

Q&A set on Hamden zoning changes

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By Ann DeMatteo, Assistant Metro Editor

HAMDEN — For Whitneyville and Spring Glen residents, changes in zoning regulations and the introduction of a resolution that seems to make it easier for developers to build in town are too close for comfort.

So, residents have exchanged a flurry of e-mails with town officials, and the leadership of the Spring Glen Civic Association will meet with a town official today on questions concerning the Connecticut City and Town Development Act.

The act gives a municipality the opportunity to assist developers in the creation of large-scale projects by issuing revenue bonds that are backed by the full faith and credit of the developer. Economic and Community Development Director Dale Kroop said the projects would be in the range of \$10 million or more.

On Election Day, one of the ballot questions facing residents is whether they want to join in the act. The Legislative Council in September approved the town's participation; state law says voters have to also agree.

The act is a means to help finance large-scale projects that could have a positive impact on unemployment, inadequate housing, blight and deterioration, Kroop said.

The act would give the town the ability to issue revenue bonds and notes for revitalization projects and programs, and the ability to acquire, construct, rehabilitate and improve development property, among other powers. The council would have to approve the projects before they could be built.

Residents such as Josh Milrad of 1743 Whitney Ave. are concerned about the possible repercussions of the act as it relates to changes in zoning regulations, and also that taxpayers may not understand what the act means. An explanatory text of the act, which is being circulated, is not enough information, Milrad says.

Kroop said the text has been approved by the state Elections Enforcement Commission. "It's all we were allowed to distribute."

Milrad said he believes that the act would allow the town to take one's property by eminent domain, something that Kroop says is not the case because the act does not have eminent domain powers.

If a property were taken for economic development, other regulations would have to be in place, such as a municipal development plan, Kroop said.

He learned about the act in the spring and recommended it to town leaders. The process of changing zoning regulations has been in the works for more than a year.

"There's no relationship between adopting the act and changing the zoning regulations," he said.

Milrad said he became concerned when he saw that the zone where he lives — at Whitney Avenue and Swarthmore Street — was changing from a residential zone to possibly a more commercial zone, and then read the act, which says “development is paramount.”

“I think there could be unintended repercussions. I think this was introduced in good faith, but with rezoning, I have substantial concerns,” Milrad said.

“I understand the concerns, but all I can do is present the facts so people can make an educated decision on Election Day,” Kroop said.

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