

SPECIAL TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

JANUARY 23, 1992

7:00 P.M.

AGENDA

1. Roll Call & Pledge of Allegiance
2. Executive Session Pursuant to Section 1-18a(e)(2) of the General Statutes Regarding Strategy and Negotiations with Respect to Pending Litigation
3. Consider and Approve the Formation of a New Liaison Committee to be Titled "Public Safety Committee" Which Will Work In Conjunction with the Departments of Police Services, Fire Services and Public Works as Requested by Councilor Brian McDermott
4. Discussion Pertaining to the Budget Workshop Process for F.Y. '92-93 as Requested by Councilor Geno J. Zandri, Jr.
5. Remove from the Table for Discussion and Possible Action on Approving the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report for Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1991 as Requested by Vice Chairman David Doherty

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SUMMARY

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JANUARY 23, 1992

7:00 P.M.

A special meeting of the Wallingford Town Council was held on Thursday, January 23, 1992 in the Robert Earley Auditorium of the Wallingford Town Hall and called to Order at 7:02 P.M. by Chairperson Iris F. Papale. Answering present to the Roll called by Town Clerk Kathryn J. Wall were Council Members Doherty, Duryea, Killen, McDermott, Papale, Solinsky and Zandri. Councilors Parisi and Holmes were absent. Mayor William W. Dickinson, Jr. arrived during Executive Session, Corporation Counselor Sam Mantzaris and Comptroller Thomas A. Myers also were present.

The Pledge of Allegiance was given to the flag.

ITEM #1 Executive Session Pursuant to Section 1-18a(e)(2) of the General Statutes Regarding Strategy and Negotiations with Respect to Pending Litigation

Mr. Doherty made a Motion to Proceed Into Executive Session, seconded by Mr. Solinsky.

VOTE: Holmes & Parisi were absent; all others, aye; motion duly carried.

Motion was made by Mr. Doherty to Exit the Executive Session, seconded by Mr. Solinsky.

VOTE: Holmes & Parisi were absent; all others, aye; motion duly carried.

Motion was made by Mr. Doherty for the Town of Wallingford to Appeal the case of CRRA vs. Wallingford Planning & Zoning Commission CD90-300846 and CRRA vs. Wallingford Zoning Board of Appeals, seconded by Mr. Zandri.

Mr. Peter Gouveia, 39 Lincoln Drive stated that back in September of 1987 Whitman & Howard presented to the Council a two-phase proposal. One had to do with the manganese and DCE that led to the filtration system in Wallingford for the wells there. The second phase was regarding the hydrological study of the well field which included three different phases; 1) review the existing data with different emphasis on the Meriden Landfill; 2) review Meriden's proposal to operate the interceptor well; and 3) the detailed hydrological investigation of the Oak Street well field. He asked, was this second phase ever undertaken?

Mayor Dickinson responded that he did not believe the hydrological study was ever performed. Some aspects of the other phases were undertaken. There is testimony in the case regarding the results of the well monitoring. The well had not been operated for a long time and only recently became operative.

Mr. Gouveia pointed out that Whitman & Howard recommended that an investigation into the geologic and hydrologic conditions existing at the site be conducted in order to assess the relationship between the well field, the landfill, the Quinnipiac River and the aquifer system. He felt that if that was done then maybe by now we would

have some answers.

Mayor Dickinson felt that study is a threshold study necessary for D.E.P. to grant any permit. The Town is under separate obligation to perform Class A mapping of the aquifers. There is money in the Water Division's budget to meet the State requirements.

Mr. Gouveia urged the Council and Mayor to "throw everything at them that we have". If need be take the land by eminent domain.

VOTE: Holmes & Parisi were absent; all others, aye; motion duly carried.

ITEM #3 Consider and Approve the Formation of a New Liaison Committee to be Titled, "Public Safety Committee" Which Will Work in Conjunction with the Departments of Police Services, Fire Services and Public Works as Requested by Councilor Brian McDermott

Motion was made by Mr. Doherty, seconded by Mr. McDermott.

Mr. McDermott explained that the plan of this committee should be to work with the above-mentioned departments to develop a five or ten year plan for future expansions or purchases. The departments have been purchasing a great deal of equipment of the past few years and has been putting quite a few jobs out to bid. He would like to work in conjunction with the departments in those efforts.

