

TOWN COUNCIL PUBLIC SPEAKING MEETING

MARCH 16, 1999

6:30 P.M.

A meeting of the Wallingford Town Council held specifically for the purpose of offering the public an opportunity to speak on topics of concern to them was held on Tuesday, March 16, 1999 in the Robert Earley Auditorium of the Wallingford Town Hall and called to Order by Chairman Robert F. Parisi at 6:30 P.M. Councilors Farrell, Papale, Parisi, Renda, Rys and Zandri answered present to the Roll called by Town Council Secretary Kathryn F. Zandri. Mayor William W. Dickinson, Jr. was absent from the meeting.

The Pledge of Allegiance was given to the Flag.

Reginald Knight, 21 Audette Drive requested thirty minutes of time to address the Council.

Reginald Knight asked, why was the third of the month canceled last month?

Mr. Parisi explained, we scheduled a special meeting for that evening.

Reginald Knight asked once again why the third meeting was canceled? He stated that the schedule of meetings for the year exhibited the February 16, 1999 date as a public speaking meeting date. He also stated that the Council, on a number of occasions, have scheduled two meetings for the same night with a short meeting being held first before a second meeting, why wasn't that done for the public speaking meeting? If it was a matter of that particular evening, that week there were no meetings scheduled for Wednesday, Thursday or Friday therefore why couldn't the meeting be re-scheduled for one of those nights?

Mr. Parisi explained, the special meeting was scheduled in conjunction with the Public Utilities Commission and Pennsylvania Power & Light Global.

Reginald Knight asked, why did the out-of-town people get preference?

Mr. Parisi replied, it was the Public Utilities Commission, not the out-of-town people.

Reginald Knight asked, why couldn't that meeting not have taken place after this short meeting where people get a chance to say something; it has happened, it is not something that is new to the situation.

Ms. Papale stated, the third Tuesday of each month is the regular Public Utilities Commission meeting. They asked the Town Council to be involved in conjunction with their meeting. For many of the Councilors it is impossible to get to a meeting before 6:30 due to their daytime jobs.

Reginald Knight stated that the Public Speaking Meeting still could have been conducted first. The P.U.C. could have started their meeting at 7:00 P.M. He felt that the public was pushed out of the way.

On a separate note, the newspaper does not list the Public Speaking Meetings in the weekly meeting scheduled.

Mr. Parisi stated, the meetings are posted in the Town Clerk's Office. If the newspaper fails to pick up the notice, there is nothing we can do about it.

Reginald Knight next referred to an article that appeared in the Record Journal stating that a resident bought an ax to one of the schools. That is not at all true, in fact, he had an ax handle in his possession. This is typical of the newspapers with their headlines and garbage.

Reginald Knight stated, at the last Town Council Meeting it was stated in the record that there were no public golf courses in this town. I called Pilgrim's Harbor Golf Course who informed me that there are private members of the club but the course is open to the public.

Mr. Parisi stated, it is a rather expensive public course. From what I have been told by several golfers, they just increased their green fees.

Ms. Papale stated, I made the comment which was not 100% correct but the members of the golf club get first choice for tee time and during the height of the season the members have the same tee offs every weekend. When people who are not members want to play, it is very difficult to get a slot to golf and it is quite expensive.

Reginald Knight next quoted an editorial article from the Record Journal on the story of the Town purchasing the former Cooke Property; "the purchase of the Cooke properties by the town would seem to benefit Mr. Cooke....." this is an editorial and not an opinion, "a connected republican as some have noted more than other town residents. The properties are not needed for recreation or to control population density. Land closer to the center of Wallingford would be better for those purposes. Why this land and why now? Those are the questions townspeople haven't asked and the questions that town leaders cannot satisfactorily answer." So far we have put up \$3.6 million for that piece of property and as I stated before, I feel that this purchase was put before the public in the concept that it would be open land for all, not for golfers or any particular purpose. It seems strange

That we can spend \$3.6 million to buy land and we had such a hubbub about bringing clean water to people over in Seiter Hill. There is such an argument that is going on about that yet, almost in a cavalier fashion we can get \$3.6 million to a bankrupt man who could not sell his three and one-half acre lots which his property was deemed for.

