

# Governor declines Hudson invitation, calls logistics center a 'very good project'

By Ryan Lessard Union Leader Correspondent Mar 21, 2021

In response to a request by opponents of a proposed warehouse campus in Hudson to tour the 400-acre property and discuss the project, Gov. Chris Sununu said he supports the development and will not weigh in further on a local decision.

“I think it’s a very good project,” Sununu said at a Thursday news conference.

The governor said the Hudson Logistics Center, in which Amazon would be the primary operator, is a huge economic opportunity for the town and the state. He characterized the opponents of the development on Green Meadow Golf Club land as a “small cohort of individuals” and abutters.

Members of SaveHudsonNH, a group of Hudson residents that includes nearly the entire Green Meadow subdivision neighborhood to the south of the property and other residents who are not abutters, say they have signatures from 1,000 Hudson residents in a [Change.org](#) petition to stop the project.

Sununu’s office also sent a formal letter Thursday in response to SaveHudsonNH’s invitation from member Chris Thatcher.

“While I understand you and your organization have several concerns, the state of New Hampshire is a local control state and therefore has a limited role in the approval process for this project,” Sununu’s letter states.

He urged anyone who wants to express their views to do so at a special planning board meeting on Wednesday.

Sununu said the project's developer, Hillwood Enterprises, has worked with the state Department of Environmental Services and Department of Transportation to help mitigate their environmental and traffic impacts.

He said that led to Hillwood not only addressing traffic impacts their project would create but also helping alleviate existing traffic issues on Lowell Road.

Thatcher said Friday he was disappointed in Sununu's response because it was a missed opportunity for the governor to hear from residents and because his letter did not "truly or effectively" address any of the concerns residents expressed.

Thatcher said "the information stated in his response is not based on all the evidence and facts available, but is simply a repetition of the sales pitch that Amazon and Hillwood have been stating from day one."

Town Planner Brian Groth said developers would be required to adhere to the site plan, which includes the traffic projections and the specific use of the buildings, if approved by the planning board.

If the tenants decided to change the use of the buildings and become a high-traffic sort facility, for example, the town would have multiple ways to enforce the original terms of the site plan, Groth said.

After the first two Amazon-occupied buildings were completed, and operations began, the town would conduct a new traffic study to see if it reflects Hillwood's projections or not. If not, the developers may not obtain a building permit for the third building.

"It's in Hillwood's best interest to ensure traffic operates efficiently," Groth said. "The town will be seeking assurances that the operations reflect the projections."

Jim Dobens, an outspoken opponent of the project and a resident of the abutting neighborhood to the south, said in an email he's not against using the golf course land for development, but he said there are much better economic opportunities than Amazon warehouses.

"Artificial intelligence that will drive innovation is the Holy Grail to the long term health of economic growth and job creation. The state's business development office should be focused on bringing in technology companies to base themselves in southern New Hampshire," Dobens said.

Opponent Scott Wade said he thinks most of the jobs created by the logistics center will likely be filled by Massachusetts residents and eventually replaced by automation.

"All he (Sununu) and others are seeing are the dollars. But the impact this will have on Hudson and the region will be forever and I pray it won't be as bad as we think, but I have my reservations," Wade said.

Hillwood representatives declined to comment on the governor's letter. They previously said the project would add more than \$5 million in new property tax revenue to town coffers annually and create 1,400 jobs. They also have promised \$9.7 million in direct investments for various uses in town.

Sununu said in a September letter to town officials that if the Hudson Logistics Center project is approved, he would include funding in a state budget for the engineering phase of Hudson Boulevard, a major highway project intended to alleviate existing traffic problems.

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Union Leader State House Bureau Chief Kevin Landrigan contributed to this report.

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