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Sent: Monday, June 5, 2023 1:20 PM
To: 'pb.admin@effinghamh.net'
Cc: 'ctsheelan14@gmail.com'
Subject: Meena Case -- Vote no

June 5, 2023

Good afternoon to the Effingham Planning Board.

We are Knute Ogren and Colin Sheehan and are residents of Effingham. Though Knute (full disclosure) is on the board of Green Mountain Conservation Group, this letter is from the two of us as residents of Effingham.

We would like to add our voices to the chorus of those who oppose this gas station.

In the many, many months this case has received public scrutiny, it is clear -- the science tells us -- that a gas station at this location has a real potential to cause harm.

The question as to whether the new owner can make use of grandfather status has been answered. The answer clearly is "no." But there is evidence that some other significant questions are on the table. You have seen the feedback from a variety of folks who are opposing Meena's application. It has been shared widely.

We wish that the public scrutiny could have been so present when the zoning board discerned this case before it ever got to the planning board -- back when Knute was on the zoning board before recusing himself due to being on the board of directors of Green Mountain Conservation Group (a regretful decision to recuse, in hindsight).

There are many regrets we can all have about this whole chaotic case. We can:

Regret that Effingham's attorney gave skewed and overtly one-sided advice to the zoning board that, in our opinion, was poorly conveyed to the zoning board and is part of what put all of us on this path (in a 60 minute call, the zoning board got 55 minutes of why we should vote yes) ...
Regret ineffective efforts to persuade others that this is not JUST an Effingham concern -- but a concern for the surrounding area as well ...
Regret that some people in these small towns have been disrespectfully at each others throats

these last many, many months due to misinformation and a lack of trust ...
Regret that some within the opposition have chosen accusatory tactics (most recently
at the last
planning board meeting) that do not show respect and care to the planning board --
nor do they
reflect the whole of the opposition ...

There are real concerns that the applicant has chosen to strong arm their way from
the very beginning
by (1) taking a seriously long time in getting information to the zoning board (at
first) and then the
planning board, (2) going against a well-understood process by installing
underground tanks before
getting permission or a permit, (3) ignoring -- for many months anyway -- the advice
and suggestions
from the zoning board which I think may have been the beginning of the bad blood
between the
applicant and the town, (4) taking too long in finally seeking both the legal and
professional engineering
representation needed to more capably engage the challenges of this case, and (5)
being -- or perhaps
it's a perception on the part of others as being -- arrogant when it comes to the
real scientific concerns
that have been brought forward.

Dr. Newton has raised appropriate concerns in his latest testimony submitted to you
in recent days. He
has helped us see what before was not so clearly understood.

In the end, whether there is a gas station at the Route 25 parcel or not, we all
have to live together in
Effingham and the towns that make up the Watershed. We hope that we all will have
learned how we
can be better the next time a big concern like this comes before the town. We deeply
respect and are
profoundly thankful for the work of the zoning board and the planning board. Even
when we might
disagree with a decision made, it is important that these volunteers -- you,
yourselves -- are made to feel
respected and valued.

We appreciate your commitment.
We value our water.
And we urge you to vote no on the application on the basis of simple ethics.
You are well within your right to vote no.

Thank you.
Sincerely,

Knute Ogren & Colin Sheehan
117 School Street

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