

TOWN COUNCIL

PUBLIC SPEAKING MEETING

JUNE 16, 1998

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, June 16, 1998 in the Robert Earley Auditorium of the Wallingford Town Hall and called to Order by Chairman Robert F. Parisi at 6:30 P.M. All Councilors answered present to the Roll called by Town Council Secretary Kathryn F. Zandri with the exception of Councilor Zandri who was attending the Public Utilities Commission Meeting as a member of the Town Council/P.U.C. Liaison Committee held at 6:30 P.M. at their John Street Offices. Mayor William W. Dickinson, Jr. was also in attendance. Attorney Janis M. Small and Comptroller Thomas A. Myers were absent from the meeting.

Pledge of Allegiance was given to the Flag.

Lester Slie, 18 Green Street stated, I complained about this matter about a year ago and nothing has been done about it; down on Ward Street and Elm Street, you take a right hand turn onto Ward St. from Elm Street and you are going over the curb. Ninety percent of the drivers are going over the curb all the time. If you go a little farther, the car is swerving in the other lane. I wish that you would consider rounding off that curb by about three or four feet so that people are not going over the curb and can turn without fear of hitting the vehicle in the other lane. We are going to have a bad accident one of these days.

Mr. Parisi stated that he will take the suggestion under consideration and will pass the information along to the Engineering Department.

Barbara Chayer, 24 Willow Street stated, I am speaking to you from two perspectives this evening. First, and throughout everything I have to say, I am a resident taxpayer, I have been since 1955. Secondly, and you will be able to see the demarcation when it comes, I will be speaking to you as the Chairman of the Zoning Board of Appeals. I have several topics that I want to hit on. The first is shoddy buildings; near Fishbein Park there is a building that suffered fire damage about three years ago and it is an eyesore. I am wondering if the Town can do anything about unsafe, neglected, abandoned, burned out-types of buildings. Can they be razed or brought up to code? We should take steps to improve the safety and appearance of this town. Trees; I have been very careful to observe

ornamental pear trees that have been planted down at Fishbein Park. I consider them totally inadequate. They are not going to give much shade nor will they create the beauty that they should and that is needed and that is also needed for camouflage of the buildings down there. It is a generally unattractive area. I would like this Board or Council to take a leadership role and next Spring have those trees transplanted where they might do some good and have some regular trees of a good size put in and trees that will grow to a fairly good size. What we were told during that whole time was, this is an urban environment; urban environment. Well, this is a supplement to this past Sunday's Hartford Courant (holds up newspaper photo to Council) and that is a much more urban environment; it is downtown New Haven. It is two blocks of green surrounded by trees. Inside in the same urban environment is Chapel Street which, if you are not familiar with it, I will tell you that it is their leading commercial street which runs on one side of the green. If you can't see it, take my word, there are trees growing all along there; there is a human being and there are some store fronts (in the picture). I would say that the trees are a good fifty feet (50') high. That is Chapel Street in New Haven. I think, as much of an urban environment as we are, we can deal with some real trees. Open Space; I would like to see us buy what we can that is on the perimeter of the town that rings the Town. This is nothing...it is not a new thought with me, other towns and cities have done this. It gives them a little ring of protection from what else is going on. When we drive on Route 5 the rage person cannot tell whether they are in Wallingford or Meriden; it just sort of changes and if you don't see the sign, who knows? I don't want to see this town just merge with all the surrounding towns. I think that should be very much a consideration with the open space. Wooding Property; I don't know what you plan for that. I am sure I have heard things but I have no recollection. My personal feeling is that I would like to see two things; either condos for the adult population over fifty-five (55); I think it is a very convenient location. Otherwise it could be used as open space, even temporarily if it were just open and you had something of an uptown park. No-show Board and Commission Members and that would go also for Councilmembers; the Town should, I believe, have a regulation that removes Board and Commission members who fail to attend and participate in three consecutive or four non-consecutive meetings per year. There should be an automatic removal of them so that there is no thought that one political party is trying to hurt another political party. It should just be part of the regulations. They aren't working; they should be removed. The Town should have people who work. I have been told that a Commission member took off most of a year because his wife was pregnant. That is dereliction of duty and the Town should not tolerate it. Debate; I listen to the Council occasionally. I notice something that is said quite often, "We don't want a debate." Maybe what you really mean is, we don't want to fight on this floor but I think debate is a good thing. I think that any topic should be given as much information bearing views so that we can consider them. A couple of months ago Mrs. Malloy and Ms. Small were debating an issue. They are both lawyers; their discourse could have been valuable to the people in this Town. They were cut off because, "We don't want a debate." Well, this citizen wants debates. Workshops; I have expressed this before, I have expressed it to the Mayor, I believe that I have expressed it in the newspaper and I will say that Linda Bush did hold a workshop for the ZBA (Zoning Board of

Appeals). I do want to make that point. I believe that all new Board and Commission members should be given one technical and one legal workshop to introduce them to the general requirements of their jobs. Thereafter, annual workshops should be held so that information could be updated, memories could be refreshed and people can ask questions, make comments, and so on. It was my understanding that.....I met with the Mayor and Ms. Small at the end of last year and my understanding was that we were going to get workshops.

Mayor Dickinson replied, I believe Janis (Small) tried to set up meetings with the ZBA and there was never a time when everyone was willing to meet.

Mrs. Chayer responded, I have never been contacted; I don't believe I have been contacted.

