

TOWN COUNCIL PUBLIC SPEAKING MEETING

NOVEMBER 17, 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, November 17, 1998 in the Robert Earley Auditorium of the Wallingford Town Hall and called to Order by Chairman Robert F. Parisi at 6:37 P.M. All Councilors answered present to the Roll called by Town Council Secretary Kathryn F. Zandri with the exception of Mr. Zappala who was caring for a family member who was ill and Mr. Farrell who was mourning the death of his grandfather. Mayor William W. Dickinson, Jr. arrived some time during the meeting (no recording secretary was in attendance to record the time of arrival). Town Attorney Janis Small and Comptroller Thomas Myers were absent from the meeting.

The Pledge of Allegiance was given to the Flag.

Ed Gervasi, 22 Martin Avenue stated his concern over the fact that the Town is considering placing former Simpson Avenue School up for sale. He understands why the Town may take the action and only asks that, if the former school is placed on the real estate market that the Town keep the neighbor's interests in mind. The street was constructed for only ten houses. With the locating of Savage Commons housing behind the school came a lot of traffic. They are not a real big impact on the neighborhood but the traffic is there. It has become much quieter since Parks & Recreation and now the V.N.A. have vacated the building. Please keep the residents on Martin Avenue in mind when addressing this matter.

Mr. Parisi stated that many of the Councilors present tonight remember all too well the problems caused in the past from traffic. He, personally, will not forget.

Ms. Papale asked Mr. Gervasi if he lived on Martin Avenue when the school was functioning and what the bus and foot traffic was like back then?

Mr. Gervasi responded that the school has been closed since he has moved to the street.

Ms. Papale stated that she, too, lived nearby the school at one time and is well aware of the problems the neighbors encountered with Parks & Recreation being located there.

Mr. Zandri reminded everyone that the Town Council has not yet voted to place the building up for sale. He stated that the Council will be conscious of the individual the Town would sell the building

to in the first place and that the Planning & Zoning process would take over from that point on. There will be two Town boards looking out for the resident's best interest.

Atty. Hugh Manke of 265 Church Street, New Haven, representing John Orsini of 1070 N. Farms Road, LLC stated, a comment was made at the last Town Council meeting that the Councilors had been receiving a number of calls at their home regarding the auto auction. It is uncommon for developers to crank up a grass roots organization to support their project because it really is not a matter of a popularity contest when you go to a Planning & Zoning Commission meeting; it is a matter of, do you comply with the regulations or not? Normally you don't circulate petitions however, in response to the comment, a petition was circulated by Mr. Orsini for the purpose of showing that there are two sides to an issue. There are a lot of voters who are very supportive of the auto auction. They have been silent and it is time for them to come out of the closet and talk. As a start, I am going to hand you a petition tonight signed by two hundred thirty-five people, all of them work for one of John Orsini's organizations. This is just a start and there will be other petitions that we will provide to you in the future. It is important for you to know that this is an individual who has been a prominent business man in the community and he has a lot of employees who work in this community and live in this community and vote, of course, in this community. I was troubled by a reference in the newspaper today to the effect that an auto auction is a place where you are going to have cars where you are leaking oil and causing environmental problems. I think it is indicative of a lack of information that is out there. I have prepared a set of questions and answers concerning auto auctions;

What is an auto auction?

It is a place where leasing and rental companies, new and used car dealers, wholesalers and manufacturers come once a week to buy cars.

What kind of cars are sold at an auto auction?

Cars that are one to four years old. They are cars that you and I drive and when we are done with our lease, we turn them in to a dealer and the dealer sends them to an auto auction. These are not cars that are leaking oil or causing any kind of environmental problems.

Are there any cars sold that are inoperable at an auto auction?

Absolutely not.

How long are cars kept in an auto auction?

Three to five days; until the next auction day. We are talking about an auction once a week.

How do cars get to an auto auction?

Some are driven but most are brought by trailer.

Are the trailers any longer for shipping cars than a trailer truck carrying refrigerators or kitchen cabinets to a warehouse, a warehouse that might be right across the street from the proposed site of the auto auction?

No, there is no difference in the size.

How are the cars that are sold leave the site?

Again, some are driven but most are taken away by a trailer truck.

How many car trailers will there be each week for the facility proposed at Northrop Road?

