

Statement to P&Z regarding the 2010 "Town Plan"

The day my husband, Seth, and I moved to Weston, a "cow chip" contest was featured on the front page of The Weston Forum. Having been city dwellers but not city lovers for 7 years, we finally felt like we were home. As soon to be parents of twin boys, we were looking for a small, rural community that felt safe, with the requisite perfect school system. We wanted to know we had neighbors, but not necessarily see them. Weston seemed like the perfect fit, and it still does today.

Maintaining the essential character of Weston is what's most important to me. Even though we have certainly grown by population and number of homes in the past 15 years, we have also managed to maintain and expand open space, built some beautiful parks and schools, and uphold our 2 acre zoning. Conservation and protection of our land, water, and other natural resources must continue to be our top priority.

What sets Weston apart from our neighboring towns is the essential character of Weston. Our one school campus and one shopping district allow all of us to feel like we're part of a community, as opposed to just being residents of a town. I like the fact that my kids care if Fay from the Lunch Box is not feeling well. I like the fact that you are greeted with familiar faces in Peter's Market. And most of all, I like the fact that people will approach me, often times to complain about town matters or taxes, but most times just to say "hi." I don't get that feeling when I'm in Westport and Wilton. We must understand that adding other business districts would change the essence of Weston, forever.

Many who have advocated for an increase in business in Weston, are looking for a means to offset personal property taxes. I understand that our relatively high taxes are a factor in causing some residents to move. This much is clear: The Board of Selectman needs to start thinking out of the box for additional ways to obtain revenue for the town.

Increasing our business district is not the answer. Weston collects a total of approximately \$165,000 in property taxes from Weston Shopping Center and Cobb's Mill Inn. This amounts to 0.27% of our total taxes collected. In order to get the kind of relief they are looking for, we would have to allow several large office buildings to be constructed. Just imagine the traffic.

I have to admit, I am confused by those who say they are looking for more goods and services. Did they not know what stores were here before they decided to move to Weston? We certainly have the essentials—a market, a bank, 2 restaurants, a pharmacy, a hardware store, a gas station and a liquor store. Travel less than 10 minutes in any direction, and you'll find more supermarkets, clothing stores, Starbucks, and yes, even several nail salons.

At the P&Z town meeting on Feb. 26, one gentleman stated that we need to continue to grow. I agree wholeheartedly with that statement, but not in the way he meant it. I loved the idea to incorporate bike paths, if it's physically feasible, on our roads. I think we should start closing School Road again on Sundays to allow bikers and walkers a safe

place to travel. Perhaps we can even raise some revenue by organizing a “street fair” once in a while. Several months ago, I spoke to Chief Troxell about the possibility of installing sidewalks from School Road to a safe crossing to the Center. He thinks there might even be grant money available for that purpose. I hope that we do have the funds in the near future, either publicly or privately, to build and support a community center that can be utilized from the very young to our seniors. This is the kind of growth that I hope to see, that will maintain our community character and protect our natural resources.

Respectfully Submitted,
Gayle Weinstein
Selectwoman
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