Mayor Dickinson stated, I have it from Janis (Small) there was a definite effort to set up meetings and the members of the Commission were not available to meet. We can follow that up with Janis (Small).

s. Chayer stated, I would not be surprised if several of them.....although I will say that several of them did attend Ms. Bush's workshop; that I considered well-attended. There aren't that many of us, six or so is good attendance, but I don't believe that she has ever contacted me. Secretaries; I believe that I have heard on T.V. that Board secretaries, Commission secretaries, and so on, are entry-level jobs. I disagree with that. A good Board or Commission secretary must work independently. They must be well-organized and reliable. Our particular secretary I think is very good. She also uses some of her own equipment. I hired that secretary a month after I became the Chairman of the ZBA. I believe that was February of 1997. I am going to tell you a little anecdotal information about what happened; I was unfamiliar with the job of Chairman and I thought we were dealing with two areas here; I have got to hire somebody, that is a Personnel area and including her and the travel allowances that are given, I should speak to someone in Accounts Payable. I went to Personnel to ask what was needed. I was met with.....at my recollection...it was a woman who was sitting down at a desk in the entry area and a woman behind the counter. The woman at the desk I thought made it abundantly clear that she did want to be bothered. She just looked around and sort of huffed. The one behind the counter I felt might have been cooperative but she was playing for this one's approval; that is what I read into it. I think Tom Sharkey heard us discussing something and popped out and I got some information from him which I later realized was piece meal and not efficient. I then proceeded to go to Accounting and I met with Eva Lamothe and Kim Skiffington, both of whom were helpful. They knew what they were doing, they knew what I should be doing and they were very helpful. I also believe that good secretaries should be paid a competitive wage. That is why I said in the very beginning, I don't consider these entry-level jobs. She is a recording secretary but I believe your recording secretary, if I can trust the Record Journal, makes about twenty dollars (\$20.00) an hour. I think it is time to look at all secretaries and if they are any good, bring

into line. Topsey; many jobs, organizations and projects roll like topsey. Soon they become disorganized and ineffectual. I think it is part of a manager's job to look at what is really being done with an eye toward improving it. Now I am going into the crescendo of the evening as far as I am concerned. I want to make a very clear point to you, I am here to ask you for your help. I am not just here to give you my opinions and views. I am asking for your help. I have tried to get things done by going directly to some people and I am up against a wall and I am not a person who is going to say, "Ooh! A wall." But, ooh, a wall, and I start kicking. So here it is; I titled it originally, Inadequate clerical support, but it is also inadequate management. Many of the variance requests that we (ZBA) receive from the Planning/Building Departments are garbage. They're just garbage. Required information is not included, the physical make-up of some of the packs makes them difficult to use and I have complained about this both verbally and in writing (holds up a copy of the letter); copy of a letter dated 6, June, this year. Really, I met the response that I say, they could give the military lessons on "hunkering down" and on dodging bullets. It is really very interesting. Now, I also want to make another point to you and I garner this information from the Record Journal and I will give you some, which you perhaps realize. The members of the ZBA on balance, are allotted thirty-three dollars (\$33.00) a month for travel expenses because we are supposed to be going out to look at all the properties in question; thirty-three a month. The Town Planner's pay is something over 10,000 a year so I want to draw that line in the sand. When the requests are accepted in the Planning/Building Department, however that is done, they should be complete. A clerk should review them and if there is something missing, I think that clerk should pick up a phone and call the applicant, either have the applicant come in to take care of it or get the information if it can be just something that can be handled on the phone. How many applications do we get a month? A low of maybe six, a high of perhaps fifteen; we are not discussing a lot of work. Now I have talked to Ms. Bush about this, she called me as a result of the letter. The upshot of it was, it was given in a little different order, but the upshot was, they do the clerical work for Planning & Zoning, they will not do the clerical work for the ZBA because of some long-standing bad blood between the two bodies. Well, I am not really interested in some old vendetta between them; I am not even aware of it. I think what we have got is a new vendetta building. I want clerical work done in that department and I want properly prepared requests into my Board members and when Planning and Building have pertinent comments, they should submit them and we'll do the voting. That, to me, is the end of that story. I am sick and tired of non-performing, full-time, paid government workers. If they can lead departments, they should be able to balance their workloads. If they need additional help, they should go after it and I say go after it because perhaps they do have to fight for it. If a union worker says she is overburdened then my suggestion is, number one, she think through her job and try to figure out if there is some improvisation she can make and if she can't figure it out, she should be able to go to her supervisor/manager for help. If that doesn't take care of it, then she should ask her union for a desk ...lit but what ever it takes, the work should be done. They have jobs for which they are paid and which require them to serve this town. I want them to start serving and not give me the run around I have been getting. If you have questions, I would be happy to take them.

1311. Parisi stated, you were talking about the instructional classes, I believe I requested that at the start of our term.

Mrs. Chayer stated, I think it is an excellent idea and I think that the Council would be well-served.

Mr. Parisi stated, we don't seem to have as much concern about it in our area but the point is, it had been requested and as the Mayor said, I thought it was being followed through.

Mrs. Chayer stated, I will flesh out a little the idea that I gave you which is, if you have non-performing Board and Commission members, they should be let go. If a person takes these jobs, that person should be willing to do a little backup work which is, attend a workshop.

Mr. Parisi agreed with Mrs. Chayer and stated that he will follow up on it. Currently, I don't believe that there is any control over attendance. It may require a change of the Charter, he stated.

