

A single vote has no value. But at some point, a collection of valueless votes becomes an unstoppable force of influence. - Keller Nunley

Over the last many days, it has come to my attention that many of the duties of our local Zoning and Planning boards are about to be dissolved or usurped by the legislature in an effort to remove their authority to the State level. It seems this is being done under the auspice of personal freedom and the nationwide housing crisis that New Hampshire also suffers from.

Everyone can agree that New Hampshire does share the same housing crisis being felt all over the nation. We can also agree that with a State motto like Live Free or Die, we take our personally rights very seriously. Some believe that the collision of these 2 principles should be handled at the State level in order to alleviate the stress of both. Others understand that by concentrating the powers of local boards at the State level we will remove the authority of the voters voice in a state where Freedom reigns supreme.

Removing local Control will not alleviate the housing crisis. With the series of bills being heard today, one might argue that the cost to produce housing will be reduced whereby reducing the final pricing for the housing that is being built. This is simply false since the greatest driving factor of price is what the market will bear. Even if the cost was drastically reduced for developers, a bidding war would still ensue driving up the final price of the real estate perhaps even further than it is now. In none of these bills is there a clause which requires developers to pass their savings along to their buyers.

Second, some believe that the growth does not have to be dependent on the current infrastructure of the municipality. Most understand that infrastructure in our state is already stretched and aging and in some cases already failing. By maintaining local planning and zoning boards, municipalities are able to ensure that growth does not outpace the resources available in a town or even a particular part of a town. The gross undertaking of this scope at a State level would leave gaps for

towns unable to solve their infrastructure needs through warranting solutions. We must allow local elected and appointed boards to manage these areas.

The last reason we must address is simply the will of the people. The sponsors of these bills would blame a few bad apples and tell you that because they cannot get the municipalities to cooperate and allow the developers free reign, they must take matters into their own hands using the long strong-arm of the State . In doing this, the sponsors have not been shy about the fact that they are working with developers and real estate agents against the wishes of their constituents; the tax-payers footing the bill for that will profit these same shadow players. New Hampshire has never been a state that allows the strong arm of government to silence the will of the people and we mustn't start now.

The true causes of the housing crisis have not even been addressed. In none of the bills have there been any limits on profit margin or the ability to limit second home purchase form out of state buyers or purchasing for the purpose of vacation rental, nor should there be. None of the current bills will ensure that the crisis of people living out of their cars or in homeless encampments will actually be solved.

People in our state are free to develop their property in a responsible and appropriate way for the ordinance that their towns have voted on. It is wrong for our Senators and Representatives to believe that developers should be able to come in, develop our land unchecked, and leave the taxpayers to pick up the infrastructure pieces. With more development comes more need for wastewater management, fire support, police, and road construction just to name a few.

In addition, no one is addressing the fact that The State is not the only entity that will experience a shortfall in the coming years. With Federal monies and grants drying up, it is clear that every budget will have to cut; State, County and local. Now is not the time to saddle already overburdened towns and tax payers with the threat of increased infrastructure costs due to unmitigated State forced development

because there are a few problem municipalities. We cannot use a hatchet where a scalpel is necessary. New Hampshire can't afford it.

None of the arguments that have been put forth to allow the State to rip zoning from local elected bodies will actually solve our housing crisis nor will they create a freer people. What they will do is permanently remove control at the local level, create more bureaucracy, ensure higher local tax burdens and hand an unfair advantage to developers while strapping your constituents with the cost of the infrastructure fall out.

I am asking you today to say no to big development. Ensure the New Hampshire charm that we love be allowed to grow appropriately and under the guidance of the people who call those places home.

Developers may be drooling at the open land that exists in the sprawling towns across our state with their rich and unique history, but these are the places our children's children will have to call home. Ensure that we are able to pass along our legacy to them in the form of an unadulterated landscape of responsible development guarding by an engaged and empowered electorate.

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