

All,

Now that the school board election has passed and the budget thankfully too, I wanted to draw everyone's attention to something else going on in Metuchen of which you may not be aware. For a while there has been talk in town about the development of the old Stop and Shop site along with Boro Hardware. Well the rubber is about to hit the road and what I've seen so far, in my opinion, is way too big and not right for Metuchen. I believe that it will further stress the infrastructure and services of Metuchen and is a substantial threat to the businesses on Main Street and downtown. Simply, the proposal is for 130 condos on top of over 60,000 square feet of retail space. These items will be housed in one of 6 new large buildings, 4 of them 3 stories high and 2 of them 4 stories high. I have created a web site with more information if you are interested:

<http://www.metuchen21.com> . If the redirector doesn't work you can try <http://www.metuchen21.com/dnn> .

You should know that the current zoning law of Metuchen does not allow for this kind of development anywhere in town. To get around this problem and to ease the red tape, our Mayor and Borough Planner have worked hand in hand with the developer to craft a large amendment to the Borough Code. This ordinance has twice been put on the Borough Council agenda for first reading but has been pulled at the last minute each time. The next Borough Council meeting is May 7<sup>th</sup> at 7:30PM. I for one plan to be there to voice my displeasure with the changes. Even if the ordinance is stopped, the developer could apply for zoning variances. This would elongate the process and provide the citizens of Metuchen more of an opportunity to voice their support or disapproval of the proposal. I don't think that is such a bad thing. Things being done in back rooms with developers, who seek only to maximize their profit, is not what is best for the citizens who will have to live with the development forever.

Lastly, I don't want to be viewed as just a naysayer. I am not opposed in any way to developing this piece of property reasonably. It is my opinion that we should seek to balance the residential, commercial and retail spaces in town to maximize revenue and maintain costs. We have added a good deal of residential space in town over the last 8 years with little to no additional commercial or retail space in town and our budget woes have not been solved. The Mayor and Council continue to cry poor, so much so they considered cutting our police force, yet the tax ratables have increased. The reason for this is that residential development adds additional costs: more students, more crime, more traffic, more sewerage, more garbage. I know at the public meetings held on this development some time ago there was an interest in a new grocery store. The proposal I've seen includes one but at 16,000 square feet. The old Stop and Shop was 26,000 square feet. Our borough zoning allows for one up to 40,000 square feet. I'd say this proposal includes more of a super sized convenience store than a super market. Is that what we want?

Regards,

Justin Manley