

CONTINUATION OF THE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING OF DECEMBER 13, 1994

DECEMBER 19, 1994

5:30 P.M.

AGENDA

1. Roll Call and Pledge of Allegiance
2. Remove from the Table to Consider and Approve the Abandonment of Property Adjacent to Pent Highway
26. Executive Session Pursuant to Section 1-18a(e)(4) of the CT. General Statutes with Regards to the Purchase, Sale and/or Lease of Property
27. Discussion and Possible Action on the Selection of a Possible Site for the Recreation Center - Park and Recreation Commission

(Note: The above-listed items exhibit the numbers assigned to them on the December 13th agenda.)

CONTINUATION OF MEETING OF DECEMBER 13, 1994

DECEMBER 19, 1994

5:30 P.M.

SUMMARY

<u>Agenda Item</u>	<u>Page No.</u>
2. Remove from the Table and Fail to Approve Abandoning a Portion of Property Adjacent to Pent Highway	1-6
26. Withdrawn	
27. Approve the Fairfield Blvd. Site as the Location for a Recreation Center and Authorize the Mayor to Execute a Contract for a Purchase for the Amount Discussed in a Previous Executive Session	6-17

CONTINUATION OF THE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING OF DECEMBER 13, 1994

DECEMBER 19, 1994

5:30 P.M.

The continuation of the December 13, 1994 Town Council Meeting was held on Monday, December 19, 1994 in the Robert Earley Auditorium of the Wallingford Town Hall and called to Order by Chairman Thomas D. Solinsky at 6:37 P.M. All Councilors answered present to the Roll called by Town Clerk Kathryn J. Wall with the exception of Ms. Papale who arrived at 6:39 P.M. Mayor William W. Dickinson, Jr. and Town Attorney Janis M. Small were also present. Comptroller Thomas A. Myers was absent.

The Pledge of Allegiance was given to the Flag.

ITEM #2 Remove from the Table to Consider and Approve the Abandonment of Property Adjacent to Pent Highway

Motion was made by Mrs. Duryea, seconded by Mr. Rys.

VOTE ON REMOVING THE ITEM FROM THE TABLE: Papale was absent; all others, aye; motion duly carried.

Attorney Richard Gee appeared before the Council on behalf of Pat and Joan Siniscalco. He was before the Council on September 13th at which time the Council tabled the item until additional information could be obtained along with approval for the abandonment by the Planning & Zoning Commission.

He explained that the triangle was created several years ago when Pent Highway was moved and straightened out. It used to be part of Pent Highway. When the road was straightened out it created the triangular piece of property which does belong to the Town but no longer serves as a road. It has been an integral part of Atty. Gee's client's property in terms of appearance. They are requesting that the Town abandon the portion of the property to Joan Siniscalco for the purpose of allowing for recognition of status quo, add to the symmetry of the neighborhood and most importantly, would eliminate an eyesore. The Public Works Department is supposed to maintain it and doesn't. High weeds grow on the property creating a traffic hazard by blocking the view of traffic exiting Pent Highway south to the traffic heading north on North Plains Industrial Highway. This request dates back to 1982. In March, 1983 Town Engineer John Costello authored a memo which, in part reads, "I examined the area and informed Mr. Siniscalco that in my opinion since the old road bed is no longer a portion of the public travel way, the Town has neither the resources nor the time to maintain the old road bed. As it is we have our hands full maintaining 180 miles of travels in good condition." In June of 1983 Mr. Costello wrote, "We are also preparing a map showing that portion of the old road way, right of way, which should be abandoned to abutting property owner to the south who has expressed a willingness to accept it and maintain this area." The Town has been dealing with

December 19, 1994

this since 1983 and recognizing the fact that A) the problem is an eyesore, B) it is a liability to the Town and C) since they moved the road the Town was supposed to have deeded this to the Siniscalco's a long time ago. The land has no value, it is not useable for anything. It adds no value to the Siniscalco property and is a liability to the Town. The Town is not maintaining it. The Planning & Zoning Commission has approved the abandonment as well.

Mr. Gouveia pointed out that there are two entities benefitting from the action, one being Atty. Gee's client and the other being a realty company located on the property.

Atty. Gee agreed that this action affects two parties, however, he is here only on the behalf of the Siniscalco's and recommends that the entire piece be abandoned otherwise it makes no sense to abandon half of the property.

Mr. Gouveia stated that he has served several terms on the Council and does not recall this item coming before the Council. Atty. Gee stated earlier that there have been many attempts to have this piece of property abandoned, yet, it has never come before the Council.

Atty. Gee agreed that it has never come before the Council until this evening. He corrected his earlier statement by saying that many attempts have been made to initiate the action to bring before the Council and those attempts have failed in the past.

Mr. Zandri asked, what plans does your client have for the property?

Atty. Gee responded, nothing special except to maintain it and incorporating it into his parking lot. It adds no value to his property, simply adds symmetry to the neighborhood while straightening out the land records.

Mr. Zandri asked, did the Town have to purchase any property when the road was straightened out?

Atty. Gee responded, he did perform some of the title work at the time that occurred and it is his understanding that the Town did have to purchase or swap or make some arrangements with property but not with the Siniscalco piece. It was further east on Pent Highway.

Mr. Zandri stated, whether further east or not, the Town had to come up with dollars in order to straighten out the road and make it a better travel lane.

Mayor Dickinson stated, he did not recall purchasing any property. The issue back in 1985 was that the Town was not going to maintain or pave the highway without ownership of it. As a result there were conveyances of property to the Town in order to perfect title in the Town. We did not pay for any land plotted by Engineering. The correct route for the road and property was received from various owners along the length of it in order to accomplish it. Some was swapped but he was almost certain that nothing was paid for.

December 19, 1994

Mr. Zandri's concern was that every piece of property has some value no matter how small it may be. It is going to add to the acreage of what the client owns, therefore worth something somewhere down the line. He is not in favor of handing the property over.

Atty. Gee pointed out that it may add minuscule value to Mr. Siniscalco's property, however, it adds the potential for a large liability to the Town.

Mr. Zandri stated, just because it is not being maintained, we should not be giving out property.

Mr. Killen asked, why wasn't a new map generated to reflect the current owners and dates?

Atty. Gee responded, the map given to the Council was from the Town, he was not sure where the Town got it from, the owners are not correctly identified on it, you're right.

Mr. Killen did not feel comfortable addressing this issue with confusing, incomplete information before the Council on the property. It could lead to a variety of problems.

Atty. Gee stated, that map is not a recorded map, but simply an internal map used solely for illustration.

Mr. Solinsky stated, early on the land was supposed to be conveyed, however the Council is not being asked to convey the property but to abandon the roadway. Therefore the map is solely to show the proposed conveyance.

