

Costco gas station bill in trouble

By Victor Zapana, *The Washington Post*. Published: July 9, 2012.

A controversial Montgomery County bill that would block plans for a gas station at the Costco under construction next to the Wheaton Mall in Wheaton appears to be in trouble.

One of the five co-sponsors of the bill — County Council member Craig Rice (D-Upcounty) — is reconsidering his support of the bill, county officials said Monday. Without his support, the bill does not immediately have enough votes to be approved by the County Council.

Rice could not be reached for comment Monday. County Council member George Leventhal (D-At Large) said Rice had told him he was reconsidering his support. A county official who was granted anonymity to speak freely about council politics said Council member Phil Andrews (D-Gaithersburg-Rockville) is now “the swing vote.”

In an interview Monday, Andrews said he was still undecided. “I’m still reviewing the testimony and reviewing the options,” he added.

In April, Montgomery County Council member Marc Elrich (D-At Large) proposed the bill after hearing concerns from residents near the site.

Civic activists say the super-sized gas station — which would fuel up to 16 vehicles at a time — is a public health risk because it is too close to residential neighborhoods and a swimming pool.

Business leaders, on the other hand, believe the legislation is overly burdensome. Costco is already undergoing a rigorous application process with the county to gain approval for construction of the gas station.

Some council members, including Leventhal, agree with business leaders. On Monday, a three-member council committee — which includes Leventhal and another bill critic, Council member Nancy Floreen (D-At Large) — voted not to endorse the bill.

But the vote does not block from the bill from appearing before the entire County Council. Council officials have not announced a date for the meeting.