

### **With Apologies to P.H.**

This page is an introduction to a piece that my friend P. H. Filler wrote, but which never got "published". I was partially responsible for that, and my decision to publish it here on my own website is by way of apologizing to P.H. (he prefers to be called P.H. - and although I know what the initials stand for, I would not dare tell). P.H. wrote his article when we both were knee-deep in the effort to prevent Costco from building a mega gas station in Westfield's Wheaton Mall. We were both members of the Stop Costco Gas Coalition, serving on the Coordinating Committee. I was the Webmaster and P.H. was in charge of various "Miscellaneous Tasks".

We were, at that point in time, working like crazy on the various "filings" that we made to the Planning Commission staff. These turned out to be VERY long documents and their length was driving P.H. crazy because he is a great believer in simplicity, clarity, and common sense. He was particularly annoyed that we were filing a really big document about the probable impact on Public Health if Costco was given permission to build the mega gas station where they wanted to put it.

P.H. insisted that the entire argument could be reduced to one single page (with some brief notes and attachments). He even prepared such a document and wanted to submit it, But we said no, because it was so short it would not be taken seriously. Then he modified it and asked if we could put it on our website ([www.stopcostcogas.org](http://www.stopcostcogas.org)) as a 'filing not filed'. But we again said no. Since I was webmaster, he was particularly annoyed at me.

Since then I've re-read P.H.'s piece - several times - and regret our decision. He had the right idea. I could of course post it "post facto", but that would probably annoy him even more. So I'm publishing it here, as a sort of apology. I doubt he will ever see it, but it makes me feel a little bit less guilty.

*MRA 1/27/13*

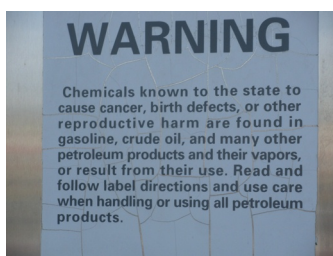
## Yes, Health REALLY Matters!

This is the filing that did not get filed - because of time constraints and because everyone involved in the battle over S-2863 says (with different levels of frustration/scorn) that "health doesn't really matter" in the process by which approval/disapproval of S-2863 will be decided. [Of course health really does matter to the citizens who are so opposed to S-2863.] This piece will not be filed; simply posted here. But it is really short, so maybe a few people will read it.

The Code (law) upon which S-2863 will be decided mentions health just once [1]. We are talking about public health. The question (supposedly) is whether or not placing a VERY large gas station uphill and and upwind and about 150 feet from the nearest home of a residential community constitutes a health risk. Do you need more details? The truth is that, yes, it will constitute a health risk and health does matter. Many people have commented on this issue, in various ways. Excerpted versions of seven such statements are attached (A-G). Most of the attachments are not actually attached - just a brief synopsis [2]. Each can be read and regarded as definitive - or not. It depends on who is reading them and what "rules" of evaluation are used.

One rule is common sense, in which case one does not need to read any of the statements; but the author of this piece did in fact read all of them (in order to prepare the synopses of the non-attachments). His rule is based in part on the "history" of how other complex matters relating to public health have been decided in our society. Think smoking, water supply pollutants, driving while drunk, fluoridation of water, etc. It seems we decide the "complex" and very important issues VERY slowly, because we have constructed a very tangled process for reaching consensus [3]. Maybe that's the way it should be, but an awful lot of damage (to the public health) gets done while the hollering is going on.

Consider just one "exhibit" here: a picture of the label on one of the gas pumps at a neighborhood gas station (then multiply it by at least 16 - the number of nozzles at the proposed Costco station; also the approximate number of times larger that station will be than a typical gas station):



The Code says the proposed use (putting Costco's mega gas station in the southwest quadrant of Westfield's Wheaton Mall) should not be allowed if it constitutes a threat to health. Read the fine print. **Then reject the application.**

## ENDNOTES

1. Actually twice, but the second time is a duplication of the first.
2. The full statements are either within this document or accessible via links in this "Filings" page of our website.
5. The process (in the case of S-2863) begins when planning commission staff (professionals) review the large number of filings (applicant's and opposition's) addressing various factors. The "rules" that planning staff must follow as they consider all the filings are often not ones that "the average citizen" might come up with, because the professionals must consider a series of caveats and "what ifs". So sometimes the rules get rather complicated - even bizarre.

**ATTACHMENTS** (most are not attached)

A. This attachment is here (*in toto*); the author wrote it: The health risks to citizens living near the proposed gas station arise due to various pollutants in the air. Air quality is affected not only by the exhaust gas coming from the proposed gas station, but also due to the traffic in the vicinity - actually traffic congestion, because cars that are idling, or moving rather slowly, emit much more toxic material than do cars moving smoothly at optimal speeds. Planning commission staff (and other professionals) are forced to determine what "bright line" exists defining how much of an effect on air quality will be allowed and how much of a health risk will be accepted if the gas station is built where Costco wants to build it.

B. At several points in its various filings, Costco refers to its "Health Analysis". We have been unable to find it and, during the course of many discussions with planning staff we all came to agree that Costco had not in fact filed a "Health Analysis", simply the "Health Letter" (C. below). However, recently we found, on pages 75-76 of Costco's Environmental Consultant's filing, several mentions of cancer risk. The cancer risks are considered minimal (by Costco) and no other health risks are mentioned. Maybe those two pages are Costco's "Health Analysis"?

C. Unless the pages mentioned in B. (above) are the long sought health analysis, Costco's supposed "Health Analysis" is actually a "Health Letter". It is a pathetic statement (not just my words, that's what many others say), written by a health professional paid by Costco. The health professional says (we paraphrase) 'not to worry'.

D. Our air quality expert (we think he's absolutely correct) filed a report on the air quality/health risk. Quite long and detailed. Concluding that we probably should be worried.

E. A letter written by an area doctor. It is very concise and extremely well written (with a number of references). [We don't know if it was filed with the planning commission, so we can't cite it, but we know it was sent to the County Executive and a whole bunch of other folks.] She says she is a pulmonary specialist and we better worry.

F. Our webmaster, was busy writing a bunch of other filings. He is a scientist and taught medical students for about 37 years. He taught them about cancer, cardiovascular problems, respiratory problems, you name it. He says "I don't live anywhere near where Costco wants to put that gas station, but the notion that it is not a health risk is totally b.s."

G. Our "Health Matters" filing has lots of details about the toxic components that automobile exhausts introduce into the air, the health risks these components constitute, who will be at risk, relevant government regulations, what various experts have said, etc. We hope people will read it.