

JOAN M. HAGAN
102 EAST FRANKLIN STREET
MEDIA PA 19063

April 21, 2011

Media Borough Council
301 N. Jackson Street
Media, PA 19063

Dear Members of Council:

As a former council member who has faced issues of finance, zoning and economic development, I am concerned that the present Council is not balancing those issues as they consider plans for 1 W. State Street. First and foremost, I am not opposed to selling the property. But, such sale should take place only if it contributes to the strength and stability of State Street's future. If it does, then the importance of the purchase price diminishes. As much as we revere it, the property "as is", is a white elephant. With very little usable floor space, high ceilings and chopped up rooms, the likelihood of rehabbing and getting strong destination tenants is very small. In my opinion, this building provides a grand design element to State Street, but is, by no means, an historic architectural gem, worthy of saving at all costs. On the contrary demolition and new construction with solid 1st floor retail, 2nd floor prime professional use and nice 3rd floor apartments or additional offices makes more sense. Paul Robinson has suggested that a structure could be constructed with design features emulating the original borough hall at the northeast corner of State and Jackson Streets now occupied by Tancreed's .

The facade easement, which may be unenforceable, devalues the purchase price. Any zoning relief would require zoning code changes which would entail extensive public hearings. An exception to the Zoning Code can be granted only by the Zoning Hearing Board and cannot be negotiated by Council. Any change to the Zoning Code made to accommodate a new buyer would constitute illegal spot zoning. A major change in the current "retail only" zoning would spell doom to State Street and could jeopardize renewable leases with Trader Joe's. While former leases of the property at 1 West State have not been profitable to the Borough, remember that without the New Orleans Cafe , there would have been no Iron Hill and no Trader Joe's.

The value of 1W State Street is not the 600 to-700,000 price tag, but is in its ability to maintain and foster Media's vibrancy. Remember Snowden's Department Store? Snowden's constituted a strong presence, single use retail building. The facade was saved but the interior is a mismatched collection of uses. 1 West State isn't "worth what someone is willing to pay for it". It is worth what you are willing to sell it – and the Borough's vitality - for.

I appreciate the negotiating process but Council's first responsibility is to Media's residents and taxpayers, Council's obligation is not to the developer looking for a bargain basement buying opportunity and not to your agent who only earns a commission if a sale is executed. You should reject the offer and consider one of the following:

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- a stronger lease
- a public/ private partnership, whereby the borough retains ground and leases development rights. The borough would have a stronger say as to design standard and use..

Some of those options may give the real estate market a chance to rebound and the value to increase.

What did the property at 305 East Baltimore recently sell for? Its value was in location, location, location. 1 West State Street is the last impact property on State Street and giving away that corner with few guarantees and slim hopes is short-sighted. Controlling that corner is vital to Media and its' future

Trader Joe's, Iron Hill and New Orleans didn't just happen. It was Mayor McMahon, Gail Whitaker, Paul Robinson, Debbie Krull and Frank Daly who prepared packets, developed the recruiting strategy, meeting time and again, travelling, calling and making it happen. They did not wait for opportunity to come knocking. Media cannot afford anything but a Council that works for strong destination stop at 1 West State Street.

Sincerely,


Joan M. Hagan