Mrs. Chayer replied, you are the leaders, that is another area where leadership should be shown.

Parisi took the suggestion under advisement.

Mr. Renda stated, there are two structures on Route 5 that are abandoned. They are fire traps. I talked to someone who did repairs in those buildings; that is the old Barberino Property on Route 5. I was told that the houses should be torn down; there is a fire hazard, there are plumbing problems and stuff like that.

Mrs. Chayer stated, I went to the property on ZBA business one day; he was looking for a garage variance. At that time, while I was in there I heard something about problems in the building across the street. It seemed it was abandoned but a dog was there.....it was a flaky conversation.

Mr. Renda stated, it is the white house and the green house. I have contacted the Health Department who was supposed to have gone down there; talking about going up against a stone wall. I am going against an iron wall because I can't penetrate it. I tried to work with the Housing Authority but it seems like these two departments that I am dealing with, I can't get anyplace because it is who knows who and there is some kind of pull being played. Everybody in this town deserves a fair share and these people are in their positions and have to do their job. I would like to see a work sheet of r schedules.

Mrs. Chayer stated, I don't know what the Personnel Rules are of the Town; you might start there and look and see what your chances are of making some changes.

IVII. Renda stated, I can't get anyplace; that's it.

Mrs. Chayer replied, maybe if you read the rules you may find a way to make some changes. Because some people only respond to beheading. If they think their head is going to roll, they'll respond. If they think they can "dog" it forever they will continue "dogging" it.

Mr. Renda stated, I would like to see whether it is me as a Councilor or a taxpayer in this town. They call up any department.....anybody that works for this town has to serve the public; their tax dollars are paying their wages. You don't have to be a Councilman or anybody, just a regular citizen. You should be able to call that department and get some kind of response. If I had my way, one department in this town; I would like to meet with the Mayor and bring this department forward. That department should be reprimanded. Either you are going to do your job or you're out if you can't. But then we would run into a union problem. It is a stone wall.

Mrs. Chayer replied, having worked for the State Office for Policy and Management, I can tell you that I have dealt with union problems and they are frustrating; there is no easy answer unless you have the goods on them, period.

Mayor Dickinson stated, to my knowledge there is no authority for government to go on to private property just because a building is abandoned. If a person wants to not have a building inhabited or used, that really is their right. If the building is unsafe in some way then there is an ability to have it condemned and demolished. We have no authority to go on private property and tell people that they have to do anything.

Mrs. Chayer asked, when you say safe, would that take in fire hazard and sanitation problems? If it looks like a timberbox?

Mayor Dickinson stated, just because it might burn doesn't mean it is a building that.....

Mrs. Chayer stated, I realize this building (Town Hall) could burn, I realize that but I think there are degrees that might be established.

Mayor Dickinson stated, to my knowledge, the only thing that allows government to force the issue is where the building is structurally unsafe; it could fall down. Otherwise, it is a serious police authority we able to go out and tell people.....

Mrs. Chayer wondered if the building across from Fishbein Park that was a Chinese restaurant would be considered structurally unsafe. Even if people in this town realize that the town fathers are interested in the upkeep of the town, they might respond. (Mayor) Guiliani seems to have done pretty

well; I was down in New York the end of May and I will say that the sidewalks are clean in Spanish Harlem. I had to drive through there. I think sometimes moral suasion can help.

Mr. Rys stated, with regards to the building near Fishbein Park; I spoke with the Fire Marshal and also the Building Department because there is a couple of businesses located behind that building that were very concerned with vagrants going into the building. As far as the Fire Marshal and the Building Department goes, the building is safe and they can't do nothing about it. The owner lives down in Florida and he has been contacted several times. When it snows we end up plowing the snow and billing him down there.

Mr. Farrell stated, in regards to the comments about the communication between Planning & Zoning and Zoning Board of Appeals, I would be glad to pass your comments on and talk to Bill Austin (Planning & Zoning Commissioner)

Mrs. Chayer replied, wait a minute; the only thing I said about them; they have their clerical work done by the Planning & Building. I had nothing else that I recall to say about them.

Mr. Farrell continued, I think it may be an issue that could be addressed through Bill Austin and I will ask him. If it is something that you are not satisfied with, a little later on, we can talk to the Mayor and we can also bring it up at the Planning & Zoning/Town Council liaison meeting.

Mrs. Chayer asked, are you saying to me that he should be able to exercise authority over Spiteri (Carmen, Building Official) is his name and Bush (Linda, Town Planner) to get something done? Is that what you are saying?

Mr. Farrell replied, I am not going to tread on that legal turf. It may be that Bill (Austin) can talk to Linda (Bush) about some of the things that they already use to input the Planning & Zoning applications that could be done for your applications. That is probably the easiest way of taking care of it.

Mr. Zappala asked, do I understand you to say that you get your papers from Linda Bush and they are not correct? As a Chairman what do you do with them?

Mrs. Chayer stated, I will explain it to you because, as I said, when I hit that wall, I am going to kick that wall. If anybody watches the ZBA meeting on T.V.; I believe it will be on Friday, 7:00 P.M.; we turned three applications away because they had not signed the applications so we just said, "sorry". Frankly, that could have been handled very easily by a clerk who could have called them up and said, "Please come in" or who ever reviewed.....I think its possible that there are people who

come in and simply put their applications on the counter. Maybe there is nobody there and they put the application down and they leave. It has to be reviewed.