Mayor Dickinson stated, the record of title is what will show in the land records. If this map is not recorded in the land records and there is a deed which refers to either a correct map or property description, which is accurate, then that will be the record of title regardless of what shows up on other documents that are not recorded.

Mr. Killen stated, the simplest way would be to abandon it, the contiguous property owners then become owners of it, so to speak, and then the Town would have to convey a title to Mr. Siniscalco in a separate matter. Then you will have a clear title to it.

Atty. Gee responded, he had no problem if the Council chooses to convey the land by deed.

Mr. Knight stated, it may be advantageous at some point in the future for the Town to widen Pent Highway, at least that junction, at that point if we want to go back and acquire the property that we are about to abandon, it would make sense to abandon it with a stipulation that should the Town require the property later on, it can do so without cost.

Atty. Small stated, she was not sure, in the theory of abandonment, that you can place conditions on it. You can convey with a reverter clause. You either abandon or don't abandon, nothing in the middle.

December 19, 1994

Atty. Gee stated, if the road was to be widened he doubted that the Town would want that exact piece.

Mr. Zandri stated, there is no one here representing the other property owners who will acquire some of this land, what happens if they don't want it?

Atty. Small asked, why are we considering an abandonment of a piece of property for someone who is not seeking it?

Mr. Solinsky responded, there is a sliver of land with that piece and Atty. Mantzaris recommended that if we abandon one piece, we should abandon both.

Atty. Small pointed out that the second piece is not responsible for obstructing the view of the traffic on the corner. She did not recommend abandoning property to someone who is not seeking such.

Mr. Zappala asked Mr. McCully, Director of Public Works, what can we do to eliminate this problem and maintain the property so as not to create an unsafe situation?

Mr. McCully responded, this situation is entirely new to him. That portion of the road was rebuilt two years ago, shifting the road to the north.

Mayor Dickinson stated that the letter from Corporation Counselor was signed off by Town Engineer, John Costello, therefore, on that basis he has to feel that the Town Engineer, being aware of what potential highway uses may be, is indicating that it is not necessary for the Town to retain the property.

Mr. Zappala stated, if the property is creating a hazard, then take care of it by either paving it or mowing it. We should not have to give it away when we can simply maintain it.

Mr. Killen stated, if this was a problem to the Town then he would have expected one of the department heads to have put this request before the Council at some point. No such request has been made.

Atty. Gee stated that this has been ongoing since 1982.

Mr. Rys sympathized with Mr. Siniscalco but stated that there have been other "buffer strips" in the Town which the Town has offered up for sale to abutting property owners but has not offered to abandon them. He was not sure if this would set a precedent.

Ms. Papale stated, at times she has noticed what appears to be truck loads of debris or sand on the property. Perhaps Mr. Siniscalco would like this over with because he feels he is cleaning up someone else's mess.

Jeffrey Miner, 314 Grieb Road asked, will Mr. Siniscalco pay taxes on the property? How about the other property owner who is not aware that they will acquire land that will be abandoned, will they pay more taxes?

December 19, 1994

Atty. Gee responded, he could not comment on that.

Mr. Miner stated, it is pretty obvious that they will have to pay taxes and they are not here tonight. Don't we have an ordinance for picking up trash in this Town? We should not be giving up anything for \$12-\$14 worth of taxes that we may ending up needing again someday. We should just pave it.

Mr. Solinsky stated, he shares Mr. Knight's concerns with regards to a future need to widen the road, however, it does not seem that this piece would be of interest to the Town. The Town would most likely be more interested in the piece located to the North of it. He was in favor of abandoning the property.

Mr. Gouveia stated, the Town should receive something for the property for it is 140' by 30' approximately, and fronts the road. Has the Town expressed any interest in selling the property or has Mr. Siniscalco expressed any interest in offering money for it?

Mayor Dickinson responded, to my knowledge there has been no such discussion...he did not know if Corporation Counselor Mantzaris has had such discussion.

Atty. Gee stated, no such discussions have taken place. The reason that the action was not acted upon last time by the Council, he believed, was because it required Planning & Zoning approval prior to coming to the Council.

Mr. Gouveia stated, there were other reasons as well. It is easy to vote to give away property that does not belong to you. This property belongs to the people of the Town of Wallingford and to simply give it away concerns him. He would not have a problem with selling the property for it does have some value. As it stands now half of Mr. Siniscalco's property only fronts one road, it will be fronting two roads should the Council abandon the property, increasing the value of his property immensely.

Atty. Gee responded, we disagree.

Mr. Rys stated, he recalled that Mr. Siniscalco indicated to the Council that he would not be willing to pay anything for the property the last time he was before the Council on this issue.

Atty. Gee responded, that is Mr. Siniscalco's position. It has no value to anyone but to Mr. Siniscalco simply because it is added to his property. He has access to both roads from his property, it does not enhance it in any way.

Motion was made by Mrs. Duryea to Approve the Abandonment of Property Adjacent to Pent Highway as Referenced in Schedule A to Mr. Siniscalco, seconded by Ms. Papale.

VOTE: Solinsky, aye; all others, no; motion failed.

December 19, 1994

Mr. Solinsky asked the Mayor if he still required the executive session before Item #27?

Mayor Dickinson responded that he did not believe so. It is only necessary if there were specific questions regarding the site that has been discussed regarding the purchase. The choice of sites can be made without a need for executive session.

ITEM #27 Discussion and Possible Action on the Selection of a Possible Site for the Recreation Center - Park & Recreation Commission

Motion was made by Mrs. Duryea, seconded by Mr. Rys.

Mr. Killen asked if the two possible sites before the Council this evening have gone before Planning & Zoning?

Mayor Dickinson responded, he believed that Fairfield Blvd. property has been but since the Town owns the Community Lake property, if there was a desire to go there we could approach Planning & Zoning then. We should make a choice between the two. Due to the auctioning of the property Fairfield Blvd. has been approved by Planning and Zoning.

Charles Johnson, Chairman of the Parks & Recreation Commission and Tom Dooley, of the Parks & Recreation Department were on hand for discussion of this matter. Mr. Johnson referred to the letter written on behalf of the Parks & Recreation Commission stating their reasons for recommending Fairfield Blvd. as the site for the recreation center as opposed to Community Lake (Appendix I).

Mr. Zappala asked, what did Mr. Johnson base his concerns with traffic and safety on?

