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APR 11 2019

TOWN OF DARIEN
PLANNING & ZONING

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TOWN ADMINISTRATOR

Good evening members of the Darien Planning & Zoning Commission. I'm Jayme Stevenson, Darien's First Selectman here to comment for the record in support for your proposal to expand the Municipal Use (MU) Zone to 13 properties that serve a municipal purpose.

First, I want to thank the Commission, our staff and Glenn Chalder of Planimetrics for his assistance in undertaking a thorough review of our zoning regulations. Your work on the 2016 Town Plan of Conservation and Development highlighted opportunities to streamline certain regulations which are proving to be beneficial as our town experiences unprecedented and historic redevelopment activity.

The Town has benefited from the overlay of an MU Zone and the flexibility it offered for the successful completion of the Darien Library, Darien Police Department and the current redevelopment of Old Town Hall Homes. Among other benefits, the application of the MU Zone to all properties serving a municipal purpose will allow for a consistent application of zoning regulations throughout town and provide some flexibility for height and setbacks for property redevelopment.

A critical attribute of the proposed MU Zone extension is the requirement that all applications become 'special permit' applications requiring a substantially greater level of public engagement in the process and a greater burden for making certain findings on the part of the Commission. This process will ensure that public and neighbor interests are preserved. Section 425d makes clear that all uses shall be subject to 'special permit' approval and the Commission must determine that there will be no unreasonable detrimental impact on adjacent properties in order to approve the application of the MU Zone.

The use of the MU Zone has proven to be useful in facilitating better outcomes by providing flexibility for several town facilities and may do so for future projects where property characteristics and current zoning impede optimal outcomes. With the commitment to careful consideration of impacts to surrounding properties through a 'special permit' process, I support the extension of the MU Zone to the 13 facilities stated in your application.

Respectfully submitted,

Jayme J. Stevenson
Town of Darien, First Selectman