

June 2, 2020

Planning Board  
8 Newmarket Road  
Durham, NH 03824

RE: *Continued Public Hearing - **Mill Plaza Redevelopment**. 7 Mill Road. Continued review of formal application for: 1) Site plan and 2) Conditional Use for mixed use redevelopment project and activity within the wetland and shoreland overlay districts...*

*Topic of this letter: **Fiscal impact analysis, request for economic future scenarios***

Greetings,

Entering the world of hypotheticals, let's suppose that the fiscal impact analysis prepared by Fougere Planning does meet our Conditional Use criterion.

Let's also assume that the Planning Board, to a person, believes that a decision whether to grant approval to this application must derive from a determination that doing so will be to the overwhelming benefit to the community.

Then isn't it incumbent upon the Board to requisition a professional evaluation of the economic impact of this proposed redevelopment not just in the immediate future but as its impacts on the community might play out? This is what Councilor Lawson suggested at your May 13 meeting and was opposed.

We must address the question of what could happen in the broader community given:

- (1) the potential for newer housing in a prime location to draw tenants from outlying and/or older housing;
- (2) the ensuing likely lower occupancy and deterioration of those exited properties, with likely requests for property tax abatements—which could lead to a vicious cycle: lower revenues, lower reinvestment in maintenance and improvements, lower occupancy; and
- (3) COVID-19 driving some potential tenants to make other choices; and
- (4) the likely further deterioration of the Hannaford building, constructed in 1969 (51 years ago), if “redevelopment” does not encompass renovation or replacement of that building as well. (Mark Fougere pointed out during his presentation on May 13 that the rear building will be torn down, having “reached the end of its useful life”—likely true for the earlier Hannaford building. And might Hannaford even abandon it?)

I urge you to approve a new motion to immediately commission an analysis that shines a light on worst-case, likely-case, and best-case scenarios of this project's future impacts on the broader community, not just for the first few years, but also when the bloom is off the rose.

Sincerely yours,

Robin