Mr. Johnson stated, one of the Park & Recreation Commission members informed Mr. Johnson that it was his recollection that back when the Boys & Girls Club wanted to place their building on the property that it was recommended by the Police Department that it not be built there due to traffic and safety reasons. It is the feeling of the commission that a recreation center would draw more traffic than the Boys & Girls Club would. The only access to Community Lake is Hall Avenue from all over Town where there is a number of ways to get to the Fairfield Blvd. property. It is located only a short distance off of Route 68, there is more parking available, we won't have to lose a pavilion and tennis courts that are already on the property if the building is built at Community Lake. Also, Fairfield Blvd. is available now, except for a gym, we could move in and use the building, now. We may be talking about waiting a good five years before there is a facility at Community Lake, in judging the way other projects are done in this Town.

Mr. Zappala stated that, in his opinion, Route 68 is more hazardous due to all the traffic on it. It is safer at Community Lake.

December 19, 1994

Mr. Johnson stated, the Community Lake property is too close to Route 15. Fences will need to be installed to keep the children away from Route 15 and also the lake.

Mr. Zappala felt that the traffic on Route 68 is just as dangerous for the children.

Mr. Johnson stated, no one is taking bicycles to Simpson School presently, why would they be doing so to Fairfield Blvd.?

Mr. Dooley stated that there is a much greater potential for liability at the Community Lake site than Fairfield Blvd. due to the larger "buffer" zone between Fairfield Blvd. and Route 68.

Mr. Zappala stated, there is always a hazard when children wander by themselves. It can happen anywhere.

Mr. Dooley stated, Fairfield Blvd. provides for a safer area.

Mr. Zappala stated, Fairfield Blvd. is a nice building but Community Lake is more than adequate and can serve both sides of the Town easily because of its central location. He frowned upon locating a recreation center in an area designed to be a commercial setting. He agrees, without a doubt, that a new recreation center is sorely needed. We should not just jump into something that we will have to live with for a long time. He prefers Community Lake for it will enhance the park and start an incentive to develop the rest of the lake area. He distributed a copy of the Boys & Girls Club plan for the property which exhibited the relocation of the pavilion, new tennis courts, etc. (Appendix II). There is no reason why it can't work for us. We could be proud of the lake and the building. He questions whether or not this is the right move (Fairfield Blvd.). The other side of the coin is that we will be taking away tax revenue for the Town, approximately \$61,000 per year that the building generates in taxes. We are promoting businesses in Town, we want people to come here and then we buy a building and take it off the tax rolls.

Mr. Zandri favored Community Lake as well. He stated that Fairfield Blvd. will cost the Town as much, if not more, than Community Lake in the long run to convert the facility. It is time something is done with the lake. With regards to the traffic issues, both sites will need to be addressed. If we want to get this done we can get it done and if we want to drag our feet we can do that too. It all depends on how enthusiastic we want to be on getting the facility done at Community Lake. We can move as fast as we want to on this, it is simply a matter of choice. He prefers Community Lake.

Mr. Rys stated, if we are ever going to have a lake there again, he would like to see the lake and not a building blocking it. Hopefully the Community Lake Study Committee will be able to obtain funds to restore the area. Industry pays a lot of the taxes in Town and a lot of the recreation programs serve industry. It may not serve them directly but a lot of the individuals sign up for programs which may enhance the programs even more so. The Fairfield Blvd. area is clear, no obstructions; there is a traffic light to the east and soon

December 19, 1994

one to the west; it will be in a location where the bands and dances will not disturb anyone and it will be easier to police. The building is there and could be occupied within one year if approved tonight.

Mrs. Duryea stated, the first action to look at the recreation center occurred in August of 1992. In two weeks it will be 1995. This has not been a rash decision on her part. A lot of alternatives have been considered including the Migliaro proposal. Other buildings have been looked at as well. This is an office complex we are considering, not an industrial park. The current recreation center is located in a deteriorating building. She is not sure how much longer the building will last. There is no money in the budget to take care of the repairs. The recreation center needs a large building. The Simpson School Study Committee presented the Council with a detailed study a few years ago, citing traffic as a major concern. The Council has to respect what the recreation center wants. She respects those Councilors and other individuals who prefer the Community Lake site for it is a nice area, however, she has a major concern with the traffic that it will generate in that area.

Mr. Gouveia stated, at last we stand at the threshold of a new, long overdue home for Park & Recreation. One of the reasons we are looking at this is not only because of the deplorable condition in which the recreation center is housed, but also because of lack of space due to the fact that the programs are so successful. Everyone is grateful for the wonderful job that is being done by the department. There are a lot of people here who feel that if we don't approve the Fairfield Blvd. building tonight, the Park & Recreation Department may be forced to stay where it is now for a long time to come. Moving them to Fairfield Blvd. soothes the pain for now, addresses the present overcrowding and safety concerns, but it is not, in his opinion, in the best long-term interests of the Town of Wallingford. He supports the commission in their efforts to find a new home, however, he deplores the lack of planning in meeting the long, overdue needs of the Park and Recreation Department. Looking for a place to go out of business or a building to be foreclosed is not a substitute for planning and designing with the objective of meeting the needs of the department in mind. Quite frankly, the Town deserves better, better than the facility it has today, better than the helter skelter approach to procure a new facility. Community involvement is not only desirable but essential...the kind of involvement that the Boys & Girls Club put together when they were to build a facility at Community Lake where everyone in the community was involved in the project. Regarding location, he believed that Fairfield Blvd. is located in a relatively new park. It does not pre-date our zoning regulations. It was designed for a large scale office, research and development and high technology and industrial use. It was designed in such a manner to serve the specific needs of those uses. To arbitrarily change the use, diminishes the viability of that park. Attraction of like businesses may be effected if a different use is assigned to that park. A Park & Recreation Center should be as centrally located as possible, easily accessible to its frequent clients either by foot, on bike or by public transportation, none of which Fairfield Blvd. will offer. Based on those points he would favor the location of the building at Community Lake.

Mr. Knight commended the Park & Recreation Commission for their poignant letter on the issue. Despite the fact that he does not consider Fairfield Blvd. to be the optimum location, he is not sure that there is such a place. Approximately one year ago we jumped at the chance to buy this very facility for the purpose we are discussing tonight. We did not win the bid and the property is still just as viable as it was one year ago. With regards to the location, as a member of the transit district, they are trying to do everything they can to lure people to use public transportation. Studies have proven that we cannot get people out of their cars. We are, for better or worse, this community is accustomed to jumping in their cars to go anywhere. If he felt that public transportation would be an important segment of transportation to and from the recreation center, he would not be in favor of Fairfield Blvd., obviously. He does not, however, see the recreation center as being a real generator of passengers. He supports the Fairfield Blvd. location.

Mr. Zappala pointed out that approximately 2-2 1/2 years ago when the Boys & Girls Club was before the Council to build at Community Lake, Johanna Fishbein, Park & Recreation Commission member stated, "We should be the ones applying for this location". She stated that to Stan Shepardson at that time. Nothing was presented to the Council from the Park & Recreation Commission on this issue until Mr. Migliaro came along with his ice rink issue. Prior to that nothing was going on.

