**ALAN H. SLAVIN**

36 Oak Street

Wareham, MA 02571

November 24, 2020

Wareham Planning Board

Memorial Town Hall

54 Marion Road

Wareham, MA 02571

Dear Chairman Barrett and Members,

I have been asked for my thoughts on the proposed Hospitality, Recreation and Entertainment District, and why I believe that it makes good sense to approve and support the proposed Zoning Amendment. I am drafting this letter at a time that presents huge challenges for our town, and challenges for everyone working to get through this period. I can’t remember a more important need and opportunity for us to pull together as a community and look out for each other and the best interests of our town. The reality is that the Commonwealth is currently debating tax increases, program cuts and reductions in aid to cities and towns that are likely to impact every Wareham resident.

*25% of Wareham’s revenue is from state aid.*

In the coming months and years, we will be looking at a highly competitive environment for jobs and new economic development as communities struggle to deal with a growing tax burden.

There will be new opportunities for smart development, and Wareham will be in the running to attract this tax-generating and job-creating growth. Competition for these revenues will be tough, as every city and town in the Commonwealth is suffering the consequences of the economic slow-down. I expect that with the change in Presidents/Party a stimulus package for infrastructure similar to what the Obama administration brought forward early in his 1st year. It is critical to have potential projects shovel ready to take advantage of full government subsidies. We have a real chance to take advantage of some of these opportunities if we are prepared and put procedures in place now.

The proposed Hospitality, Recreation and Entertainment District provides a procedure where economic development proposals that meet certain thresholds may submit a proposal for review by the Planning Board under Wareham’s existing Special Permit Review standards. Review by the Planning Board would follow the usual public hearing process, with peer review, and public comments.

The proposed zoning amendment applies only to R-130 land north of Route 25. We would never prevent a residential developer from using land for permitted purposes, but we have a unique opportunity to improve our zoning to allow for uses that will attract smart development. While the Commonwealth is considering various economic development programs and initiatives, we do not currently know what will be available in our region. We do know, however, that we have a unique opportunity to compete for any projects that become available - if we do the work now to update our zoning bylaws.

We are all aware of various town projects that were expected to be on the horizon – whether the development of Onset Pier, a proposed Public Safety Complex for our police department and emergency medical services, discussions regarding the need for a new community center/senior center and more. It is important that we take it upon ourselves find ways to address budget issues without increasing the burden on Wareham families. This proposal puts us in a perfect position to benefit from these competitive economic development opportunities instead of watching them locate to other communities.

Thank you for considering my opinion. I encourage the Planning Board to support the proposed Hospitality, Recreation and Entertainment District zoning amendment.

Sincerely,

Alan H. Slavin