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## Record turnout for Town Center

By **Katie Liesener**/ Staff Writer  
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In the largest town meeting in Wayland's history, the Town Center bylaw passed by nearly 80 percent last week, easily capturing the necessary two-thirds majority and paving the way for a proposed mixed use development of 165,000 commercial square feet, 167,500 residential square feet, and 40,000 municipal square feet at the former Raytheon property.

Asked what the biggest difference was between this vote and the failed vote for a Town Center bylaw at the special Town Meeting last fall, developer Chuck Irving said, "Probably Colleen Sheehan and Paulette Greene," referring to two Wayland residents who helped organize support for the proposed Town Center.

Irving said development team Twenty Wayland LLC paid \$100,000 on a professional marketing campaign last fall, and this time spent just \$300 on a sign.

"This year, we said, it has to be coming from the town, not from us," Irving said. "They (Sheehan and Greene) were able to communicate with people and get them motivated in a way we weren't able to accomplish."

Irving said the development team did not help fund the grassroots campaign.

Now that the bylaw has passed, he said, developers have begun work on designing the commercial and residential components of the project. The tenant mix should be finalized by the end of summer or early fall, and a site plan completed by next spring.

"We would love to see stores open at the end of 2008, but it could realistically be the end of 2009," Irving said.

Planning Board member Lynne Dunbrack, who told residents at Town Meeting the drafting of the bylaw had been rushed, said she anticipates a less chaotic schedule moving forward.

"I think both sides recognize that we can't continue to meet all hours of the night almost on a daily basis ... That doesn't really benefit either party," said Dunbrack, the new Planning Board chairwoman. "We can both work together to get tasks accomplished hand-in-hand in a timely fashion yet still have time to fully deliberate."

Dunbrack was one of two Planning Board members to vote against the board's endorsement of the Town Center bylaw. At special Town Meeting, she laid out reservations about the lack of a site plan, the contested amount of tax revenue the development would generate, and impacts on traffic.

The traffic analysis conducted by TEC Inc. predicted an increase in weekday traffic, and an increase in weekend traffic of over 1,000 percent over fully reoccupied use of the current office building on the site.

At special Town Meeting, residents of side roads near the site supported an amendment to restrict Old Sudbury Road access to prevent their roads from being used as cut-through routes. The amendment did not carry, and use of the driveway will remain under the Planning Board's purview through the master special permit process.

"We need to look forward," Dunbrack said in an interview. "We need to ensure the vision of the Town Center that's built is akin to the town centers people have expressed interest in."

The next step for the Planning Board will be to write rules and regulations for the permitting process and for site plan development, she said. The board will also meet with developers in coming months to discuss ideas about the development's look and layout.

Last week's special Town Meeting saw the largest town meeting attendance in recent history, beating the 1969 record by nearly 100 people. Roughly one out of every four registered voters showed up for the meeting, which was attended by 2,313 people.

The unprecedented turnout delayed the meeting for half an hour while town officials scrambled to find seating for the crowd of people still lined up at the door a half hour after the meeting's start.

Moderator Peter Gossels announced the meeting would have to be postponed if seating was not found, but the crowd was ultimately accommodated by filling the Little Theater and setting up extra chairs in the Field House.

"If I'd had to postpone Town Meeting, I would have been lynched by 2,300 people," Gossels joked.

During the delay, anxious supporters and opponents of the Town Center bylaw were unsure how the

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crush of voters would affect the outcome of the vote.

Irving was concerned about the possibility of postponement.

"The amount of time put into babysitting efforts cannot be duplicated," he said, eyeing the crowd.

Resident Regina Mandl, who petitioned to restrict Old Sudbury Road access to the Town Center site, was unsure whether the wet and bedraggled residents coming in from the rain supported her cause or not.

"Some of these people I've never seen at Town Meeting before," she said.

Selectman Joe Nolan, who supported the bylaw, commented, "We might be victims of our own success."

Once every resident had a seat, the town debated the Town Center bylaw for the full hour allotted. A motion to extend discussion for half an hour, made by a resident who said she had not yet made up her mind, did not pass.






The final vote was announced without applause or booing from the crowd.

"This is not a ballgame. These are serious issues that affect people's lives and pocketbooks," Gossels said in an interview.

Despite how divided the town has been over issues like the Town Center and the override, Gossels told residents their conduct was proof that the town can debate "peacefully, thoughtfully and with respect for each other."

### A record turnout

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