Mr. Zappala stated, they (applications) have to be checked out before they (applicant) leave. There is a fee that you have to pay....

Mrs. Chayer stated, I go in there (office) with some regularity and there are days when there is no visible person in the Building Department. If I had an application, I would just leave it.

Mr. Zappala stated, if there is a problem, the Mayor is the only one who could take care of it.

Mr. Parisi asked, there is no visible person in the Building Department?

Mrs. Chayer answered, absolutely!

Mr. Parisi stated, every time I have gone in there has been someone.

s. Chayer stated, I go in to pick up the folder and quite often there is.....the reason I say in the Building Department, not the Planning Department....and I am careful to say visible because it has come to my attention because I hand-delivered my letter to Carmen Spiteri that he has an office in the back so he and anyone else could be in the office and I wouldn't see the person.

Mr. Parisi asked, when these things are not signed, are the people there that night?

Mrs. Chayer responded, they may be, it depends. An owner is required to sign the application but an owner is not required to make the application.

Mr. Parisi asked, if that was the only thing wrong with it would it be a problem to just sign it that night and then allow it to just proceed?

Mrs. Chayer replied, here is the problem, I am not going to spend my time dealing with this garbage. They better give me the proper forms and it is not my job to hold people up and say "sign this, do this, do that". That should be presented to us in a proper manner. At the beginning of the month I get a letter, immediately thereafter or within the next business day I will go in and pick up the packet and t should be in good order.

Mayor Dickinson asked, let's assume that a clerk is not reviewing it, the applicant puts together all the information....even with a clerk assigned to that they could miss that the signature isn't on there. Should the applicant....the applicant being there, the owner, all the necessary parties, should they be punished because someone missed it in the office because then they miss a whole month? I am aware

his because I received complaints today about it. That means that people for a minuscule error, one that is easily correctable with someone just signing it at the time and reminding people that this has to be filled out correctly. I don't fault anyone on seeing it is filled out correctly but in an interest to see that it is done properly, people lose a whole month which can involve the ability to earn a living; it can involve any number of things. It seems like it is a harsh penalty on the people coming in who, it was just a mistake that other things were signed but one line for an owner wasn't signed. It seems like a harsh penalty for someone who is coming in and seeking assistance and something that may not be controversial. If it is really controversial then I can understand, you have to have it in order. But where there is no controversy, we are beating up the people who are just looking for help. I agree, we should maybe come up with better review in the administrative office but it seems to me that we are beating up the wrong people.

Mrs. Chayer replied, I did not tell the whole story; you are now going to get a little more of this story. When I left the letter that I had written and the pack on Linda Bush's desk, she was not there and I was not aware that she was out ill. A few days later Tom Talbot called me and he was quite upset because he apparently considered himself to be the clerk unnamed because I don't know who does what down there exactly and I said I was not talking about him, I was talking about a clerk. His answer to me was along the lines of, "it used to be that nobody reviewed anything but when I came to work here I began reviewing things and I guess maybe I don't review everything as perfectly as I should but there isn't any clerk reviewing." Yesterday afternoon Linda Bush called me and that is when she told me they will not do it; they will do it for Planning & Zoning but not for Zoning Board of Appeals. She said to me, "the only thing to do is be hard-nosed about it, just don't accept them (applications) be hard-nosed." Well, I thought it was pretty good advice, not because I agreed with her position on it for I don't, but I agree with doing it because somewhere this thing should be brought to an end and that is what I believe.

Ms. Papale asked the Mayor, I have visited both the Planning & Zoning Department and Building Departments for different reasons and I don't go in at lunchtime and maybe that is why I always see a girl or a woman sitting in one department and one in the other. I figured that they were the clerks. What I am driving at is, if there's a clerk that does it in the Planning Department, why can't someone in the Building Department do it for the ZBA? If for some reason Linda Bush's Office cannot or will not do it, can't someone in the ZBA do it?

Mayor Dickinson replied, I don't know that we have clearly established that no one is doing it. I think that Mrs. Chayer just indicated that Tom Talbot indicated that he does.....

Ms. Papale stated, but that is the Planning Department, why should he....

Mayor Dickinson responded, he is the Zoning Enforcement Officer and that is why he gets involved with variances.

Ms. Papale stated, he does the ZBA, supposedly somebody should....?

Mayor Dickinson replied, I believe that he has dealt with the applications. I am assuming that he does look them over but that is why my example earlier, I don't care how many people you have looking over them, you can miss something. It is a busy office down there and it is easy to miss something. I am just saying, I can understand where information vital to the review of the application, if that is missing then you can't do it. Say, for instance, a map is required or the information regarding what the zone is or what the exact variance request it should be; I can understand that because it goes to the heart of the matter but when you deal with things that are more peripheral and can be handled immediately; if the parties aren't there, no, you can't do it but if there is an ability to handle what really is a minuscule error, I don't care how many people we have reviewing something, there is a good potential at some point that something is going to be missed.

Ms. Papale stated, I agree with you. I have spoken through the years to many people that are frustrated by the process because they only meet once a month and if something happens that it can't go through, they have to wait another month and it is not the public's fault and this is what bothers me. If someone puts in an application and they feel it is 100% complete, they come to the meeting all nervous, they are ready to state their case and because of a signature or some little thing, it can't happen and they have to wait another month and I think that is wrong. Somehow, something has to be done and I don't know if it stubbornness in one department or another department but the everyday person should not have to suffer.

