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Alpine decries RDA bill tactics

Board felt 'strong-armed' in extending tax relief

By [Laura Hancock](#)

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HIGHLAND — Members of the Alpine School District Board of Education said they were "strong-armed" into extending property tax relief to the current tenant of the Micron facility in Lehi in order to protect pending RDA legislation that could benefit school districts across the state.

"We took this one for the state," board member Andrea Forsyth said following Tuesday's vote.

Sen. Curt Bramble, R-Provo, took issue with Forsyth's characterization of the situation, saying Alpine officials had agreed months ago to extend tax relief at the facility. Bramble is the sponsor of the bill in question but says he has no control over its future now that it has passed the Senate and is awaiting action by the House of Representatives.

"This should have been resolved months ago," Bramble said.

The school board's action will allow IM Flash Technologies — a joint venture between Micron and Intel — property tax relief over the next 20 years, saving the company millions of dollars that would have ended up in district coffers.

Controversy over the tax relief issue goes back to when the facility was under construction. Micron built roads and other infrastructure that Lehi city normally would have built.

The company entered into an agreement with the city to receive a reduction in property taxes to allow Micron to recover the money. Bramble said the facility, which has operated well below capacity since its opening, is simply seeking a needed extension of that tax relief.

Bramble said he sponsored a bill last year that inadvertently made it illegal for Lehi to extend the Micron tax relief.

Parties that negotiated this year's RDA overhaul bill — including a number of municipalities and the Utah Taxpayers Association — would have objected if Bramble allowed extended tax relief for the Lehi situation, the senator said.

Bramble said he told education interests who were involved in the RDA overhaul that if they wanted provisions in this year's bill, Alpine needed to enter an "interlocal agreement" to extend the tax relief.

SB196 includes a provision that will give local school districts more say in how they will participate in future redevelopment projects, including the right to opt out.

Alpine board member Christine Hannemann said people talking to board members indicated the bill would be killed if Alpine failed to grant IM Flash Technologies the extension.

Today is the last day of the Legislature, and Hannemann said board members were told a vote would not be held on the legislation unless the IM Flash agreement was in place.

Forsyth and Hannemann said they favored the IM Flash Technologies agreement because they believe the company will strengthen the county's economy, which means more tax dollars for the district in the future. They said they resented the pressure tactics.

The board members said Bramble's friendship with Stan Lockhart, a lobbyist for IM Flash Technologies and husband of Rep. Becky Lockhart, R-Provo, was part of the pressure.

Bramble said his friendship with Lockhart was not at play and said his past history speaks for itself.

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