



State of Connecticut

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STATE CAPITOL

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Planning and Development Committee Monday, March 11, 2013 Testimony in Opposition of,

HB 5242 An Act Expanding Fee In Lieu Of Open Space Programs

Honored Chairs, Ranking Members and Members of the Planning and Development Committee

Thank you for calling for a hearing on this proposal. The impetus for this bill however, has been lost in its current draft.

I had been contacted by the First Selectman of Colchester to help create enabling legislation that would allow towns to collect a "fee in lieu of" program for sidewalk development—as a specific new program similar to the "fee in lieu of" open space program. In rural districts, many subdivision developments require a sidewalk installation.

In many cases, new subdivisions in rural districts like mine are far removed from the center of town. Yet, mandates remain to build elaborate sidewalk systems for those subdivisions. The purpose of the new program would allow developers instead to forgo building a sidewalk in that far removed subdivision and instead to pay a fee towards the upkeep or extension of the sidewalk in the center of town or where the local Planning and Zoning Commission felt to be the most appropriate. The goal would be to have the developer have the option to either build the sidewalk (per town regulation mandate) or pay a percentage "fee in lieu". The fee would then be used toward the upkeep of sidewalk infrastructure as dictated by the regulatory commission in charge.

Since this bill does not do what was intended, I have requested my co-sponsorship to be removed and instead I urge this committee to amend this bill to allow the enabling legislation to happen at the State level. If this cannot be done, I feel this proposal should not be supported.

This new legislation is critical, because without it, the rural towns will continue to build "sidewalks to nowhere" while the critical framework in the town centers continue to erode. We must create a process in which the towns can focus their limited resources.

Melissa Ziobron
State Representative, 34th District