Mr. Parisi stated, in the case of a signature though, quite frankly, I think that they should be allowed to; if that is all that is wrong; my own opinion is, they should be allowed to sign their name and that would have had three people not been sent away.

Mrs. Chayer replied, this is a reoccurring problem and I was told they will not do that clerical work. It is my contention that they should do it. They are saying or she said they will not do it. So there is your answer. It is not that they are.....they won't.

Mayor Dickinson stated, I can look into it but as I understand it Tom Talbot has been dealing with the applications.

Mrs. Chayer stated, absolutely. My belief is he does a lot of work on them and helps people quite a bit.

Mayor Dickinson stated, I don't know if that is going to change.

Mrs. Chayer replied, it shouldn't change, I am not saying it should. My contention is that a clerk should review it.

Mayor Dickinson stated, there is someone at a higher level than clerical that is reviewing this then. Tom Talbot is Zoning Enforcement Officer, that is management level. I am not sure the picture is as dark as.....

Mrs. Chayer interrupted to say, I don't think that he is doing what I will call reviewing, Mr. Mayor. I think what he is doing is helping the applicants because some of them seem to have difficulty with scale; drawing to scale with producing the information of that nature. That is part of the problem.

Mr. Parisi stated, maybe we should just get together and have a meeting and pursue this a little further.

Mrs. Chayer asked, does that mean you would want me to attend?

Mr. Parisi responded, sure.

Mrs. Chayer replied, certainly. Sure, I would like to bring this thing to a head.

Mr. Parisi stated, we can discuss this further and maybe find some sort of a solution or something.

Mayor Dickinson asked, is it possible that a special meeting could be scheduled to handle the people who were rejected?

Mrs. Chayer stated, I have never been against them but one other time when we had a problem and someone that I thought should have had a special meeting, I was told, "Oh no, you can't have a special meeting for anybody." And that I believe was a legal opinion. It was a gentleman who lived in the Carriage Drive basic area and that was when I said we must have some kind of workshops because I misunderstood a side yard for a front yard because he lived on a corner. You may remember that because I think they spoke to you (Mayor).

Mayor Dickinson stated, I will have Janis (Small, Town Attorney) call you.

Mr. Parisi stated, we should check into this about a special meeting, too. It wouldn't hurt. If I may offer a little advice, have you checked with the Town Attorney when you have questions about the legality of things, Barbara?

s. Chayer responded, I have checked with her from time to time, yes. I don't know if there is something specific you have in mind but certainly I have. You just heard me say that I met with her and the Mayor maybe eight months ago.

Mr. Parisi stated, we have minutes of this meeting and we will pursue this matter.

Mr. Centner stated, that was the very point I was going to make, about having a meeting because what it is is, the system is flawed, not the people. The people coming forward are not flawed, they are only doing the best that they can. It is just a shame that it.....is to the individuals.

Mrs. Chayer stated, I think it should be corrected at the level of the Building and/or Planning Departments, that is my contention. When I get ten reports with seven or eight having flaws on them, that is not just an occasional thing, that is their method of operation.

Mr. Centner stated, an applicant wouldn't know per se but if it is recurring with the same applicant; these are different applicants being turned down and not the same person, then I have great difficulty with that. Because I can't fill out even the simplest piece of paper because every single thing you
ld ever apply for in your life, the paperwork is different. When you get a rhythm going and all of
idden they are looking for something that the other guy wasn't; I always make errors on
applications, myself. I kind of feel for the people that are coming forward to be turned down for a.....

Mrs. Chayer interrupted to say, that is why I say a clerk should review them.

Mr. Centner continued, the solution might be found in the meeting. It is just the point that having the meeting is a good one.

Mr. Renda stated, one thing I find puzzling, as you know I was at last night's meeting. Now a person puts an application in for something, they have to pay \$150?

Mrs. Chayer explained, I believe they pay \$50 to cover the advertising expense and \$15 for the recording expense which goes to the Town Clerk.

Mr. Renda asked, if their application is denied they can put another application in but they have to do so after six months?

s. Chayer stated, I do not believe that there is anything in the law that says when they may do it. The regulation in this town or State is, the Board does not have to entertain the same or substantially the same request for a variance for six months.

Mr. Renda asked, if, after a period, the applicant makes alterations and wants to bring his application back to the ZBA does he have to pay another fee?

Mrs. Chayer answered, yes, any time they come in with something new.

Mr. Renda asked, if that comes up before the meeting and is just tossed aside, that fee, as far as I am concerned, he should be reimbursed. This case has not been heard.

Mrs. Chayer replied, that is not the way it works. The \$50. Covers advertising; the \$15 covers the recording. The \$15 will be returned, most likely the original check will go right back to anyone.

Mr. Parisi thanked Mrs. Chayer for her input.

Reginald Knight, 21 Audette Drive asked the Mayor, I was asked by an elderly lady who lives on McGuire Court; it is a very short street; three street lights are out and one is blinking, could you please look into that for me, please? She stated that she has gone through the process of calling the it and power people and she doesn't seem to be getting anywhere. I think the elderly people should have some lighting in their area. Do you know where it is? It is on the east side, the elderly housing. The lady's name is Wetmore if you wish to call her.