Mr. Farrell stated, I don't think that characterization is correct. We don't allow personal attacks.

Mr. Parisi stated, I don't think that comment was called for. If you know he is bankrupt, that is one thing, but I don't believe that he is. And if you talk to the builders around town, if you know any, I think they will tell you that was a very, very good buy, if you know the price of a building lot in this town.

Councilor Knight stated, quoting the Record Journal and their opinion, you could do much better by stating your own opinions rather than theirs, especially when it comes from an editorial that was "ghosted" by somebody not in their employ. You would be better off giving us your opinions, not theirs.

Reginald Knight stated, the point is, the public at the time was not able to see any ranking for us to see where the priorities were in buying this land. For myself, I don't like the thought of a piece of land way over on the far side of the town, almost out of the town altogether....my conception of what the townspeople would be looking for would be small park lands and areas in and throughout the town, not just one large piece stuck out in the middle of nowhere. I think we should prioritize our money and there are other projects that deserved money and did not receive any. The girls' softball teams, there was such a hubbub about that and then finally they were squeezed into the swampy area in the corner of Prageman Park and that actually cut down on park area rather than bringing park area to it. We had this hall filled at one time with young people, ice skaters, hockey players, and that failed. There was no opportunity to put up an ice rink; these are our future citizens. It is good healthy aerobic exercise and that (ice rink) could have been given more.....

Mr. Renda interrupted Reginald Knight to tell him, the thing about the ice rink was that the committee wanted the town to put up the money and they wanted to run it. If we don't get any feedback on that dollar-wise, that comes back to the Town and the Town eats it. We cannot put ourselves in a situation like that.

Reginald Knight stated, last week I took a trip to Milford to watch the ice hockey and I saw the Wallingford Kings (team) there at an ice rink on the far side of Milford. There is no place here for youngsters for ice hockey except for Choate and that has a long standing waiting list. I think an ice rink can pay for itself just as much as any golf course. I have been talking with people who are very familiar with this area and one of them mentioned, I don't know if it is true or not, but apparently when Mr. Cooke acquired some of this land from a neighbor, Mr. Farnham, there were certain

obligations that went with it as to what type of use would be used for that land. I don't know if anyone has looked into that. Is that true, Mr. Farrell?

Mr. Farrell replied, that is a different piece of land I believe you are talking about. It is my understanding that is the piece that Mr. Cooke has retained and that there are conservation easements on it. That is not the piece that the Town purchased. If anything, that compliments why the Town purchased it, that we are purchasing land adjacent to property that the State of Connecticut has easements on. You make an argument over smaller pieces and there is an argument for smaller pieces but there is also an argument for trying to buy things that are together. I think that was more beneficial rather than detrimental. Our Law Department is not going to let us close on property to which there is not a good title. It would be malpractice for an attorney not to do a title search prior to representing purchaser.

Reginald Knight stated, It would not be the first time that something was over looked. It could be.

Mr. Farrell answered, you are talking about something that is quite major. Any title searcher who is performing only fifty percent of their job would notice the conservation easements.

Reginald Knight stated, I have also been told that one of our best bird sanctuaries is up in that area, both for ducks and geese.....I am glad that I am amusing people. What is going to happen to them (birds)? Geese tear land to pieces, they are voracious.....

Mr. Parisi asked, are you familiar with the pond?

Reginald Knight answered, no, I am not.

Mr. Parisi explained, it is probably about the size of this auditorium.

Reginald Knight stated, I am talking about the swamp area, sir. This is from people who know this area very, very well.

Mr. Parisi stated, the swamp area is down by the reservoir.

