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Negotiating Town Center

By **Katie Liesener**/ Staff Writer
Thursday, March 23, 2006

Two different sets of negotiations crucial to the possibility - and quality - of a Town Center coming to Wayland took place at Town Building Monday night. Though held in the same building, they might as well have been worlds apart.

In the selectmen's hearing room, selectmen and developers reached swift agreement on nearly all elements of the development agreement, occasionally trading quips and laughing.

In the Planning Department room later that night, selectmen and the Planning Board dispensed with political postures of goodwill, with a power struggle erupting between the two boards over whose bylaw should be voted on at Town Meeting and how the signage issue should be resolved.

"Trust has been a scarce commodity around here lately," said Selectman Bill Whitney.

Nobody offered disagreement.

Planning Board members reiterated their stance that because they are the town's zoning authority, the selectmen should back their decisions on signage to give the town a stronger position going into negotiations with developers Twenty Wayland LLC.

"All we're asking is for you guys to get behind us for a change," said Rebecca Regan, Planning Board vice chairwoman.

The selectmen insisted they submitted their bylaw as a placeholder to give the board time to negotiate a signage agreement with the developers. Because Town Counsel Mark Lanza advised that only the selectmen's bylaw was broad enough to accommodate changes, the selectmen said working with their bylaw made the most sense.

"This is a control issue now," said Selectman Joe Nolan, who left the meeting visibly exasperated.

Both sides accused the other of abandoning the town's best interest.

"I find it unconscionable that they're doing this ... I think they're abusing the process," selectmen Chairman Michael Tichnor said during the selectmen's meeting.


"The Board of Selectmen are still saying, 'Whatever the developer wants, that's what we'll do,'" Regan countered.

The debate lasted into the wee hours of Tuesday morning.

At another meeting Tuesday night, Tichnor said the tone was much more positive and the meeting ended on a good note.

At the meeting, the Planning Board struck another compromise with the developer that if they could all agree on dimensions for the signs on the three biggest stores (the 40,000-square-foot grocery store and the two 15,000-square-foot stores), then they would agree to come to a conclusion on the signage for all the smaller stores in the 30-day period after the developers submit their plans after special Town Meeting.

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