

Testimony for 9/13/2021 City Council Meeting Item 25A

The outsize city contribution to the Exit 17 grocery store was a bad project from the start. The several other grocery stores in the city paid for their own road improvements and have been paying property taxes for years, so why are they required to subsidize a competitor? The double roundabout will make the property behind less desirable for the intended industrial development. City taxpayers should not pay for the unnecessary I-93 ramp to slow down traffic when the roundabout will already make traffic slower than it is now.

If the city wants to spend \$4 million on a grocery store, why not put it in downtown Penacook where people wanted it instead of where only a dozen homes are within a half-mile walking distance? It will be particularly bad if like Nashua this third Market Basket in the city results in the closing of their oldest store in the city, in this case the Storrs Street location which is within walking distance of maybe a thousand households. How else will Market Basket find the 275 part-time retail workers they need when the city is full of Help Wanted signs? At a recent event, the Granite Geek suggested that the project is non-green due to the need to drive there.

Surely any developer should be required to contribute at least half the project cost. Because the new project tax revenue isn't enough to pay the project bonds in the first few years, property taxes from already-built buildings are being diverted instead of being spent on police, fire, schools, etc. like they could have been. The city council was told that the developer couldn't afford any contribution toward Concord's cost, and the project was supposed to die if bids came in high. But when bids did come in high, the developer suddenly found money to pay the difference which magically was found to be in Canterbury's portion of the cost. And how could the city sign a construction contract for more than the authorized amount without a public hearing first? Maybe this isn't actually fraudulent but it sure doesn't smell good.

A couple decades ago Concord's then-city manager signed a document they weren't properly authorized to in order to expedite a development project, and now they are the town manager of Hanover. If the construction contract was not legally signed, it should be cancelled and any penalties charged to the city's malfeasance insurance. If the developer wants the project to continue, they should offer Concord the same extra amount they are giving Canterbury - or alternatively get the state to remove the exit ramp from the project which would save everybody money and reduce stress to the environment.

- Roy Schweiker Concord NH