One hundred (100). The normal warehouse on this site and remember, a warehouse is an allowed use in this zone, it is encouraged, it is an essential part of your IX zone; a warehouse will generate at least four times the amount of traffic. We are talking about a warehouse bringing in tractor trailer trucks that are of comparable size to car trailers.

What does an auto auction do with the cars before each auction day?

They are made to look like new cars; there is a car wash; there is detailing that takes place because the price certainly goes up, the better the cars look.

How are auctions conducted?

An auto auction has about five bays where you have bleachers of people who are bidding on cars. The cars are all lined up and you hire a lot of semi-retired people to move the cars

in place on an auction day. You drive them through at least five different bays and they sell about one car per minute.

There are private meeting rooms in an auto auction, why is that?

So that manufacturers may meet to discuss private manufacturer sales of off-lease cars and to hold management meetings.

This is a first class facility; there is a restaurant in the facility, why? Because of people who come to an auto auction insist on having amenities. They want a well-lit reception area, lockers, phone, meeting rooms as well as a restaurant.

Do you register vehicles on site at an auto auction?

Yes, a fully computerized system for registration is an important part of an auto auction.

How many people work at an auto auction?

For a five bay facility, there would be forty full-time employees and approximately one hundred part-time employees.

What are the important factors in deciding where to locate an auto auction?

Proximity to an interstate is essential and also being close to various hotel or motel facilities to accommodate those people who come from longer distances for an auto auction.

Atty. Manke continued, let me leave these with you with the hope that you will have a chance to look over them (petitions) and share them with the Councilmembers who are not here. Information is an important part of our whole democratic process and it has been a disappointment that there has not been a very fair representation in many of the newspaper articles about an auto auction. All of you are encouraged to discuss with Rick Doll and other staff people who have been to an auto auction to see what it is all about. Arrangements can be made for anyone who feels strongly that it is important to see a facility before commenting about it. There is a facility in South Windsor.

Paris stated, it is interesting that you offer that because I tried to go up there and I was not allowed to. I wonder why you can get me in there and I could not get myself in there.

Atty. Manke stated, I would like to go with Rick Doll because he has got a uniform, he has got a car.....arrangements can be made to get in there and I don't know why they are so secretive.

Mr. Parisi stated, maybe they cleaned it up.

Atty. Manke responded, I don't think there is a matter of anything being unclean. We are talking about pretty new vehicles.

Mr. Parisi stated, I think that can be debated but I am not going to.

Atty. Manke stated, there are no junk cars coming here. There are no old cars coming here. I don't know why people are saying that there is something unclean or junky about it.

Mr. Parisi answered, I don't know either.

Mr. Renda asked, was the petition signed by the employees of Executive?

Atty. Manke responded, yes.

Mr. Renda stated, it is only natural, because if they did not sign it they'd be afraid of some sort of..... on this side of the bench I would call it a conflict of interest, it doesn't go, I'm sorry.

Atty. Manke stated, we are going to provide you with a petition that has nothing to do with employees of Mr. Orsini and that will happen in the coming weeks. I thought, just to get the ball rolling, I would remind you that there are a lot of people working in town for this particular individual.

Reginald Knight, 21 Audette Drive stated that he read in the paper that Mr. Zandri had thrown his hat into the ring for the mayoral position which is everyone's right. However, there was a comment made in the paper that he is not a team player. If the term "team player" means subjugating one's logic and conscious to a party no matter which the party, I sincerely hope that he is not a team player but an intelligent, constructive, knowledgeable person who will use his skills for the good of the people. I, myself, have crossed party lines to vote for people who I feel, of the two, would do a better job. At all levels of government one finds oneself so often voting against one rather than voting for another person. Mr. Zandri, I would vote for. I would like to make that comment, thank you very much.

Mr. Zandri stated at this time that he had to excuse himself from this meeting to attend a Public Utilities Commission Meeting for, as a private citizen, he had an item on the agenda to be addressed.

Mr. Zandri left the meeting at 6:45 P.M.

Reginald Knight asked, with regards to the Cooke Property, is the Town being offered the pieces of land that Mr. Cooke owns simply because he cannot sell six hundred thousand dollar, three acre zone development and probably would not be able to do so for decades as the newspaper stated? The newspaper also stated that Mr. Cooke went into Chapter 11 because of the land value. Is this why all of a sudden we are being offered these pieces of land? This property is pretty far out for the average town citizen to go see open space; even east siders. Even if they knew of its existence five years from now and knew how to find it, people from downtown and the west side would not be getting much of a chance to see it or use it. The subject of a leasing back the property was discussed. If you lease the land back to the previous owner then the taxpayers cannot use it. If you do lease it back for five years, when do people get onto that land? What purpose will they be able to use it for? Is the land all meadow-type or are there crops growing there? Does anyone know?

