be treated, but it isn't  
20 current?

21 MR. PLANTE: Nothing is treated today.  
22 So you have a municipal lot which will be treated, and  
23 then a majority of the site is just open pavement which  
24 will now be buildings, that is cleaner water, it  
25 doesn't get onto the pavement where vehicles are, so it

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1 comes from the building roofs right into the storm  
2 draining system, so it never comes in contact with oils  
3 and pollutants such as that.

4 MR. DOOLITTLE: Thank you.

5 MS. MECK: Thank you, Mr. Doolittle, I  
6 think at this point we've reached our 11:15 adjourning  
7 time. We will recess until Monday night the 21st. We  
8 will reconvene at 6:15. Thank You.

9 (Hearing adjourned at 11:15 p.m.)

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CERTIFICATE

I hereby certify that the foregoing 199 pages are a complete and accurate computer-aided transcription of my original stenotype notes taken of the Joint Hearing between West Hartford Town Council and West Hartford Town Plan and Zoning Commission, which was held at West Hartford Town Hall Auditorium, 50 South Main Street, West Hartford, Connecticut, on June 17, 2004.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Sandra V. Semevolos RMR, CRR  
LSR # 00074  
Certified Court Reporter

04-06-17

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