Mr. Zandri asked why would these departments be treated any differently than any other departments, what is the purpose of it?

Mr. McDermott responded, it is exploratory now and certainly any other department dealing with public safety could be added.

Mr. Zandri felt that there are too many committees as it is and wondered what the real need for forming the committee is?

Mr. McDermott explained that one of the volunteer fire departments will be coming before the Council for a rescue truck and if another volunteer fire department is considering purchasing a ladder truck then there should be some coordination between the groups regarding the purchases. He feels that a town-wide plan for safety for the fire department should be reviewed. Public Works services should be looked at by the committee and the recent purchase of a computer system at the Police Department could have been reviewed with the committee as well.

Mr. Zandri asked if there is any mechanism currently in effect for handling these issues?

Mayor Dickinson responded, yes. There is a capital acquisition list that the Fire Department has, Chief Lefebvre has it, where he monitors vehicle needs, trucks, etc., and determines a replacement schedule with regards to those specific needs. That has been done and most of the departments have a good idea of what their replacement schedule is. Public Works, as well as the Fire Department, has been on a replacement schedule for a number of years. His concern is that this

committee will involve evening meetings of which the Department Heads are already burdened with. Each of these departments are heavily involved in overtime activities without the added strain of evening meetings added. Another concern is that this cause will turn into a "wish list" issue.

Mrs. Duryea felt that it would be futile to spend time on a five or ten year plan when the deciding factor is the economic climate of the town. It cannot be that cut and dry.

Mr. McDermott agreed that economics would most certainly be the key factor and he is not looking to establish "wish lists".

Ms. Papale was hopeful that the committee could meet by appointment during normal working hours. She extended invitations to other Council Members to join the committee.

Mayor Dickinson warned the potential committee members to be cautious in approving things before it is absolutely necessary for what they will be subjected to are "wish lists".

Mr. Killen felt that the Council is fairly well stretched in trying to cover the committees that currently exist. He was worried that people involved could unintentionally become lobbyists for the particular departments instead of representing the public.

Mr. McDermott appreciated Mr. Killen's concerns and reminded him that the committee would be exploratory.

Mr. Doherty questioned if this action would be in direct conflict with the Town Charter since the Mayor is the Director of Public Safety?

Mayor Dickinson responded that the Council will not have any administrative authority in the matter.

OTE: Holmes & Parisi were absent; Killen & Solinsky, no; all others, ye; motion duly carried.

(Mr. Killen voted, "regretfully no".)

ITEM #4 Discussion Pertaining to the Budget Workshop Process for F.Y. '92-93 as Requested by Councilor Geno J. Zandri, Jr.

Mr. Zandri made a motion to Open Discussion, seconded by Mr. Killen.

Mr. Zandri reminded everyone how much time and effort is spent on the budget process each year on an individual basis and by the Council as a whole. He asked the Mayor, if the same scenario happened again this year that happened over the last three years with work being done on the Electric Division's budget and the results being similar to what happened in the past, will you veto the budget again? If the same philosophy is used in reworking their budget and trying to get additional dollars to offset some taxes will it be vetoed?

Mayor Dickinson: I'm in disagreement with subsidizing local govern-

ment with utility funds for operational purposes.

Mr. Zandri: So I can assume that that is a yes?

Mayor Dickinson: I am not going to commit myself beyond that statement. As a general principle, subsidizing local government operational purposes with utility funds is inappropriate.

Mr. Zandri: Even though we do some of that already?

Mayor Dickinson: Not to my knowledge.

Mr. Zandri: Isn't \$1.2 million of their budget going to offset taxes as a pilot plan?

Mayor Dickinson: It depends on what it is used for.

Mr. Zandri: I think this past year I was a little smarter as I gained some knowledge up here and tried to offset the money that was coming from the Electric Division for capital parts of the budget, so it all depends on what game you want to play as far as where the money is going and where it is coming from. The reason that I am bringing this up now, Bill, is very simple. I put in a lot of time over the past three years and I am not going to waste anymore of my time this year. As far as I am concerned if I read from you that the same thing is going to take place, then I plan on not spending as much time in this upcoming budget session. I would like to get some idea from you this evening.

