

# FAIRFIELD MINUTEMAN



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## Fairfield looks at Kings Highway redevelopment

BY AUDREY ADADE

First Selectman Ken Flatto and the development team for Fairfield Commons, a proposed retail development project at 414 Kings Highway, met at a press conference on Aug. 9 to discuss their plans for the site.

Fairfield Commons will be a change for site, which was used as an adult video store.

The 15,000 square feet of proposed retail space will be used by one to five retail tenants. The building will be one story, but the exterior façade, will look like a two story building.

The adult video store at the site is the last video store of its kind in Fairfield and has not been one of the most favored businesses in town, according to Flatto.

"The economic goal has been to really transform a part of our town which we feel has potential to be similar Fairfield center and similar to thriving business corridors we have in other parts of our town," Flatto said. "This project will be taking an underutilized site with what I, the town, and many residents consider uses and tenants that have been inappropriate for the area and will be transforming it into quality retail and quality visual aesthetically pleasing buildings."

Flatto has full confidence in the development team for Fairfield Commons and supports the project. The overall concept, he said, will be well received by town officials in land use bodies. He is also hoping it will be well received by those boards.

"Given what is at this site now, this project is exactly the

kind of catalyst and example that we have been looking for the Kings Highway area to continue coming alive, which started over the last few years with some retail stores and BOE headquarters," Flatto said. "This is going to build on that and create an infusion."

The development team is made up of Paxton and Ray Kinol and Seth G. Wienstien. This is this team's first project in Fairfield. Paxton, Ray and Weinstein have together and independently developed residential and commercial property in Connecticut. Recent accomplishments include projects on the waterfront bureau of Stonington and Greenwich Avenue in Greenwich, both for which they have received awards.

"We have a history together of developing buildings that are very historical on the outside, while keeping up with the modern requirements of retailers and in some cases residential construction," Paxton said. "We try to do that here in Fairfield by photographing a number of historical buildings in town and really using that flavor of traditional red brick buildings in developing a retail building."

The Fairfield Commons development team promises to preserve the look of Fairfield while constructing this building.

"We are thrilled to have the opportunity to work in a lovely town like Fairfield where we think we can make a substantive difference in transforming some of the somewhat blighted areas into community based retail establishments that will

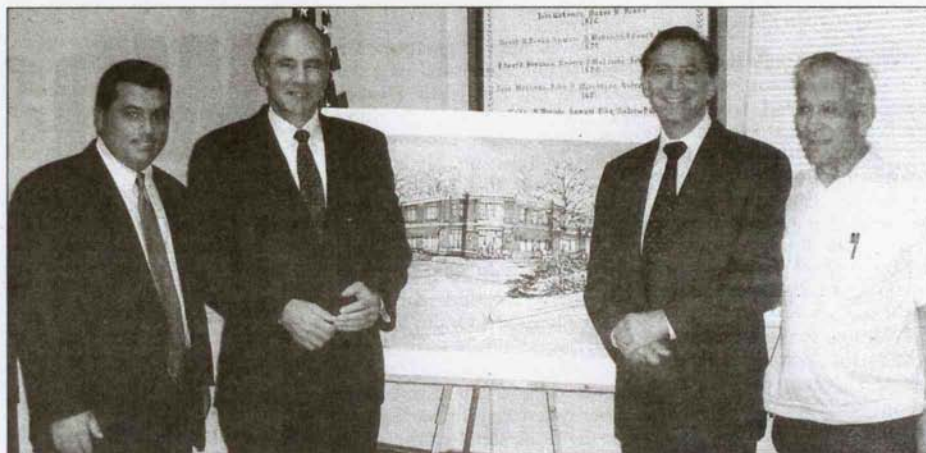


Photo by Audrey Adade

At a press conference last week, plans for Kings Highway redevelopment were released. Left to right: Fairfield Commons Development Team members Paxton Kinol and Seth G. Weinstein, First Selectman Ken Flatto and RTM member Joseph Gall.

continue the lovely character of the Fairfield town center," Weinstein said.

"As we enter a new community we try to understand what it is that community is looking for, what the needs of the community are and how best to work with the local folks to achieve goals that are very consistent with community desires," he said.

The development team hopes for a closing of businesses at the Kings Highway site and the start of construction by the end of the first quarter of next year. They hope to make their way through the zoning approval process by the end of this year. The team will be ready to start building in the first quarter of 2008. The following three months will be used to complete their financing

and obtain demolition permits, according to Paxton. The project will probably be financed by Citizens Bank.

"The economic development commission is supportive of what is being proposed here, and we see it as a major upgrade to the neighborhood enhancement certainly of this particular section of town," Mark Barnhart said, who is director of the Fairfield Office of Community and Economic Development. "We are quite happy to see this furtherance of our overall development objectives regarding Commerce Drive, Kings Highway area."

"We are looking for further planning in that area in anticipation of the opening of Fairfield metro center development," he said. "That has been a catalyst and spurred a lot of investment

activity and development interests in this part of town, which we have long felt has been an underutilized section and could very well be a major driving force of economic development for Fairfield in long run. We see this as a furtherance of that overall goal of positive development for this part of town that is consistent with the overall character of our community."

According to Joseph Gall, a Representative Town Meeting member in the Kings Highway district who has been in Fairfield for a number of years, "the neighborhood is happy that a dilapidated part of town will be cleaned up."

"We all want to see a continued revitalization in the area," he said. "Ken is doing a good job. Piece by piece we will get there."