

As a resident of this Town, a former regular member of the Zoning Board of Appeals, and a current alternate to that board, I want to address the argument that this citizen's petition simply corrects an error that was made when the zoning by-laws were changed. This is simply untrue. I was a regular member of the ZBA at the time when the by-laws were changed to include the current table of uses and when they were changed to create the Business Highway North district. I remember that Martha Morrison and other members of the Planning Board worked for months to carefully revise the Table of Uses so that the uses would be clear and unambiguous. Every category was reviewed and considered. Martha used the NAICS codes as a reference point. We on the zoning board received occasional updates on their progress. When the job was finished in 2004, the Zoning Board and the Planning Board had a joint meeting and we reviewed the table together in detail. These changes were deliberate, including the change to create different categories of medical facilities and to allow them in different districts. Information was circulated to the public about the changes, there were articles in the local paper about the zoning revisions generally and the nursing/community care change specifically. The bottom line is that there was no mistake. The boards' recommendations were intentional, the public was fully informed, and the town voted to adopt these changes at Town Meeting.

The narrative that there was a mistake is false and it does not form an appropriate basis for the Planning Board now to vote to recommend affirmative action on the citizen's petition. There are those of you who know this, and to keep silent is wrong.

As there was no mistake, there is no valid reason for recommending that the will of the Town, which carefully considered this before, be upended. On the contrary, there is every reason to leave the table of uses undisturbed. The potential benefits to the Town from these facilities are obvious – the badly-needed tax revenue, the availability of a local health care option for residents, the increase in beds that may help with competition to decrease the cost of these facilities. The question of the appropriateness of a particular facility at a particular location should be dealt with through the permitting process, not through a zoning change that smacks of spot zoning. I urge the planning board to recommend no action on this warrant article.