

SENATE BILL 968

Senate Bill 968 is an excellent and oft used way of financing public improvements that would burden a private development. The Bill targets funding for what is some of the most expensive construction in any development. Finding ways to reconcile the needs of the public and the needs of developers is always a quandary. This Bill goes a long way toward that end.

The Erie-Western Pennsylvania Port Authority has been developing the waterfront in Erie, PA for the last 30 years in an aggressive manner. We have developed and refined plans for overall development (i.e., long range Master Plan) and individual plans for segments of the Master Plan. All of these plans include substantial public access features. We have tried to balance the need for industry, shipping, ship building, industrial parks, etc., with the need for recreation, marinas, parks, launch ramps, restaurants, etc.

The need for public/private partnerships is almost a requirement for a successful waterfront development. This Bill makes these partnerships easily available on every project.

Having realized the merits of the Bill, I would like to comment on the structure. 501(c)(3) organizations exist because they work for projects that have little or no revenue sustaining properties. They can be tailored to a specific task. In this Bill, 501(c)(3) waterfront development organizations are a good vehicle to utilize the pass-through tax credits. I feel that other organizations that are immersed in waterfront development could also utilize this Bill to benefit their communities. In particular, the Erie-Western Pennsylvania Port Authority functions as a non-profit waterfront developers as do other similar agencies throughout Pennsylvania.

The mechanics of the Bill have all the necessary safeguards to include other similarly structured development agencies. I feel this Bill will be very successful in creating development opportunities where they did not exist before. If it is successful, as I feel it will be, I would hope the legislature would expand the scope of available credits.

I have several copies of our Bayfront Master Plan available and I will gladly answer any questions you may have.