

# **Borough of Somerville**

**Mayor:** Brian G. Gallagher

**Council President:** Robert Wilson Clerk **Administrator** Ralph D. Sternadori

**Borough Council:** Sean Decker ♦ Jane Kobuta ♦ Thompson Mitchell

♦ Dennis Sullivan ♦ Patricia Webster

## **Mayor Brian G. Gallagher Borough of Somerville**

### **Statement To Press September 28, 2006**

In recently reported articles, it is readily apparent that if Pathmark does not get what they want...which is money, they will stop at nothing to further their own financial gain at the expense of the residents of Somerville, and the many people who have worked on this project including myself.

In Pathmark's attempt at further delaying the economic revival of downtown, they have come to attacks on the character and integrity of the many people involved in this project. That is a personal smear on individuals and our community as a whole.

This is wrong and I will not allow this to happen.

There are many who have worked extremely hard to ensure a good project was created for Somerville. Pathmark has now implied a conspiracy in a pay to play scenario which is an outright lie, and they know it. The scenario they have fabricated starts in 2003, stretches across years, party lines, mayors, borough councils, planning boards, paid professionals, attorneys and others. They have implied that I knew of a donation to the County Republican organization....this is a lie, and again they know it. The first I learned of this was in my deposition 2 months ago, which was part of Pathmark's pending lawsuit with JSM, when Pathmark's attorneys informed me.

This redevelopment project was first recommended as a result of a county study in the early 1990's. This redevelopment process has been embraced across party lines and by the public, and has been called a model for how other redevelopment projects should be handled statewide. We held 5 Planning Board meetings which were televised, and were repeated continuously on local TV at my request to ensure all could see the process, made available on DVD for those who wished to view, and the print media were present to report on all of these meetings.

I asked that the redevelopment agreement be posted on line for our entire community to review and comment BEFORE council voted on it...an unprecedented action. And, we have spent the last 2 years facilitating negotiations with Pathmark and the redeveloper to satisfy Pathmark's shifting set of demands.

3 months ago I called John Standley, CEO of Pathmark, requesting a meeting in Somerville to help resolve remaining issues, the response from his office was that he was a very busy man and didn't have time to come to Somerville, but agreed to meet at a neutral location. I drove to New Brunswick to meet him, and asked Mr. Standley three times if Pathmark was committed to Somerville and her residents...I was never given the courtesy of a direct response, only a general <sup>3</sup>as long as the store returns an acceptable margin we will keep it open<sup>2</sup>. Now I know why.

This is strictly an issue of money for Pathmark, and while they may try to cloud issues with arguments of parking, site plan, lease and developer...the goal of this financially unstable company is to extract as much financial gain from the developer and the Borough as they can without regard for Borough, people or reputations...and I can say that with knowledge having been at the table negotiating for the past two years. That is their right though, but when the tactics they use cross into a smear campaign, it is a smear on our entire community.

Pathmark is holding the future of Somerville hostage.  
I Can Not Allow That To happen.