Mrs. Duryea stated, it may have been, as part of the Simpson School Study Committee, Mrs. Fishbein may have realized the amount of traffic that was generated that would not be through the Boys Club. This has gone on a long time. The main thrust of the Simpson School Study Committee was to renovate the building, however, upon reviewing the issue it was discovered that many issues needed to be addressed, traffic being one of them. A lot of work was done on the part of the committee to determine what a viable solution would be. Her first impression of the building, upon viewing it, was not favorable, however, in viewing the inside and assessing the needs of the department, she has come to realize that it is a nice building and one that would serve the department well. It is not far removed from everything. She has given this issue a great deal of thought and research and is not jumping into it for the mere sake of purchasing a building.

Mr. Zandri stated, if it were not for the fact that the building was being auctioned, we would not be looking at it at all. Yes, a lot of projects in this Town have been stalled because there is no support to fund them. It takes dollars to get anything done whether it be Community Pool, Community Lake, new school systems, buildings, etc., and unless there is a commitment from this Town to put up the dollars, none will be done, including this one.

Mayor Dickinson stated, in his opinion a decision should be made, the Council should choose a site tonight, we are facing major dollars to put into Simpson School if we don't. We are committed to putting up the money we just need to choose a site.

December 19, 1994

Mr. Killen asked, what is it going to take to make sure that if we make a selection this evening that it is going to be done? Even if we obtain a 9-0 vote in favor of the project, what proof do we have that the project will be funded?

Mayor Dickinson stated again, we are committed to moving forward and should do so with feasible speed. The funds will have to be appropriated. Some preliminary work needs to be done and it is his recommendation that the Public Works Department be utilized with consultation by the Park & Recreation Commission. The Town would have to appropriate the funds to see that the move takes place in as short a time as possible and he would then favor putting Simpson School up for sale.

Mr. Killen stated that neither one of these sites are ideal as far as he is concerned, however, the Fairfield Blvd. site is the lesser of two evils. The key issue here is traffic. With the entrance ramp located slightly south of the intersection of Hall Avenue it will be a nightmare trying to exit Community Lake. There will not be much room for anyone to park with a recreation center located there and even less if Community Lake is ever restored. If any grant funds are to be obtained from the State it will most likely be due to the inland wetlands aspect of it and as much of that as we can keep down there the better for that is what is going to draw the State's attention.

Ms. Papale stated, one thing that everyone agrees with is that we must get out of Simpson School as soon as possible. Mrs. Duryea and the committee has brought that to the Council's attention through their study. The Mayor has made this a priority and agrees that the recreation department needs to move. She was not happy with the Community Lake option from the beginning. The traffic will be horrendous in that area and she cannot picture that situation ever being alleviated no matter what type of traffic light pattern is arranged. Mr. Tolla and his committee were given a charge of cost estimating a new facility at Community Lake which was presented to the Council. In reviewing the details of that information Ms. Papale could not see how the type of building needed could be constructed for the estimate provided. Fairfield Blvd. has plenty of room as it currently stands and offers much potential for expansion, therefore she supports that option.

Mr. Gouveia asked, what is the proposed total cost of Fairfield Blvd.?

Mayor Dickinson responded, \$2,456,232.000.

Mr. Gouveia stated, if that is the total cost of the project and the Council was satisfied with this project, why then form a committee and approve charging it with looking into Community Lake? If you wanted Fairfield Blvd. at any cost then why did we put another committee through the process of looking at another place, give them only thirty days...which we have never given anyone less than six months...to come up with a price that is \$500,000 less than Fairfield Blvd. and not even entertain their idea, what so ever? Three sites were contemplated for this center, Fairfield Blvd., Coastcast Building and Community Lake. He was not in favor of Fairfield Blvd. the first time

it was presented last year, for the record. When Coastcast was discussed with this Council, there were at least three members of this Council who favored Coastcast over Fairfield Blvd. Were we so enthused about Fairfield Blvd. from the very beginning? He thought not.

Debra Testa, 30 Piper Drive complimented Mr. Dooley on his recreation programs and stated, by moving to Fairfield Blvd. you are putting it totally out of the way for a good part of the Town. Also, you are putting it into a business complex. She was not sure how happy the other tenants in that building will be when there are children running all over the place. A centrally-located building would be more convenient to those individuals who use it. If you are not happy with Community Lake do not rush into Fairfield Blvd., look into something else. A few more months will not hurt us.

Johanna Fishbein, 112 East Main Street stated, yes, when the Boys Club was given the land at Community Lake, yes, she did state at the time that she was very frustrated at the time because they have been trying to get something new or useable for the recreation department. She stated to the entire commission one night that they should be getting the land. Time has passed on and she has learned a lot since stating that. Originally, Community Lake was meant to be a park for the Town. There is no telling where the growth of Wallingford will go in the next ten years therefore the Community Lake areas may no longer be central to everyone in town. How can we say that one location is too far and one is central? There are approximately five ways to access Fairfield Blvd. She favors the Fairfield Blvd. property which shows great potential for development.

Mr. Johnson stated, currently #6 Fairfield Blvd. has only one tenant which occupies 3,000 sq. ft. Perhaps a recreation center in the area may help retain tenants in that and other buildings up there.

Tim Cronin, 47 S. Ridgeland Road supports the Park & Recreation Department in all that they do therefore what ever they are requesting and what ever the Council gives them is fine with him.

Jim Barker, 501 N. Branford Road, Member of the Maintenance Advisory Committee, stated, the only view that the building would obstruct at Community Lake is the view from the highway. Yes, the recreation center needs a building and they should get the type of building they want and need for they should be comfortable. It will be for the public, however, the 1,200 - 2,000 people who will be using it and not for the five employees for work for the recreation department. The concern for those individuals who use the building for recreation should be primary. The center population of Wallingford right now is somewhere around North Colony Road and Rembert Street. It is about twice as far to the Fairfield Blvd. site as it is to the Community Lake site. In fact, if you juggle the numbers a little, you can actually put it on the eastern shore of Community Lake. There has been a letter to the Council from Park & Recreation which the public

December 19, 1994

has not seen. He would like it read into the record so that the public would know what the Council was considering over the weekend. A big concern seems to be over traffic. There are approximately 100 cars parked at Community Lake on a daily basis and he does not recall reading about any fatalities. If that many cars can squeeze in and out of there every day at rush hour then it may not be as dangerous a site as it has been proposed. Before the Council acts there should be a professional opinion obtained as to whether or not the traffic situation can be handled or whether it really is a danger. The cost of the two sites seems to be pretty close, except when talking about the Fairfield Blvd. site, you have to look at the present value of the revenue that will be lost to the Town if taken off the tax rolls. If it is true that it is in the neighborhood of \$60,000., that means that there is a present value of approximately \$800,000 to \$1 million that you must consider as part of the cost of the site vs. Community Lake. He, personally has not made up his mind for both sites have major flaws. He wanted the Council to consider the extra cost and hold off on a decision until traffic studies are performed by a professional.

