

To the Planning Board:

Comments Planning Board's hearing on their warrant articles, March 5, 2019

- Sue Rettberg, 103 Revolutionary Road
- I'm speaking in support of the Planning Board's proposed Formula Business Bylaw for historic Concord Center (Article 29).
- I served for 10 years on the HDC. It was a challenge to work with other volunteers and townspeople to help the Town grow and change while at the same time trying to preserve the special appearance that makes Concord such a desirable place to live.

It has often been said that "Concord Center is protected because it is in a Historic District". This is only partly true. The HDC is not all-powerful, and does not cover all the commercial centers of Concord. It is further limited by its focus on "what can be seen from a public way". While this includes signage and shop fronts and some landscaping, it does not have any authority over what kind of shops or banks or offices may occupy the buildings. However, it was just this function that allowed the HDC to deny Citibank, because, unlike other businesses in Concord Center, it would have been entirely lit both day and night. What would have been visible from a public way was everything. Now, Citibank has withdrawn its consumer activities from Massachusetts, and the Town would be left with an empty storefront with a long lease. A cap on Formula Businesses would help support the HDC in its work to preserve the sense of Concord.
- The experience of the formula business cap in West Concord, along with other factors, has brought a swelling of new businesses to that center. Given that only 7 of 10 formula business openings are filled in West Concord, the bylaw cannot be accused of keeping formula businesses out.
- I would like to congratulate the Planning Board for acting on the 2018 Comprehensive Long Range Plan's recommendation to consider such a bylaw, and for getting it in the warrant for TM 2019.
- If this bylaw is passed, the Town will gain an invaluable planning tool to prevent any of us ever having to hear "Concord is a very nice town, but it's not much different from a lot of other towns we have visited".
- Thank you for your time.