



Another attorney questions HRT procedures

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NORFOLK -- A second eminent domain attorney agrees with the claim that Hampton Roads Transit used improper procedures to acquire land to make way for light rail construction.

But Norfolk attorney James Pickrell is not planning a similar lawsuit to one filed Monday by Hank Howell.

Howell represents Welton Real Estate Services in Norfolk, which lost part of its parking lot to HRT. His lawsuit says HRT unlawfully took the land through a process called "quick take" eminent domain, which allows government bodies to take the land before going in front of a judge.

Howell said his research showed HRT did not have that power.

Pickrell, who represents five clients whose properties were seized by HRT through eminent domain, said he came to the same conclusion.

"I'm surprised they filed certificates of take without doing the research," Pickrell said.

Pickrell said filing a lawsuit would not benefit his clients because it would keep them from taking HRT's financial offers right away, especially because HRT would likely get the land anyway.

He said his clients have been satisfied with HRT's dealings.

"I think they've been reasonably happy," Pickrell said. "It hasn't been easy, but we've gotten great results."

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