At this time Mr. Knight read the letter from the Park & Recreation Commission into the record (Appendix I).

Peter Hale, Scard Road stated, recreation vs. industry. We carefully zoned this area (Fairfield Blvd.) for industry to create maximum employment for the Town and maximum income to the Town. Here, you are trying to tell us to place a tax exempt unit in the middle of it. If we are losing \$30,000 per year off the tax rolls, you must add that to the cost of the project. Over a ten year period it will cost the Town an additional \$300,000 for the project to have a tax exempt use in the middle of our choicest industrial area. Regarding Community Lake, what a better place to have a recreation administration building then in the center of the recreation activity of the Town for he believes that some day the lake area will be restored. Enormous acreage, which is useable, exists in the lake area on both sides. He supports the Community Lake site.

David Doherty, 6 Reynolds Drive supports Fairfield Blvd. for the following reasons; the size of the building, it already has offices, showers, sauna, aerobic rooms with padded floors and mirrors, day care room and room for expansion. It is a ready to go facility now. How long are we going to wait before one is built at Community Lake? The schools are a good example. He introduced a motion in June of 1993 to renovate Yalesville School. It is December of 1994 and that school has not even been touched. There are 180 spaces at Fairfield Blvd. which will meet the many needs of the people using the facility. A lot of people will use this facility and travel down the hill to do their shopping. It is not a remote area. It is right off of Route 68 in a beautiful location. The people coming from the west side of town have had a long trip over here for many years to Simpson School. They would appreciate a little shorter one. It has great access. Regarding the tax loss, he feels that the taxpayers of Wallingford have been cheated in their recreational services over the past ten years, not by the wonderful programs and staff of the department but by the buildings and facilities that they have had to use. Lastly, Community Lake should stand on its own. The Boys & Girls Club that

December 19, 1994

was proposed down there never spurred the revitalization of Community Lake and he doubted that the recreation center would either. The Fairfield site is the one to choose.

Dave Canto, 4 Meadows Edge Drive agreed with Mr. Doherty. He reminded the Council that the project cost for Community Lake was absent of the site work costs. The key consideration is time. Community Lake would take approximately five years by time you deal with the Army Corps of Engineers and the CT. D.E.P. office. We can't wait that long. It is not the perfect site but it is better than nothing at all.

Jon Walworth, Park & Recreation Commission member stated Wallingford is a very large community, 42 square miles, with only two east/west routes. We have two choices, both served by the north/south corridors. One has a resale value and one is a park. The costs are not necessarily similar because he does not believe that there are several hundreds of thousands of dollars of cost that the committee was asked to look at. It was not included, including a signal light, perhaps. There is no perfect solution. He has been trying to find one for ten years. He is eager to find a facility and hoped that the Council is making the right decision this evening.

Edward Bradley, 2 Hampton Trail questioned whether or not these are the two only viable sites in the Town? There was some talk in the past of the Backus property which consists of 11,000 acres at a price of \$900,000. and is contaminant-free. A yearly tax loss of \$60,000 compounds to over \$600,000 for a ten year period. There is also the aspect of personal property which comes into play. The current recreation center building is 30,000 sq. ft., the building proposed by the Advisory Maintenance Committee was 38,000 sq. ft. and Fairfield Blvd. is 44,000 sq. ft. He asked, where will the other agencies located in Simpson School be moved to?

Mayor Dickinson responded, the Youth Service Bureau as well as the Television Studio will be located at the new recreation center. The VNA is at Simpson and there is no plan to move them to the recreation center.

Mr. Bradley stated, a traffic impact study on the surrounding businesses at Fairfield Blvd. should be performed. You have already witnessed an industry in Town raise heck over a simple name change of a street, it would be very wise to approach the businesses there, if they already haven't, to see how they feel about a recreation center being placed in a commercially-zoned area. Let's not let eagerness get in the way of common sense thinking.

Mario Tolla, 69 Pond Hill Road, Chairman of the Advisory Maintenance Committee, asked, is Fairfield Blvd. available? Are you going to evict the tenants?

Mayor Dickinson stated, there is no long-term lease, the property is available.

Mr. Tolla referred the Council to an updated list of costs associated with the structure proposed for Community Lake. This list includes

December 19, 1994

the prevailing wage aspect of the project to bring the cost-estimated total of the project to \$2,185,000. He can understand how the recreation department wants to occupy a new building as soon as possible, however, when you are looking at \$2.2 million compared to \$2.5 million for another building in an area of Town that he is opposed to, he wondered if the public really knows where Fairfield Blvd. is, that it is in the northeast corner of Wallingford. He asked if any of the Councilors received any calls from constituents asking them to vote for Fairfield Blvd.? (The majority of the Council indicated that they had not received calls.) He commended the Park & Recreation Department for the job that they have done over the years and supports their quest for a new facility. He was surprised to see that suddenly the Town can come up with \$2.5 million when only a few months ago there were no funds for this project. Will this project be bonded or did the Town find \$2 million laying around somewhere?

Mayor Dickinson responded, it is not a sudden thing. The Town participated in an auction approximately one year ago and at that time we were prepared to go ahead with the project if the site had been obtained. It is not a new issue, simply a question of location. The longer we delay, the more potential there is to spend money at Simpson School and that would be unfortunate since that location is inadequate.

Mr. Tolla asked if the project will be bonded?

Mayor Dickinson answered, it will require borrowing in order to allow the project to move ahead.

Mr. Tolla stated, it is hard for him to understand why all of a sudden the department needs 40,000 sq. ft. when they are currently operating at approximately 15,000 sq. ft.? Are they then going to be needing 50,000 sq. ft. He conducted a survey of surrounding towns to find that out of thirteen towns, six do not have a recreation building, four of them are over 40,000 in population and don't have one. Why and how far are we going to go with these programs that we need a 40,000 sq. ft. building?

Mayor Dickinson responded, there are other uses in Simpson School. The total square footage of the school is 35,000 sq. ft. and not all of it is used for recreation. Remember, the Youth Service Bureau will also be moving to the new site. At Simpson School there are hallways that are virtually unusable for recreational purposes and consume a lot of space.

Mr. Dooley stated, we did not request 44,000 sq. ft. and that is what makes this such a wonderful opportunity.