Reginald Knight stated, I have to speak on the different things that are more important to the Town at moment than a golf course; again, this is my opinion. You can look the other way and say that it is my opinion and that is that. The report we have on Lyman Hall High School with words like horrendous and things of that nature; costs of \$7 to \$15 million to bring it to a decent condition; I think the health of the students is more important than a golf course that only a certain part of the community will use. I believe there are roads in the Town which are in disgusting condition and of course you have heard me mention the condition of the sidewalks over and over and we don't even

● have a sidewalk inspector. When you talk about asbestos and mold in a school, you are talking about the health of the young people, the future of Wallingford. There are better ways of spending the money than on a golf course.

Regarding an article that appeared in the newspaper about the Fire Chief who had to wait around hours to get a simple transfer approved by the Council, Reginald Knight asked, why couldn't the Fire Chief write a letter to one of the Councilmen or the Chairman? It was a \$495 transfer for refrigerator.

Mr. Parisi explained that the Fire Chief had forgotten to submit the request to the Mayor's Office to be considered for the Town Council meeting agenda. The normal process is, every Tuesday, prior to a meeting items are submitted to the Mayor's Office and the Council agenda is put together at Tuesday afternoon, anywhere between 3 and 4 p.m. At those times the items are gone over, they come down to the Secretary and she is back there right now putting the agendas together and they will go out tonight. I think he (Fire Chief) slipped up on the deadline and we accommodated him by dealing with it that night but he just didn't.....

● Reginald Knight stated, it seemed unfair to the Council, the way it (article) was written up. It made it sound like they were ignoring him and making him cool his heels and I don't think that should have been written that way.

Mr. Parisi stated, the Council did handle the transfer the fastest way they could with our procedures.

With regards to CPR, Reginald Knight stated, it is good that we are teaching CPR to the youngsters in school but perhaps the town, apart from teaching the youngsters, should be also teaching the adults. I have paid out \$37 per year to keep my certification up. For the public, surely some Town employee such as a fireman or E.M.T. could give classes and the town subsidize the teaching of C.P.R.

Mr. Parisi stated, they do it up at the Red Cross. Did they charge you?

Reginald Knight stated, yes and for the average Joe Citizen, it is quite a piece of change out of his pocket. The Town should, for the public good.....

● Mr. Farrell suggested the Reginald Knight speak to the Fire Chief. Years ago Wayne Lefebvre, who was not fire chief at the time, gave a CPR course. It is an idea that should be pitched to him.

Next Mr. Knight addressed the traffic situation down at the Johanna Manfreda Fishbein Park area. He stated that he was facing west at the Route 5 and Center Street intersection, waiting to turn left onto Route 5 heading south. There is no lead time with the traffic signal for those who wish to turn left. This causes road rage. After two turns of the light and I still had not gotten through the

intersection to turn left, a person on the opposing side of the intersection, pulls out, wriggles between two cars and flashes through the traffic at about fifty miles per hour. I think the Town should put some influence on the Public Works Department to put a left turn lead signal in the light.

Mr. Parisi explained, it is a State of Connecticut matter since it is a state highway.

Reginald Knight asked that the Town initiate some sort of action for the safety of the public.

Mr. Rys stated, I spoke to Rick Doll when he was with the Traffic Maintenance Department. A lot of people have complained about that very situation. Mr. Doll's response was, "the State is in charge of the light and they were not willing to do much about it." The State controls the light and not the town and there has to be so many cars to get through that intersection from Route 150 across Route 5. It is something that you should probably bring up to your State Legislator.

Councilor Knight added, you also have an Amtrak pre-emption project going on which complicates it logirhythmically; tying in the railroad signals with the traffic lights. That makes it a very, very, very complicated project that has taken forever to get as far as it has gotten. Not to be discouraging, I am just giving you an idea of the complexity. Three years ago we were given money for a traffic light at the top of Barnes Road. We put money for the design of that traffic light at least two years ago. It is a state project and it is nowhere. The State moves.....you think this municipality moves slow? D.O.T. moves at a pace you have never experienced before.