On another matter, I had quite a little game in the Town Hall this week with regards to tax assessment. There is two main types of assessments; real estate property and automobiles. About six years ago I had an old truck; it wasn't good for much, it was a rusty old bucket and it was tax assessed at \$1,400 at the time. I came down and stood in that corridor from four to six hours before I got the speech on it. The man asked, what was the tax assessed at before on it? I explained, \$800. He asked, what do you think it should be? I said, it is a year older and a year rustier and falling apart; I would say \$700. Lo and behold when I got the letter in the mail, it turned out to be \$600. I thought, wonderful! They assured me that it would not go up, down or sideways from then on; it was set. My tax assessment this year comes back \$1,400. for the truck that I no longer own. I sold it last December. When I spoke to Mr. Myers (Comptroller) he showed me a ruling that they go by the book; the State has a list of values but for the past four or five years, I have been paying an assessed value of \$600. Why...either they were wrong before or they are wrong now. Someone is bungling one way or the other but he showed me the ruling that the Town Assessor will go according to the book that the State gives out. The Town does not set the rate. I accepted that and went home and followed the rest of the rules which state the vehicle may not come under normal parameters, if it is different from a qualified machine then it is up to the Town Assessor to assess that. Well, they did and when I went to the Tax Office they told me they could not even find my truck in the book; in the description. If they couldn't and they set it, and for the past three or four years I have been paying a tax assessment of \$600, why am I suddenly back to \$1,400.? I am told I can appeal it. It is not the

money, this is the fact that something is being bungled somewhere because the difference between the \$1,400 and \$600 over a period of three months is only \$4 or \$5. That is not the point. The same thing happened with garages. I asked one person who was in charge of the department, what is an attached garage and he told me that it is defined by the fact that the front of the garage comes beyond the backline of your house. That is the head honcho. The people in the Tax Office tell me, oh no, you have to actually walk from your house and it has got to be connected to your house. It would be nice if we had some definition for the citizen to go on. They are telling me now that every year you will have to have your car or motor vehicle with a broad-brush from the State, no matter what the condition, that you will have to come and appeal it. This is not the way it has been going on for three or four years. Something is out of balance.

Mayor Dickinson stated, the appeal process has always been that way. Anyone who has received a motor vehicle assessment and felt it was wrong has a right to appeal it to the Board of Assessment Appeals. There is no change there. The changed that did occur was that the State of Connecticut adopted a uniform listing of motor vehicle values and the so-called "book" and that is what Wallingford uses. Where an owner feels that the vehicle is not in good condition as warranted by the book value or because of some other circumstance, that individual must bring it to the attention of either the Board of Assessment Appeals or if you don't own the vehicle, then you indicate that you don't own the vehicle and indicate to the Assessor's Office and they require a copy of the bill of sale to prove the vehicle was sold. It is all based upon the Motor Vehicle Department's listing of vehicles, owners and values.

Reginald Knight asked, was this rule put into effect in the past year?

Mayor Dickinson stated, two years ago.

Reginald Knight asked, why has my assessment been \$600 for the past three or four years?
I still have the receipts.

Mayor Dickinson stated, up until two years ago they wouldn't change but two years ago the State Motor Vehicle Department developed a new approach and we receive their information and that is what has happened since. Why this year it would go from \$600 to \$1,400., I don't have an answer for you right here. The place to go is not the Tax Office by the Assessor's Office; they are the ones to determine the rules as far as what is assessed as an attached garage or not. The Tax Office merely assesses the bills and looks to collect the money based on the mill rate.

Reginald Knight asked, would it not be smarter to look at what the person paid last year on the car?

Mayor Dickinson replied, they are tied to what the Motor Vehicle Department reports to them.

Reginald Knight added, yes, but then the Assessor's Office has the right to cut it down. If he cuts it down one year why can't they use that as a source of information for the next year? People do that constantly anytime they make an estimate of a job.

Mayor Dickinson stated, we can look into whether that is possible when each year a list is received whether they can go through it and reduce or change values. There are some dangers to that but we can look at whether that is feasible.

Mr. Parisi asked, have you been in to the Assessor's Office to ask that question yet?

Reginald Knight responded, yes.

Mr. Parisi asked, how old is the vehicle?

Reginald Knight replied, 1980, it was a clunker. That is not the point; it is telling you one thing and then telling you another.

..... Centner stated, because the State issues the book and there it gets "spots" in the market; I happen to be an owner of a vehicle that just went through a "spot market" upswing; it is an S.U.V. (Sports Utility Vehicle), they came out a few years ago and my tax bill was going down and all of a sudden it shot up and the whole market for S.U.V.s went way up and the State is reflecting that. I went into a dealership that carries the same vehicle to confirm it and three years later the vehicle was worth \$1,000 more than what I paid for it. It had, indeed, followed a spot increase and the State is following that through the VIN (Vehicle Identification Number) numbers and generating that list. I still get scared every time I see the bill; the vehicle is seven years old now and the bill still beats some of my brand new cars.

Reginald Knight pointed out that the value was established by the Assessor for two to three years.

Mr. Parisi stated, I want to know the answer, myself.

Reginald Knight next stated, my next point is the calling off of the third Town Council Meeting; I was in this hall and the statement was made that even if nobody turned up, nobody, the meeting would be called and if nobody spoke, the meeting would be adjourned and called off. That is the way it was understood. I understood that it was to placate those who couldn't get time to speak in the regular meetings and now it is being taken away. It is an erosion of the free speech that we were promised. I don't think it is fair or right.