Mr. Tolla stated, as a taxpayer of Wallingford and not a member of any committee, if you are going to take \$61,000 off of the tax rolls of the Town and move the recreation department up to the other end of Town because you can get in there tomorrow, is not good planning.

Lester Slie, 18 Green Street stated, we should keep Community Lake as a park area. There would not be enough room for a recreation center.

He also believes that Choate School still maintains a right of way on the lake. As long as the Mayor agrees, he would like to push ahead and buy the building and get it ready for the children. We need to keep them busy and off the streets to keep the crime rate down.

A letter from Philip Wright, Sr., 160 Cedar Street was read into the record at this time (Appendix III) stating his concern that the Town is making a hasty decision to purchase a building without proper planning for a long-term solution. He pointed out that not more than sixty days earlier the Council unanimously approved charging a committee (Advisory Maintenance Committee) with comprising cost estimates for constructing a building at Community Lake. The Council, who fully supported the group, ignored their findings which will discourage future volunteers from seeking participation in such committees. He reminded everyone of the last project that was undertaken without specific management oversight (Yalesville Firehouse). He hoped that the Council will not make a hasty decision in an effort to resolve a problem that has persisted for too long largely because of lack of acceptance and recognition of the problem by the Administration.

Mrs. Duryea asked the Mayor, how much money remains of the funds that were put aside in the Capital & Non-Recurring Fund by the Council for the purchase of land for the recreation center? Can we use those funds for this project now?

Mayor Dickinson answered, most of that money was absorbed for the Yalesville School roof. There may be something left but he would have to check. There were three or four different purposes for which that money was set aside, one being recreation and the others were Yalesville School roof and open space, in general.

Mrs. Duryea stated, it was specifically stated that the funds were set aside for land acquisition for a recreation center.

Mayor Dickinson answered, the money is available, providing it has not been utilized. It was set aside for more than that one purpose. He will obtain that information for Mrs. Duryea.

Mr. Zappala stated for the record that, initially he was in favor of Fairfield Blvd. when he first viewed the property, however he has changed his mind because not only is the location too far from the center of Town but by utilizing Community Lake property, it will only beautify the area. We have been waiting a long time to restore the area and this could be the beginning of it. The funding was the only thing that stopped the Boys & Girls Club from building there. Their proposed building and the landscaping were beautiful. He respected everyone's opinion on this issue but could not help thinking about the revenue the Town will be losing by taking Fairfield Blvd. off the tax rolls. He felt that the argument of too much traffic at Community Lake was an invalid one for a traffic light currently exists and the problem is not insurmountable. Route 68 is a lot more dangerous than Hall Avenue.

Mr. Killen thanked everyone who attended the meeting on this issue. He stressed how important it is for the public to participate in

December 19, 1994

person instead of sitting at home and watching. At the last meeting (December 13, 1994) of which this is a continuation of, a multi-million dollar power contract was the topic of discussion. Tonight, the economic aspect of this issue is the topic and if more people had come out, paid attention and been made aware of what the Town is entering into and how much money might have become available, we may have been able to build three, four or five of these particular buildings and not even notice it in your taxes. The public cannot simply come out on the night that the subject is nearest and dearest to their hearts. They have to make an effort to come out once in a while and give the Council an idea of which way they want them to vote. Remember, Community Pool almost didn't open this year had it not been for the large showing of hands by the public. He urged the public to become more involved in their Town business.

Mr. Zandri asked if Fairfield Blvd. was a through road?

Mr. Johnson responded, no, it is a cul-de-sac.

Mr. Zandri asked, does it "T" into Barnes Road?

Mr. Johnson answered, yes.

Mr. Zandri stated, he has heard a lot of talk this evening about all the many ways to get to Fairfield Blvd. and, in reality, all of the traffic will end up on Barnes Road and Fairfield Blvd. It is very similar to the Community Lake scenario. There is really only two roads that you will end up on to access this property, Barnes Road and Fairfield Blvd. He reminded everyone how he made some predictions years ago with regards to the trash plant and a lot of those predictions came true. His predictions for this recreation center, if located on Fairfield Blvd., is that this project will cost more than what has been presented to the Council before it is done, there will still be a parking problem there and, just like at Martin Avenue, there will be complaints from the neighbors at Fairfield Blvd. as well. Time will tell who is right and who is wrong.

Motion was made by Mrs. Duryea to Select the Fairfield Blvd. Site as the Location for a Recreational Center and Authorize the Mayor to Execute a Contract for a Purchase for the Amount Discussed in a Previous Executive Session, seconded by Mr. Rys.

Mr. Dooley stated that he has been a resident of the Town for fourteen years and Superintendent of Programs at the Parks & Recreation Department for eleven years. He does not see this issue as a partisan one, we should all be on the same team. We are providing something for the Town of Wallingford that is desired and greatly needed. We must all get on the same team to make this happen. He believes that Fairfield Blvd. is the site which will best serve the Town of Wallingford in the long run.

Mr. Johnson stated that fitness centers seem to be the wave of the future for industry. He feels that the industry in the area of Fairfield Blvd. would not object at all to the Town putting in a fitness center that they could use in their own area.

Mr. Gouveia stated that he truly believes that the recreation center should be located within walking and biking distance of the center of town. The traffic on Hall Avenue is basically local traffic while the traffic on Route 68 is regional in nature so the problem will be compounded by adding the local traffic to the regional traffic.

Mr. Knight admitted that he was one of the three Councilors referred to earlier by Mr. Gouveia who supported the Coastcast Building. He favors the Fairfield Blvd. property because, after examining the evidence and talking to people who know a lot more about building, construction and renovation than he does, that the Coastcast facility is one which the Town would practically have to just jack up the exit signs and replace everything else underneath. It does not seem feasible. It is with that evidence that he has come to the conclusion that Fairfield Blvd. is the location of choice. Also, it is more of an office park than industrial park. By being located on a cul-de-sac it lessens the amount and type of traffic that will be in the location.

Mr. Gouveia pointed out that the only reason the Town is no longer considering the Coastcast property is due to the fact that it is no longer for sale. Only three sites have been considered. He is not proud of the planning that went into this.

Mr. Zappala asked if the new 44,000 sq. ft. building will require more employees?

Mr. Dooley responded, at some point. We currently operate with many part-time employees and does not anticipate a great increase. The costs for the additional employees will be covered by the fees charged for the class.

VOTE: Gouveia, Zandri and Zappala, no; all others, aye; motion duly carried.

Motion was made by Mrs. Duryea to Adjourn the Meeting, seconded by Mr. Rys.

VOTE: All ayes; motion duly carried.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:25 P.M.

