

# HOOKSETT

## TIF TOO BIG?

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Responding to concerns first voiced at the deliberative session of Town Meeting, Hooksett town councilors considered altering the boundaries of the tax increment financing, or TIF, district, so as not to encourage unwanted development.

The council ultimately decided not to change the boundaries, with several councilors suggesting any such changes could cause confusion as the May 9 voting day approaches.

Residents will vote whether to approve an \$18 million bond to go toward infrastructure to support large-scale retail development off Interstate 93's Exit 11. Nebraska-based outdoor retailer Cabela's plans to anchor the development, and tax revenue generated from within the district would go to pay off the bond.

The TIF areas in question were the town-owned Pinnacle land, which sits next to a densely populated residential area and which has been pegged previously as conservation land, and a three-quarter-mile stretch of land running along the east side of the Merrimack River.

Residents next to the Pinnacle have publicly questioned why the land is part of the 150-acre TIF zone, and have feared that the TIF designation is the first step toward development.

At the council's Wednesday, April 12, meeting, Hooksett state Rep. David Hess urged the council also to remove the long stretch of potentially developable land along the river. The land is owned by Manchester Water Works.

"I'll bet you could put 30 or 40 houses in there with a signalized intersection," Hess estimated.

Town Planner Charles Watson, though not at the recent meeting, has repeatedly stated publicly that the TIF lines were drawn to include as much contiguously developable land as possible, especially as Hooksett stands to gain some key infrastructure in the TIF zone.

Town Councilor Mike Jolin noted that just because a given parcel is within the TIF zone, it doesn't necessarily affect potential developers.

"It's the infrastructure that's going to make it attractive."

Councilors Jason Hyde and Doug St. Pierre each said changing the boundaries, which the council first approved in February, would only serve to confuse voters who may already be struggling to understand the TIF zone.

"It's going to cause pandemonium with the voters," said St. Pierre.

After the council's 4-2 vote not to amend the boundaries, Hess said, "I'm in opposition, and the Pinnacle will be in opposition." Voting day is Tuesday, May 9, from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m. at Cawley Middle School.