

Dear Dover City Councilors,

My name is Kyle Pimental, and I live at 90 Park Street. I serve on both the Planning Board and the Cochecho Waterfront Development Advisory Committee. Additionally, in my capacity as Assistant Director of the Strafford Regional Planning Commission, I have provided consulting services to the City on various planning-related projects. I am writing to you regarding the City of Dover Ethics Commission's recommendation to remove Councilor Fergus Cullen from the Planning Board.

Before I express my opinion on this matter, I want to clarify that I did not attend the Ethics Commission's hearing on January 2, 2025, nor was I present during the June 11, 2024, Planning Board meeting where a decision was made on a project proposal at 512 Sixth Street. My understanding and subsequent assessment of the Ethics Commission's recommendation are based on evidence from tonight's City Council packet, meeting minutes on the City's website, and a *Foster's Daily Democrat* article dated January 16, 2025.

I'll begin by stating that the Ethics Commission's recommendation to remove Councilor Cullen from the Planning Board is shockingly excessive and, ironically, an abuse of power given their stated purpose. While I accept that Councilor Cullen, given his position, should have disclosed his involvement with Kevin McEneaney and/or Civilworks NE during the June 11, 2024, Planning Board meeting, I do not believe that such a disclosure would have required him to recuse himself. I also accept that he should not have engaged with the two residents raising concerns about his project during the July 10, 2024, City Council meeting. However, I am *not* willing to accept that these two minor infractions justify labelling them as ethical violations that warrant his removal from the Planning Board. An oral or written warning would have been more than sufficient; the recommendation for his removal is needless and rash.

As one of the longest-standing members of the Planning Board, I can confidently say that Councilor Cullen is an invaluable asset to the City. He comes to every meeting prepared, is engaged, and is not afraid to voice his opinions. While he and I do not always agree, he has always treated me with kindness and respect. In fact, he even went out of his way to send me a message wishing me well after I was involved in an accident last summer – an unexpected gesture that speaks to his character. A Planning Board's makeup should encourage diverse perspectives, and Councilor Cullen frequently brings a valuable, contrasting view to the discussion. I particularly admire his ability to offer simple solutions when we find ourselves overthinking a topic or spinning our wheels.

To be clear, I am not suggesting that just because someone is a valuable member of a local board, they should be absolved of consequences for their behavior. In fact, I believe that elected officials and volunteers tasked with making important decisions on behalf of their community should be held to a higher standard—within reason. The standard to which Councilor Cullen is being held and the subsequent severity of the Ethics Commission's recommendation are not only unreasonable but also send a discouraging message to those considering volunteering their time for City initiatives.

When I step back and look at the situation as a whole, it appears that what started as public concern has devolved into a more personal and hostile attack – especially online. I understand that city councilors and community leaders are constantly bombarded by criticism on social media, with no way to escape the relentless 'keyboard warriors' who thrive on tearing them down. However, many of the attacks on Councilor Cullen have been grossly unfair. Moreover, I believe the Ethics Commission, in this instance, has been used much like many environmental regulations—weaponized by opponents with the intent of systematically removing perceived obstacles and halting development.

I do not fault those who filed the complaint – it is their right – and their inquiry did highlight several ways Councilor Cullen can improve. My objection lies with the Commission's recommendation. As such, I sincerely hope that the City Council votes to reject it. If you do not, and you remove Councilor Cullen from the Planning Board, you will not have promoted the integrity of City government, but instead alienated those wishing to take part in it.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kyle Pimental". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Kyle" and last name "Pimental" clearly distinguishable.

Kyle Pimental