Meeting recorded and transcribed by:

Kathryn F. Milano
Kathryn F. Milano
Town Council Secretary

Approved by:

Thomas D. Solinsky
Thomas D. Solinsky, Chairman
Date 1-11-95

Kathryn J. Wall
Kathryn J. Wall, Town Clerk
Date JAN 11 1995



Town of Wallingford, Connecticut

December 7, 1994

Thomas D. Solinsky, Chairman
Wallingford Town Council
Municipal Building
45 South Main Street
Wallingford, CT 06492

To the members of the Wallingford Town Council:

We, Patrick Egan, Johanna Fishbein, Charles Johnson, Maynard Parker and Jon Walworth; as members of the Recreation Commission, an advisory board to the Recreation Department, who list among our responsibilities to recommend the procurement, upgrade and enhancement of Recreation Department areas and facilities, do recommend and strongly support the purchase of the building located at 6 Fairfield Boulevard in the Town of Wallingford to be utilized as a Recreation Center.

We believe this property is not only an outstanding opportunity for the Recreation Department and the Town of Wallingford, but that this location is superior to other recommended buildings and potential building sites including Community Lake. Other reasons for supporting the purchase of the building and property at Fairfield Boulevard are as follows:

1. The timeliness and price of purchase - this piece of property has become available for purchase by the Town of Wallingford at a cost that we believe to be fair and equitable for Wallingford, at a time when we believe the Recreation Department is one year past due in leaving Simpson School. Time is of the essence when considering this issue; the Recreation Department needs to be out of Simpson School as soon as possible. We don't want to pass on this wonderful opportunity which will not last for long.
2. We as a commission feel it is important to maintain Community Lake in its present condition, so that it will continue as open space, providing aesthetic beauty to the Town. Secondly, we do not wish to jeopardize the resources it presently provides for the Community, such as a Little League field, a pavillion for some 4,000 - 6,000 picnickers per year and as a lighted tennis court.
3. Taking into account item #2, we do not wish to erect a two story building on the Community Lake property. In doing so we believe that (a) the aesthetic beauty of the area would be lost and (b) would have a negative environmental impact on apart of the Town's quickly disappearing open space property.
4. Parking: the Fairfield Boulevard property positively addresses one of the Recreation Department most critical issues - parking space. The Fairfield property can accomodate a minimum of 180 vehicles with all spaces being directed toward Recreation Facility use. This parking could be increased depending on time of day and day of week upwards to 500 vehicles if the adjacent parking areas and street were utilized. This large increase in parking area is necessary especially to accomodate our large special events and registration time periods. Community Lake presently allows approximately 140 vehicles to be parked. This could conceivably be expanded by 30 - 40 more vehicles. Of critical concern is that these parking spaces would be divided among four competing elements -
 1. Recreation Facility use
 2. Commutor Parking
 3. Local business use
 4. Little League use in the Spring and Summer

Appendix I

IVAN S. SHEPARDSON
DIRECTOR

F. THOMAS DOOLEY
SUPERINTENDENT OF PROGRAMS

JOHN S. GAWLAK, III
ASST. SUPERINTENDENT OF PROGRAMS

DEPARTMENT OF PARKS & RECREATION
701 CENTER STREET
WALLINGFORD, CONNECTICUT 06492
TELEPHONE (203) 294-2120

PARK & RECREATION COMMISSION

CHARLES R. JOHNSON
CHAIRMAN

JOHANNA FISHBEIN

PATRICK EGAN

JON T. WALWORTH

THOMAS G. ZAPPALA

Secondly, these 140 - 180 potential parking spaces can in no way accommodate our large special events or registration parking needs. The most notable example of this was the recent Halloween Haunted Hayride held at Community Lake, when we had to close off the parking lot at 7:15 p.m. because we were filled to capacity; turning away approximately 300 cars over the course of the next 90 minutes.

5. Access: it is our belief that after careful analysis that the Fairfield Boulevard property provides for greater, easier and safer access for Recreation opportunities than does the Community Lake property. There are many access routes to Route 68 which are a direct link to the Fairfield Boulevard property. They are I91, Leigus Road, North Farms Road, Barnes Road, North Main Street Extension, North Colony Road, Wilbur Cross Parkway, Main Street (YV) Hanover Street, Hope Hill Road and Highland Avenue. Community Lake provides limited access with people having to utilize Hall Avenue specifically.
6. Safety: the Fairfield Boulevard property provides a safe buffer zone around the building, allowing young children an area that they can be in - run in and play without worry of traffic or other hazards. Community Lake, however, presents the Town with many concerns and challenges which must be met.
 1. Within approximately 200 feet of proposed building site you have two major traffic thoroughfares - Wilbur Cross Parkway and Route 150.
 2. Within approximately 150 feet there is a major water hazard, Community Lake, which needs to be taken into account on behalf of young children.
7. It is our belief after consulting with the opinions of people with expertise in the contractor industry that the proposed building presented by the Community Lake building committee would eventually price out at a significantly higher amount than stated to you; and there would be additional costs not alluded to for the following:
 1. Redesigning area to accommodate the increase in traffic flow and installing new traffic signals.
 2. Installing sewer lines.
 3. Demolition of pavillion.
 4. Reintegrating facilities which presently exist at Community Lake.and that finally, the proposed building would not be of the same high caliber building as the one on Fairfield Boulevard.
8. The Fairfield Boulevard property is for the most part ready, with the exception of some minor revisions and renovations to the inside and building of a gym, to be occupied now, as we speak. The Community Lake project is an idea in its infancy, and although it is a conceivable project it could take many years before we see it come to fruition. The area available in Fairfield Boulevard, 44,000 square feet, will allow for future development and expansion of the interior without expanding the building floor space; whereas proposed building area at Community Lake will be strictly limited without room for change.

We, the Recreation Commission feel that we would be remiss to support the project at Community Lake at this time, passing on the opportunity available to us at Fairfield Boulevard. The time is now, and the opportunity is Fairfield Boulevard. If we should make a mistake in this purchase, being a private property purchase we could always cut our losses and sell the building and the property. Once we commit to building at Community Lake, regardless of the outcome, it's ours.

If all things were made equal - if building costs were the same, if renovation costs were the same, if the buildings were of the same caliber, and we were discussing the same time frame, we still would stongly support - because of the safety of the area, the access of the building, the accomodating parking and location of the site - the purchase of the Fairfield Boulevard property to be used as a Recreation Center for the Town of Wallingford. We, the members of the Commission, urge you, the Town Council members to approve the purchase of the Fairfield Boulevard property.

We thank you for allowing us to present our opinion on behalf of the Wallingford Recreation Department.

