

Old A&P Plaza Still Empty

Decisions to be made within weeks

By KELLY CLARK

August 12 will mark the 1000th day that the old A&P building will be empty, having closed over two years ago.

Mellon Financial has been working on ways to fill the space and according to Joe Ailinger, who handles media relations for Mellon, the company is currently in a "sensitive stage" and he believes decisions will be made in a couple of weeks.

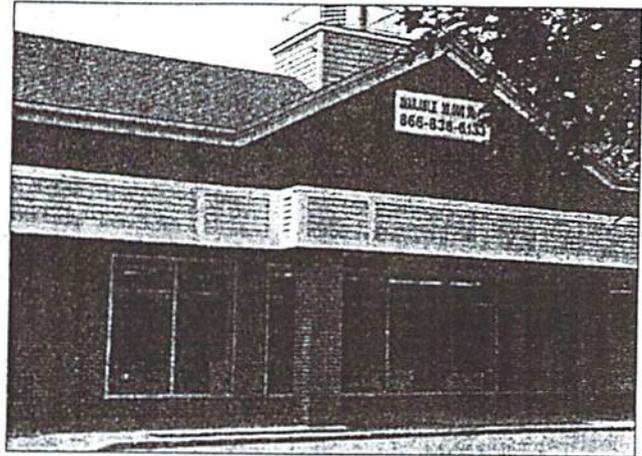
Ailinger said they have a few options they're looking at and he projected by July 31, they should know the future of the empty plaza.

At an economic advisory committee meeting on March 21, Bill Kaul, property manager for Mellon, explained a few options that were in the works at the time. One was dividing the space in half to house a grocery store and a hardware store. Kaul said two interested parties approached him about wanting to occupy 10,000 of the 20,000 total square feet. At the meeting, Kaul said he was also considering dividing the space into thirds.

The general consensus among many residents is that the space should be occupied by a grocery store. "Most of what I hear is that most people want a grocery store, no matter how small," said a passerby who wished to remain unnamed and who does not live in town, but does a lot of shopping in Duxbury.

John Allen of Depot Street also agreed that a grocery store would be necessary since "there's nothing else in town," he said. "There are a couple of stores where you can get milk and a loaf of bread but that's it."

Others would like to see a different type of grocery store,



Many residents would like to see a grocery store occupy the 20,000 sq. ft. building.

such as a Trader Joe's, occupy the space. "I think the town would really benefit from a high quality food store," said Mark Bobseine of Onion Hill Road. He said a whole foods store that carries good food, but not too "gourmet-ish," would be convenient.

"Either that or a movie theater," he said. "But the economics would never work and the space is too small."

Marcia Wilhelm of Elm Street would like to see a "nice little serviceable place" where the A&P used to be. She said that residents living in the age restricted housing complex behind the plaza used to depend on the grocery store in Hall's Corner. "We can drive to Hannaford, but they need to be able to walk," she said.

Wilhelm said that Hall's Corner is definitely in need of something to replace the old A&P. "It's hard, if it wasn't for the post office, no one would come here," she said.

Despite the empty space, Anne Antonellis, owner of Duxbury Mortgage Services, Duxbury Business Association president and economic advisory committee

co-chairwoman, said businesses have been coping.

"Would we like it to be there to bring more business in? Yes. But we've finagled a way to really make it work here," Antonellis said. She said that Kaul has been very forthcoming with information and she knows Mellon is speaking to some new and different retailers.

"We can't blame the departure of the A&P for everything," Antonellis said.

Even though Antonellis believes that Hall's Corner is starting to thrive and that a new upcycle is beginning, certain businesses are suffering, including Ejaba Interiors, which recently went out of business.

While decisions are being made, Antonellis continues to promote Duxbury Business Association's "Do It in Duxbury" focus, trying to "really make a presence of the shops and services in Duxbury," she said. While she couldn't disclose the details, Antonellis said she knows of three new businesses that are looking to move to Duxbury in the near future.