Mayor Dickinson answered, there is grazing area and there is crops.

Reginald Knight asked, does the five year lease preclude the taxpayer from going on the property for the five year period?

Mayor Dickinson answered, no, but you would not be able to disrupt the operations of the lessee. You could not walk through a planted area and destroy the crops. It is the same for all the other farm land that we own and lease. The horse trails, bike trails, hiking trails, all have to occur around the outsides of those fields. There is significant acreage elsewhere in town that the town leases to farmers. I don't think there is authority to sub-lease and the Town's rules on leasing property contain pretty detailed instructions on how to care for the land and what types of fertilizers and it even gets into crop rotation. There are some real stringent requirements on farmers who lease property from the Town to maintain the property and not do anything that would injure a watershed or do anything detrimental to the land.

Reginald Knight reiterated, the properties are too far out for recreational purposes and the purchase would not control the population density in the town. He did not feel there was a need to add more open space in that particular area of town; an area with working farms, tri-mountain State Park area, Blue Trails Range, etc. Green, open areas should be spread all over town. The areas do not need to be huge and could be created into a park-type area. Many people have many different thoughts as to what open space should be, according to their ideas of usage. The Mayor stated that he believes the area needs to be farmed to control the growth on the land. What happens after the five year lease is

Will we be sending crews out there to keep the fields clear and the wooded areas in shape?

There is plenty of other work Public Works needs to do. Who will keep the land up?

Mayor Dickinson replied, that is why we lease the property for farmers to utilize, in order to preserve that habitat and make it a useful piece of property. I would not want to see Town workforces have to do that. This is a way to accomplish that goal.

Reginald Knight stated, we can't be sure that we can lease it after the five years.

Mayor Dickinson replied, we are successful now at leasing properties we have since I have been Mayor and I suspect as long as there are farms in the area, there will be interest in leasing land from the Town for growing of hay and other products. We have not had any problem so far.

Mr. Rys stated, Tyler Mill is an example of keeping up....even though it isn't being farmed. Didn't we have a wood cutting program?

Mayor Dickinson explained, that is the harboring of timber and caring for the wooded areas. We have hired a forester to properly mark the trees that should be cut down and maintain a healthy forest. The issue on leasing the farm land is a separate issue and that is as long as there are farms and they need the area to make their farm a going concern, we lease the property. It helps maintain our property and everyone seems to make out pretty well other than some minor clashes over people mpling crops or creating other problems.

Mr. Rys pointed out that there is wooded area on the Cooke property and if he (Mr. Cooke) did not take care of that, we would probably include that into the forestry program.

Reginald Knight asked if Mr. Cooke could sub-lease the property?

Mayor Dickinson answered, sub-leasing is not allowed under the program.

Reginald Knight asked, why buy the land if we have farmers out there? It seems that we are buying the land but not getting any use out of it.

He went on to discuss how Mr. Lubees comments were curtailed at a previous meeting because they failed to deal with the topic of discussion before the Council at that time; authorizing the Mayor to enter into a contract for the purchase of open space. Reginald Knight stated, Mr. Lubees comments were specifically about the open space purchase. The fact that the Mayor or some of the Councilors could not understand the question was no excuse to cut Mr. Lubees off. Robert's Rules aside, I feel that with a little more dialogue and patience I am sure Mr. Lubees, who is a very articulate man, could've broken it down to a point where it would have been perfectly clear as to the point he was attempting to make; that there was sufficient open space in that particular area of town already. I feel because of all the secrecy surrounding the lands opted for purchase, the Townspeople have no way of knowing if there are more suitable areas of land more evenly interspersed around in the town. A

ance of open areas scattered all over town rather than tucked in one area. I had the same problem as Mr. Lubee at the previous third (public speaking) meeting. I asked the Mayor a question and hoped for an answer but he was talking apples and I was talking pears and my time ran out. I felt bad about that because I thought I was asking a straight forward question. Luckily, one person could see my point but I will refer to that later. I cannot understand how a person who had waited a couple of hours through executive session to speak was cut off. To say I was disappointed or dismayed would be a great understatement. I hoped for better but I guess I was just too naive. Much of the land conservation could be solved by more cooperation between Town Council, Planning & Zoning and the Town Planner. They could get together and develop a written plan that could be put before the people of the town. A plan that would allow for population expansion and commercial and industrial growth and still try to retain Wallingford's rural theme. One cannot stop change anymore than you can stop a child from growing up. As much as you love the child, all you can do is help and guide him or her so that the result is an adult that one can still love and admire. I believe we all love this town.