Yours truly,

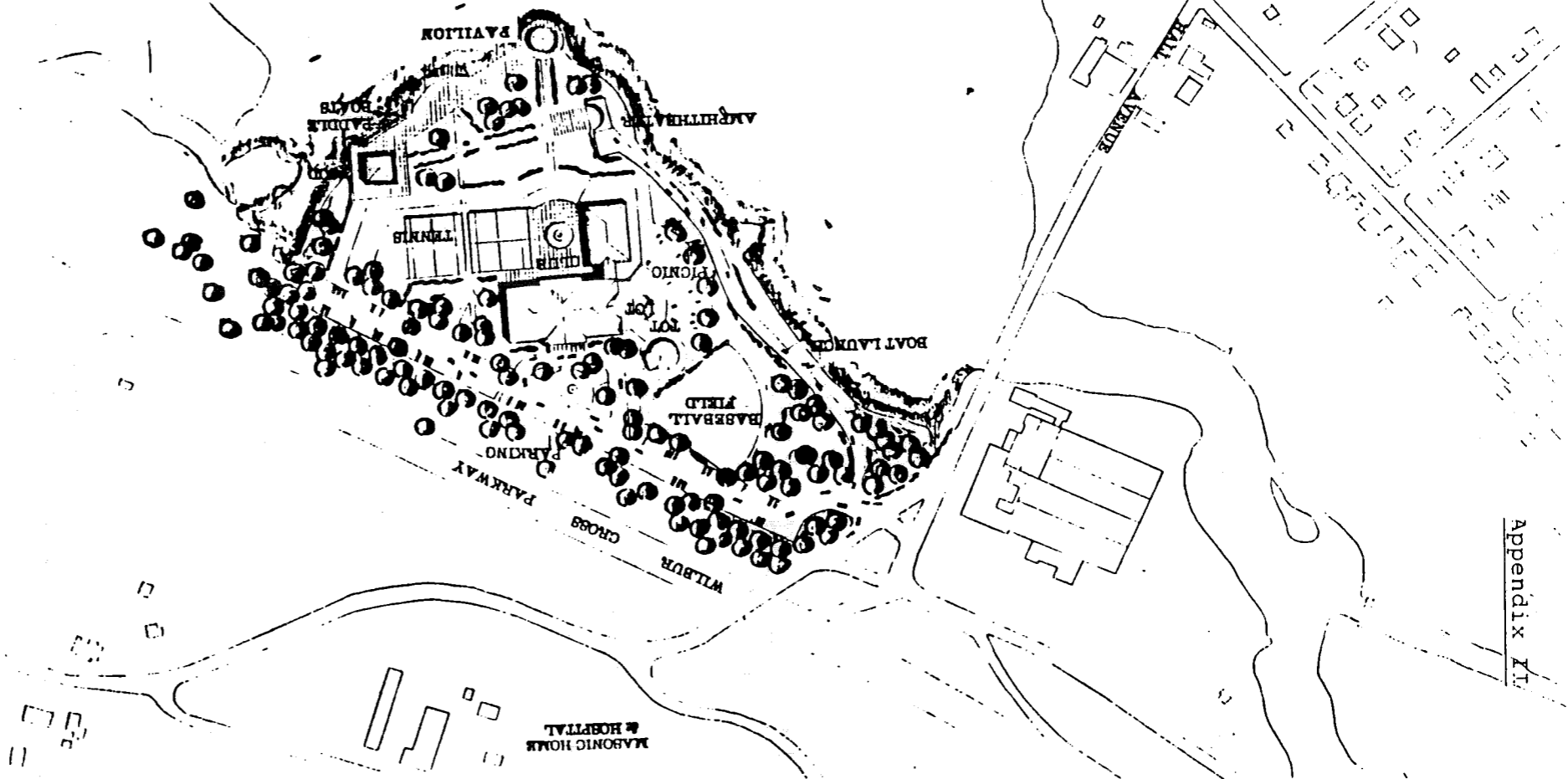
Wallingford Parks & Recreation Commission

Charles Johnson, Chairman

Johanna Liskiewicz
Jon Walworth (see attachment)

WPRC/jg
cc: Town Clerk
addendum

Per Tom Kappala -
If the Boy's Club can
do this why can't we?



Received
12/19/94
@ 5:25 PM
K. Quinn

12/18/94

Town Council Members:

I regret that I am unable to be present at the meeting of 12/19/94 to express my concerns regarding the selection of a site for the Parks and Recreation Dept. building. I ask that this letter be read into the minutes at that meeting.

It is abundantly clear to all of you who know and hear me that I am very selfishly in favor of a tip top Parks and Rec facility. I believe you also know how strongly I support sufficient prudent spending for the good of the youth in our town. Wallingford can and must provide the required funds.

Proper setting of a facility will go a long way towards ensuring that it will serve the recreational needs of Wallingford citizens of all ages for many years to come. It is an opportunity to do a real job of planning that will make our community proud. It would indeed be sad if the decision to choose a site were primarily based on the availability of a piece of property that can be adapted at some cost for the use as presently conceived, however inappropriately located.

The Martin Ave. site has presented some problems that loom very large in the minds of those of you who are responsible for making a decision on this all important subject. Almost any new location would largely mitigate these conditions. There seems to be a powerful urge to make a move, any move, that would reduce traffic and noise problems that are present on Martin Ave. Again I say it would be sad if we let current conditions color good planning decisions and act for the sake of expediency.

A report was recently issued by some very interested volunteers outlining the feasibility and rough costs of building a designed structure at Community Lake. As I recall it, the charge to this group had the unanimous support of the council. The consequence of largely ignoring their findings will discourage future volunteerism in the community. That too would be sad.

There are those of you who have frequently voiced concerns for lack of planning in our town. This present situation seems to be a perfect example of this factor. To my knowledge we do not have a properly constituted committee to deal with the problem of a recreational facility. The public has many concerns such as what will happen to Simpson School if vacated by Parks & Rec? Is a sale contemplated? Will any commercial activity there be compatible with our regulations for the area? What is the probable value of the property? Will it languish like the Wooding property? Will it be allowed to deteriorate like Yalesville School? What will be the total final cost to purchase and rebuild the north end property, and how will it be financed?

The last time that we embarked on a project that was not given specific management oversight was the Yalesville firehouse. You all recall that debacle and the recriminations that resulted. No repeats, please.

page two

I presented to you on 11/22/94 some thoughts concerning several possible locations and the planning aspects of the various sites and specifically the reasons why a recreational center should not be located in a distant commercial area. I feel that the points were valid and should be properly considered.

I would hope that the Council will not make a hasty decision in an effort to resolve a problem that has persisted for too long largely because of lack of acceptance and recognition of the problem by the administration. Let's plan it. No quick fixes please.

Philip A. Wright

Philip A. Wright, Sr.
160 Cedar Street
Wallingford, CT 06492
269-1759