Parisi stated, it is not going to be taken away, it will be canceled for the next two months and resumed in September which is the normal Council summer schedule for I don't know how many years.

Reginald Knight asked, do you cancel the regular Town meetings?

Mr. Parisi stated, yes, we have one meeting in July and one in August. We have special meetings as needed. This has been done for maybe fifteen years, it is nothing new.

Reginald Knight stated, in a supplementary to that, there was a rather large gentleman come in here at a regular meeting and he admitted that he popped into town about every twenty years. He was given a good ten minutes of speech and I don't think that is fair for the people who live in this town. If you are going to set the rules about the limits of speech, they should be kept so some don't ramble on and the other person does not get to speak. This gentleman kept going on and on and he was not even a citizen of the town as far as I know.

Mr. Parisi stated, he was a Town resident, I believe. I think he was born here.

Reginald Knight stated, yes but he said he had not been in the Town for twenty years.

Ms. Papale stated, the gentleman owns property on Cheshire Road and had been away from town for many years but I believe he has returned to reside in town.

Reginald Knight stated, this next issue may be controversial; when the public is speaking at a meeting you, Mr. Parisi, interrupt the speakers. If they are talking on a town subject, you should leave them to speak for their three measly minutes that they get or what ever it is. One gentleman was talking one night; it was not myself; but I counted seven times, sir, that you said, "what's your question, what's your question, what's your question?" and you were not even looking at the gentleman, sir. You were writing. Mr. Centner has read it into the record that it is not just question and answers, the public is allowed to comment. I think it is only fair that if a person is commenting on anything that has to do with the Town, they should be allowed to comment/question without interruption and without being asked, "what's your question?". As far as the rules are concerned, it is a question of question, it is a question of comment.

Mr. Parisi stated, Rule three reads, "The public question and answer period will occur after acceptance of the consent agenda." It is public question and answer period.

Reginald Knight asked Mr. Centner, didn't you read out the definition of what that was? Didn't you read out that it was.....that people were allowed to comment?

Mr. Centner stated, yes, it is still in there; that was rule three. "It is still under rule four, that has not changed. "Individuals wishing to speak on individual agenda items will be required to address their questions or comments to the Council Chairman and limit his/her speaking time to a total of three minutes. The Chairman has the authority to limit total discussion time for each agenda item."

Mayor Dickinson stated, there is a difference here between Public Question and Answer Period and agenda items. The Question and Answer Period says, "question and answer" whereas agenda items, comment can be made or question and answer. Is that correct?

Mr. Centner replied, no, in rule three it also says, "The Public Question and Answer Period will be for a maximum length of twenty minutes. Each individual wishing to speak will address their questions or comments to the Council Chairman and limit his/her speaking time to a maximum of three minutes." Rule four goes on about agenda items as well.

Reginald Knight stated, Mr. Centner, you have been on record in the paper as saying that you look towards the comments of the public because you learn from it and you listen. I think it is only common courtesy that, for the sake of three minutes, a person could listen as long as the person who is speaking is speaking about Town business. There is no need to interrupt or brush them off or ask them, "what is your question?". I think it would be polite and would save a lot of time and aggravation if people just listened and they might learn something.

Mr. Parisi commented, you, Mr. Knight, must understand that, as Chairman, I serve at the pleasure of this Council which means that not at this table but sometimes after a meeting or during the week or whenever, I receive advice from my colleagues and at times I am told that we are wandering off the rules and my job is to enforce the rules. I just want to correct one impression that you seem to have the idea that I can do what ever I choose to do and that, quite frankly, is not what the position of Chairman is. The Chairman is elected by the majority vote of this Council and he serves at their pleasure. They are the people who elect him and if he wants to keep his job he has to try to serve them as well as the public and to balance that. When I tell people that I would like them to ask their question, that is my judgment when they are straying from the item that we are discussing. Sometimes people will go from the item that we are discussing off on a tangent to some other thing that may have come up in their mind. That's part of the job of the Chairman, to try and stay with the business at hand and that is what I try to do. I do not try to shut someone off just to shut them off. I to guide them into the business that we are discussing at that particular time.

Reginald Knight responded, when residents are coming up to share their thoughts or ideas on a Town subject they should not be asked to ask their question. Regardless if they are jumping from subject to subject, they feel they are giving input to the Town and I think they should be heard. Janis Small (Town Attorney) has stated that there should not be interference with the content of a speech as long

as it is within the boundaries of the Town's business. I can understand if they are getting up to speak on an agenda item and they are straying off on another subject.

Mr. Parisi stated, I want you to be aware of the fact that I do talk to the Town Attorney at least once a month, sometimes twice a month and I ask her if I am conducting the meeting properly, if I am guiding the discussion and what ever. I expect her to tell me when, in fact, I am violating any rule or regulation or anyone's freedom of speech. Up to this date, she has told me that what I am doing is proper. The Mayor was in attendance a couple of times when I asked that question. I am just trying to go by what I am told and what I feel to be correct.

Reginald Knight stated, I remember the controversy over the vote that put you in your seat as Chairman but, apart from anything else, for three minutes, for three measly minutes, a person could be listened to and attended to and let him speak. I don't think there is any reason to interrupt or to bother them as long as they are on Town business.

Mr. Parisi stated, I will try and be a little more aware of it. I will tell you that I have broken the rule
I will admit it, that I allow people to speak far in excess of three minutes and I do that because I feel that they feel they have something to contribute and, you are right, at times there are statements that are made that are helpful.