Reginald Knight went on to say, with regards to my comments made a previous meetings regarding motor vehicle assessments, both the Mayor and Mr. Myers (Comptroller) said that the town was required by the State to use the State's blue book every year, no matter what the town had assessed vehicle in previous years. Every year one must go to the blue book and then after overpaying taxes, the citizen would appeal what he considered an unfair assessment. Yet, Mr. Chairman, according to the Meriden Record (Journal) on your house over on the west side of town, you were supposedly required to inform the building department every time you changed tenants, every time. You said, "it makes me want to correct this so that other people won't have to go through the same thing. I want to know why and how this happened so that other people don't have to go through this. If anything, I am a victim. I am not a perpetrator, I have done nothing wrong. I believe that. Mr. Parisi admitted that he erred not getting certificates of compliance from the Town's building department every single time he rented the Hanover Street house to a new family. I believe this parallels the motor vehicle; that one has to keep going back every year to a situation where they already know for half a dozen years in a row what the value of that vehicle is. To go back to that blue book system....once the thing is established in your records, doesn't anyone look back? I think it is pretty much the same experience.

On a separate matter, Reginald Knight referred to a recent article in the Record Journal which stated that an error had been made in the printing of a pamphlet by the Parks & Recreation Department listing the dates for hunting in the Tyler Mill area. A date was listed that was inappropriate for hunting and to correct the error Tom Dooley, Director of Parks and Recreation asked that the newspaper run a story to alert the public to the error. Mr. Dooley was concerned that someone would get hurt when using the property while hunters occupied the area also. In the article Mr. Dooley referred to an incident which occurred in Boston; a man was killed by a hunter. The

newspaper stated the following, "He (Mr. Dooley) states his concern about safety and mountain bikers whom, he says, ignore the rules and ride on hunting days."

Reginald Knight commented, the Boston man was killed by a bullet. Bullets are not permitted on Wallingford Town permit areas. High-power rifles are not permitted to be used on Wallingford Town land. The man was not a hunter. A hunter is a person who must pass certification on safety and responsibility and buy licenses and permits which he very jealously protects. The shooter in the Massachusetts incident was not a hunter but a person with a long record of poaching with no license or permits. Poaching on a Sunday when Connecticut law forbids hunting in any manner or form. The man was a criminal with a high-power heavy bullet rifle. Hunters in Wallingford may hunt only birds on permit land. This requires not a rifle but a shot gun using pellets, usually #6, very small pellets. Birds are shot while in flight and any pellets that would come down on one would feel like rain or hailstones. Again, people are making comments and making decisions on activities which they have little knowledge of and experience in. Please note the little notice Mr. Dooley has placed in the newspaper, it could easily be missed. The bingo notices are clearer. The only person who issues permits for the Tyler Mill area is Mike the barber on East Center Street, I believe.

Mayor Dickinson stated that he was not sure who issued permits for the Town or the State. The State makes the land available through their hunting program.

Reginald Knight stated, I think it would be much easier to just have Mike (the barber) not issue any permits for that day should someone come in and apply for one. He is a member of the Rod and Gun Club and I believe the only person who issues permits to hunt out there. He allocates the number of permits; he has to know how many people are on that land. There is a limit on any one day of how many people can hunt on the property.

Reginald Knight read text from the State Department of Environmental Protection handbook regarding hunting statistics, specifically the low number of incidents/accidents that occur related to hunting and how strict the State laws are surrounding this activity.