Mr. Farrell stated, Mr. Thompson, Town Engineer, stated at one time when he was before us, it was a decently high priority for him and that was something he wished to remedy because he felt that that particular light was outdated by the situation that is there (Route 5 and Center Street). The Town is trying to address that but it is not something we directly control.

Mr. Rys added, the curb at Route 68 took Mary Fritz (State Rep.) at least five years to get through. The State moves very slow.

Reginald Knight stated, it would be sad to think that we have to wait for someone to be killed or crippled before we get any action there. That would be a shame.

Reginald Knight next stated, this time I am not going to talk about the general mess that the sidewalks in around town, and they are in a mess. We have steel shafts about 1 1/4" in diameter to 1 1/2" that stand about 1" high in the air with mushroom caps on top that are all ragged pushing their way up out of the ground in various locations. The average person does not see them while walking and someone is going to get hurt. If I spot one and Public Works personnel is nearby I ask them to knock them down with a sledge and they do. There are plates that are fairly small that fit into the ground where they can put their _____ light or transit and work there. Why can't these rods be

pulled out of the ground altogether? Every year it happens, every single year. If you want to see one beauty, #716 E. Center Street; it is across the street from the school and one house up. It is in front of a white house. It is sticking up very high with a very ragged mushroom head on it. It is a marker for Town land. They are Seattle Light markers, for transits. If you want to lay something out with your transit, you have to have a starting point. You drop a plumb bob onto that and that is your starting spot where you start measuring off (surveying.) I can't see why they can't pull that right out and put in a flat brass plates. I have seen them around in other communities. Every Spring, these rods are pushed up from the soil due to the ground freezing and then thawing. There is another one at the corner of Ward St. and South Elm St. They are a menace for anyone to trip over and I would hate to see anyone get hurt. It would not take too much; you could pull them out and put a brass plate in. I don't know if they even still need the markers.

Mr. Farrell stated, don't pull them out Mr. Knight because they could be surveyor's markers and it is illegal to pull them out. Bring it to someone's attention and don't do it yourself.

Reginald Knight stated, I would not do it myself; I am asking the Town to do it. They are extremely dangerous.

Mr. Parisi stated, I will check this on the way home.

Reginald Knight stated, there is a deed restriction on the Durham land you may have noticed. That is why I am concerned about this other land. I was hoping that people had looked into that so that we don't get into a clash with that.

He went on to say that he was ambivalent about Mr. Orsini. Nobody wants junk cars on their lot yet he assures that they are modern cars and not junks. I am concerned about the fact that he is in the zone for the type of business and when or if he goes to court, we are going to have an extremely expensive battle on our hands. We saw that over where I live (Westview Hills Case) and it cost the Town a packet. I don't know if he holds a winning hand or not but he is in an area that has been zoned for the type of work that he wishes to do. I am afraid that the Town is in for quite a battle. I am afraid that the Town is in a very bad situation here.

Mr. Parisi asked that the Council not make any comment on the topic.

Reginald Knight thanked the Council for listening to his comments this evening.

Motion was made by Mr. Zappala to Adjourn the Meeting, seconded by Mr. Farrell.


VOTE: All ayes; motion duly carried.

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 7:05 P.M.

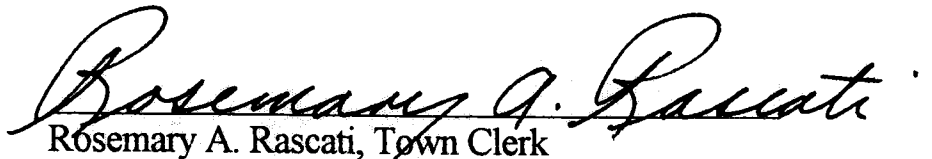
Meeting recorded and transcribed by:


Kathryn F. Zandri
Town Council Secretary

Approved:


Robert F. Parisi, Chairman

5-3-99
Date


Rosemary A. Rascati, Town Clerk

5-3-99
Date