

## **Ed Shell Comments for Granite Quarry Board of Aldermen 05/01/2017**

In the context of the Public Comments portion of the Aldermen's meeting, I'd like to reemphasize a few of the points I made to the Mayor and each Alderman in my correspondence to them dated April 5, 2017. And I also want to touch on some related issues.

First, I want to recognize Mayor Pro Tem Mike Brinkley and express my appreciation to him for his candor and forthrightness regarding the safety issues revolving around access by the State Employees Credit Union to Highway 52. His views on the matter and the process surrounding approval of those plans were presented at the last Aldermen's meeting on April 3 and are contained in a document included in the Alderman's package for today's meeting.

It is extremely unfortunate that Mayor Feather seems not to have recognized and shared the fact there would be no further review and approval required by Town authorities for whatever access plan SECU pursued once their proposed site plan had been approved by the Planning Board. If he had made that known I feel certain there would have been not only a public outcry, but serious encouragement from Aldermen such as Mike Brinkley for the Planning Board to withhold approval until the matter could be more fully investigated and a determination made regarding why such access was being planned which was not only contrary to what had been previously understood and acceptable, but raised many safety concerns. It should be noted if the finality of the Planning Board's decision had been understood well beforehand, there could have been conditions attached to the zoning changes which were made to accommodate SECU while providing an acceptable compromise for the community.

I want to especially emphasize the point that in addition to the general public, people like myself and Mike Brinkley who were very involved in this entire process from the time of SECU's formal announcement of interest in the property were unaware of any plan to utilize access to Highway 52 other than via the proposed new section of Granite Street. And yet we hear at the last Planning Board meeting where SECU's site plan was approved, that there had been ongoing work with DOT for quite a while on various plans for additional, direct access to 52. As I remarked in that meeting, where have these plans been, who had them? They certainly never had been shared with me, Mike Brinkley or the public! The very first inkling we had that such access was being planned and reviewed with DOT was the site plan presented to the Planning Board for its approval. What town officials were aware of this type access being considered and planned, and perhaps had even seen proposed drafts? Did the Mayor know this? Did the Town Manager know this? Who did know it and not alert those who should have been made aware of what was transpiring? This was not an inconsequential matter and these are very serious questions.

I understand there is no requirement under the existing ordinances to hold a hearing at this juncture, but you may call for a courtesy hearing to allow information to be presented and to have comments from affected property owners and other concerned parties heard. In consideration of how this entire matter has been handled and the lack of knowledge by parties who should have been made aware of pertinent information, it seems only appropriate that the Aldermen resolve there should be a well-publicized presentation of the latest SECU site plan at a courtesy hearing with public input in conjunction with a subsequent Aldermen's meeting. It's understood that the access and other aspects portrayed in the site plan presented to the Planning Board are being modified and in that regard are no longer consistent with what was seen and approved. Even if through administrative oversight the Aldermen lost their authority for final approval in this situation, it would seem if SECU is the good corporate citizen it should be and represents itself to be, they would want the public to know about their plans and how the considerable community concerns and fears about the safety of travel on that section of Highway 52 are being properly addressed.

I'll leave you with a final thought. Who among you will accept responsibility if the predicted increase in accidents, perhaps some involving tragic loss of lives, materializes because the safety concerns were not sufficiently heeded? Who will be the first to say "It's not my fault, I couldn't help it" and point your finger at someone else or some "process" over which you've allowed loss of control?