

**CITIZENS COMMENTS**  
**FEBRUARY 21, 2023 COUNCIL MEETING**

**Jeffrey S. Feld**

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1. In light of the ongoing federal investigation and certain allegations and guilty pleas relating to the municipality's municipal planner, why hasn't the local governing body severed its relationship with this planner?
2. Are the professional financial services being authorized for this outside accounting firm, in addition to its special budget consultant duties and obligations?
3. If we have a finance director and a CFO, why does Orange need an outside accounting firm for these in-house type related financial professional services?
4. In connection with the latest long term tax exemption agreement, did the local governing body receive and review a net fiscal impact study for this latest project?
5. When will Orange adopt a Best Practices Inventory inclusionary zoning ordinance?
6. When does Orange anticipate introducing its CY 2023 Budget and user friendly budget information and documentation?
7. Has a trial date been set in the Willis Edwards III federal criminal matter?
8. Is Orange current in paying its statutory long term tax exemption payment obligations to the County?

**Douglas Farrand**

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Dear Councilmembers,

I'm writing with regard to Ordinance 5-2023 PEEK Cleveland 1 Urban Renewal.

I'm a member and Board President of the First UU Church of Essex County located at 35 Cleveland Street. Our congregation has been on Cleveland Street in Orange for 130 years, and our buildings are home to many organizations including the HUUB, University of Orange, Lanbi, and Laundry Workers Center.

Our block of Cleveland Street is a beautiful residential street. With Rosa Parks and Central Elementary schools at one end, the street is well trafficked by children and families on their way to and from school. Many of the houses on our street are well cared for and frequently invested in, and there are many beautiful gardens in the summertime. There is a real sense of security and connection to the community when you walk down the street.

I am upset that the proposed ordinance would offer a tax abatement to a development on our block that threatens to destroy what I have just described.

I understand that tax abatements are a crucial tool for the city to incentivize investment and development, and I am excited to learn more about them at Councilmember Ross and Montague's information session on tax abatements tomorrow. I am very concerned, however, that the city is using tax abatements to incentivize *this* proposed project by PEEK Development on Cleveland Street.

If the other PEEK Development projects that are being built now are any indication, it is reasonable to assume that this development of 80+ mostly market rate units will *also* feature a sheer brick wall and parking facilities on the ground floor of a building that will take up several lots on our block. This kind of hostile architecture will undermine the security and safety of our neighborhood, and does *nothing* to support the social and cultural life of our neighborhood. This is not to mention the massive increase in traffic on a school street, and the likelihood that a majority of the units will be unaffordable to most Orange residents.

These tax abatements amount to a very sweet deal for PEEK Development. We should be demanding that in exchange they build projects that take more into account than real estate value and speculation. A building of this size on Cleveland Street should be designed to interact with the street and to maintain the sense of connection and feeling of security that it has now.

The business administration, planning board, and city council, have worked diligently over the last 5+ years to ensure that we are able to attract developers to build in Orange. I wish the council would work as diligently and urgently to implement policies to ensure that these developments are FOR the people of Orange. In this case, a community benefits agreement policy, with design standards for new developments, would help a lot. I know first hand that there are many residents and organizations in Orange that would be very willing to work collaboratively with you to develop such a policy.

Our congregation has been around for 130 years, and we plan to be around for another 130. I am very concerned about the damage that incentivizing developments like this will do to Cleveland Street and the City of Orange. I urge the council to vote against this ordinance and to be diligent about making sure Orange is getting what it deserves in exchange for these tax abatements.