Next, Reginald Knight reminded everyone of how beautiful and healthy the trees were that bordered the Johanna Manfreda Fishbein Park before the Public Works Department cut them down. He stated, there is a tree very close to where I live that has been posted with a notice that it will be cut down since October 7th. It is a dead tree. It is a danger and a menace. It is at the junction of East Main Street and Durham Road. It is a very large tree and we are entering a season that is very windy and dry. I can't understand how this tree which poses a hazard is still standing after forty-one days of being posted and the little trees on the green were cut down within three days of their posting which was an illegal notice besides. I would like to see the dead tree removed as soon as possible. One of the reasons stated for cutting down the little trees on the green was due to the uplifting of bricks by the roots. The bricks, themselves, are causing problems around town. If you go out the front door of

Town Hall and walk towards the center of town and look at the area where the bricks are, it is actually sinking. Every one of the bricks that abuts the curb area have sunken. Anyone stepping off a curb is liable to stub their toe and fall head first into the road. There is a problem with these bricks and it is all over town. I travel around town quite a bit on foot and I notice these things.

Lastly, Reginald Knight congratulated the Council, the trash he has been complaining about on the North Main Street property has finally disappeared; it took three months, he stated, but it is finally gone.

Mr. Parisi stated, it was on private property.

Reginald Knight stated, afterwards it was moved to private property.

Mr. Parisi stated, a friend of mine who owns a private company removed the trash for me. It was on private property when they saw it. I asked them if they would take care of it and they did.

Reginald Knight agreed that it had been moved to the corner of the house on private property but the garbage laid between the sidewalk and the street for over two months.

Mr. Parisi stated, it is the responsibility of the person who owns the house.....

Reginald Knight stated, it is the responsibility of a property owner to pick up the trash that accumulates on his/her property, I do it every day.

Mr. Parisi responded, as I do; I live next to East Side Market.

Reginald Knight next addressed the issue of security on the east side of town. He stated that he realizes the police cannot be everywhere all the time but his neighborhood seems to be witnessing an increase in minor crimes, although they are not minor to the person that is the victim of them. Apparently a pickup truck carrying passengers in the back made their way through the Audette Drive and Carr Street areas spray painting and gouging vehicles parked on the side of the road. He rarely witnesses a police car patrolling the area, let alone his street which has no outlet. People tend to drive by dead end streets. They tend to feel they are safe because people don't go whizzing by doing bad things.

Mayor Dickinson stated, the police department was called and there were three arrests at about 4:30 - 5:00 a.m. They did arrest the perpetrators.

Reginald Knight stated, they did arrest the youths but I would still like to see a little more presence because I feel that police work should be preventive rather than punishing. There is no point in punishing someone after the damage is done. I would like to see a little more presence there.

Lastly, Reginald Knight stated that he would like to thank Mr. Farrell for following up on his request to have the Board of Assessment Appeals hold additional meetings to consider appeals on automobile taxes. He (Reginald Knight) received a letter from Gerald Labriola, member of the Board of Assessment Appeals, stating that he will ask that Reginald Knight's request be placed on the agenda of the Board's next regularly scheduled meeting in March, 1999 for discussion and possible action.

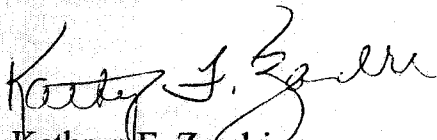
There were no other speakers wishing to address the Council therefore a motion to adjourn followed.

Motion was made by Mr. Centner to Adjourn the Meeting, seconded by Mr. Renda.

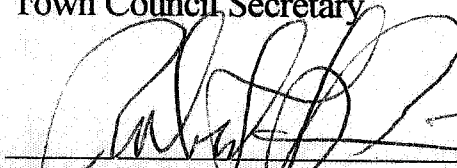
VOTE: Farrell, Zandri and Zappala were absent; all others, aye; motion duly carried.

...ere being no further business the meeting adjourned at 7:57 P.M.

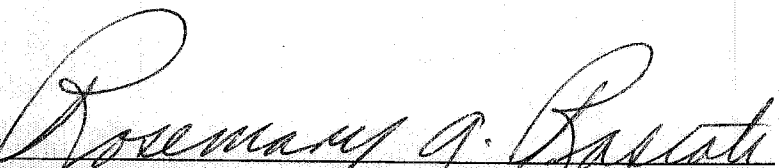
Meeting recorded and transcribed by:


Kathryn F. Zandri
Town Council Secretary

Approved by:


Robert F. Parisi, Chairman

12-8-98
Date


Rosemary A. Rascati, Town Clerk

Date
12-8-98