Reginald Knight stated, when you do that what it does is, it does not react fairly with the other people who are waiting to speak. Time and again I have seen a situation where there is the last speaker just because the clock says so. Some people are allowed to wander on. Somebody brought up a suggestion that a little sound be heard; a thirty second warning; to let them finish their speech. I am not talking just about you, I am talking about the whole Council.

Mr. Parisi stated, no, we haven't, I would be the first to admit it.

Reginald Knight continued, they have not followed the rules that they have set.

Mr. Parisi stated, I can enforce them next meeting and that will be three minutes. Now, see, there they (public) go. They are now saying we are being forced.....

Reginald Knight stated, I think that would be better....

Mr. Parisi interrupted to say, if that is what you want, I would be happy to do that.

Reginald Knight stated, the fact that you set a twenty minute limit also, if there are other people wishing to speak and don't get a turn to speak, that is not fair to them either.

Papale stated, yes it is.

Reginald Knight continued, they have as much right to speak as the person before them.

Mr. Parisi stated, that is my point, I agree with you and when I try to get people to speak to the issue during the public question and answer period, I am thinking of the other people who want to speak. If I let somebody ramble on for fifteen minutes, the other five people are not going to speak within the twenty minutes.

Reginald Knight stated, that is what is happening.

Mr. Parisi stated, you cannot have it both ways. You cannot talk for ten minutes and then let everybody speak.

Reginald Knight stated, even if you abided by the three minutes, there could be ten people out here wishing to speak and it is not fair to the ninth and tenth person that they don't get a chance. It also is a position of the Chairman, whoever he may be, to choose who he wants to hear and who he isn't. It leaves the issue open to, if a Chairman does not want to hear from someone, he may choose others before.

Mr. Parisi stated, if it is a new person, I try to give them the opportunity to speak. If someone has not ever been here before, I think it is important that they be allowed to speak for their first time. We have gone past the twenty minutes too.

Ms. Papale stated, I think that the comment Mr. Parisi made earlier about all of the Councilpeople, we are not more or less telling him what to do but we give our opinion to him, right now I am going to give my opinion that if six people spoke for three minutes that would be eighteen minutes and I think six people are usually the amount that speak at these meetings, maybe seven. I will suggest publicly that Mr. Parisi keep it to three minutes a person; that would be six people. I would also suggest that during the Public Question and Answer Period that our secretary write down the names of people that spoke and then two weeks from that give other people the first chance to speak. That would be the fairest thing and, Mr. Parisi, you have been going over the twenty minutes and we haven't been too happy.

Reginald Knight stated, the problem with that is, you are telling those six people from the last meeting they cannot speak at the next.

Ms. Papale stated, those were the rules that were voted on when this Council took their seats. I think you have been too generous and now it is time to.....

Parisi stated, we will just proceed on with this but that is the other reason for this third meeting. We have added another meeting so that there can be a dialogue without limitations.

Reginald Knight pointed out, one Councilor was known to comment that the third meeting doesn't really matter anyway because no business is conducted. I think giving the opinion of the public, no matter who it is, whether I agree with them or I don't, everybody has the right to their opinion. If people listen then the job is accomplished and there is something being done; there is business happening.

Mr. Parisi stated, I'll tell you, out of this meeting tonight, there are comments that I'll guarantee are going to be followed up; that I can tell you, I know.

Reginald Knight stated, with this taxation issue, I think the public should be warned somehow that their vehicle could be over-taxed and they will, as of now, have to go and appeal every year. People don't check their tax bills, they just pay them.

Mr. Parisi stated, I once found an error on my bill. I had to go to the Appeals Board and it was fixed and that is the system and it is the system and we do have to do it, if we have to do it.

Reginald Knight stated, there should be some way to warn the people that their taxes can go flying high. It just doesn't seem sensible that a thing can be rated....this is a vehicle that gets more and more dilapidated as it goes along. It isn't something that beautifies as it grows old.

Mr. Parisi stated, it is not something that we control; it is information that comes from the State and therefore that is what the appeal process is. If you disagree with it, you have an opportunity to at least give your say and voice your opinion and hopefully, you may be lucky enough to get it changed, and you may not. I would like to hear the answer to why, once it is changed, it doesn't stay changed.

Mayor Dickinson explained, part of the answer is, personal property including motor vehicle, are valued every year at fair market value. Real estate stays at a constant level based upon re-valuation so, for ten years, it stays at the same amount. But, personal property values change; it is a fair market value issue and things can go up or down but it is a yearly analysis; that is part of the explanation.

Mr. Parisi vowed to check it out and get a definitive answer.

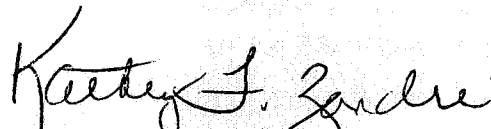
other speakers requested to come forward at this time.

Motion was made by Mr. Rys to Adjourn the Meeting, seconded by Ms. Papale.

vOTE: Zandri was absent; all others, aye; motion duly carried.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:45 P.M.

Meeting recorded and transcribed by:


Kathryn F. Zandri
Town Council Secretary

Approved by:


Robert F. Parisi, Chairman

7-21-98
Date


Rosemary A. Rascati, Town Clerk

7-22-98
Date