Mayor Dickinson: My concern has been, and continues to be, more than one budget year. If we take action one budget year that will have a negative impact over a multi-year period, either to the utility or the Town of Wallingford, then I have real concerns about it. That is what my motivation has been and will continue to be. It is difficult to generalize about it, but that is probably the most accurate generalization. Something can look like a quick fix one year, my concern would be, what happens next year, what happens the year after that? Every budget is different, this one will be different and it is very difficult to forecast what the major factors in the budget will be. I can't specify exactly but, in general, I don't want to have a seemingly wonderful impact one year and then turn around and have havoc next year because of what happened the prior year.

Mr. Zandri: First of all I don't think it was a quick fix, I think it has been proven over the three or four year period that dollars have been there and it is amazing that when you decided to move approximately \$1.2 million from the Electric Division into the Town's General Funds you had enough concern to veto the budget and all of sudden when we decided we wanted to get some money back for the ratepayers we can come up with \$1.5 million of the same budget and it is not a problem. I am a little concerned about when you make the statement about a quick fix. I think that this Council looked into this a lot more than you are leading us to believe here. I think you did answer my question though and I think I know what I have to do as far as what I am going to contribute into this up-

coming budget session.

Mr. Doherty: I have a related question on the quick fix and pumping of revenue in. The related question is revaluation. If we pump in part of the surplus to revaluation this year, what happens next year?

Mayor Dickinson: That is a real concern. There is no question.

Mr. Zandri: It is a quick fix.

Mr. Doherty: It seems to me that is what we are headed to do and I don't see anything wrong with it, but I am saying that once that \$1 or \$2 million that we pumped in this year and there is no increase in the Grand List and the economy stays the way it is next year and we don't have the \$1.2 million aren't the taxpayers going to get it on the head the next year down the road?

Mayor Dickinson: They will if it is not a multi-year plan, it has to be. It can't be looked at for just one year.

Mr. Doherty: How many is multi?

Mayor Dickinson: As many as it takes to ease the impact.

Mr. Zandri: It has to be phased in over two or three years. Three years from now everyone will be paying a lot more.

Mr. Killen could not understand how the Mayor could state that taking \$1.2 million this year and pumping it into the budget will through the budget out of whack the following year. You have no idea at this point what you are going to receive from the State of Connecticut. Year after year you put dollars in there not knowing where they are going to come from, not knowing that you can put them in the following year. If we are going to sell a piece of property tomorrow or the day before we adopted our budget and that money became available, it certainly would be available to offset the mill rate and yet we could not guarantee that we were going to sell another piece of property the following year. Your philosophy is way out in left field.

Mayor Dickinson: It may be but I point to the fiscal condition of the town and say, if it is in left field then there should be other towns in left field.

Mr. Killen: If every town built in the things that we did and squirreled away the money that we did and overtaxed our citizens the way we did and the people let us get away with it then maybe more towns should be run this way. The fact that we have \$18 million dollars laying around there, the fact that the Town Attorney says that those dollars are supposed to be available at budget time, of course you never made them available at budget time, is wonderful to someone ten years down the road but I wonder if it ever occurred to you why we go to bonding in the first place. It is not always because of lack of money. If a mayor is elected that is not as conservative as you he could blow that all in one year. What happens to the people who got absolutely nothing but helped acquire it?

Mr. Killen: There is no game plan. In reality you are telling the people out there, so long as I am mayor that money will not be spent, I cannot guarantee anything after that, in the meantime you will pay the higher taxes because this is my game plan. You are not being fair to the public.

Mayor Dickinson: What happens if you end up spending that and have higher than necessary electric rates because you spent the money that the electric division should have for its needs?

Mr. Killen: What happens if the State does not give us enough dollars one way or the other, are we going to declare bankruptcy? One thing we can do with the Electric Division is, we know how many dollars are there and we are also capable of setting the rates to produce "X" number of dollars, we are allowed to gain at least 8%. We have every method at our fingertips to decide how much money might flow in in any given year. We have more control over the Electric Division than we have on most of the outside sources of revenue and yet, you take this particular one and say, "no, I won't touch it with a ten foot pole". It doesn't make sense.

Mayor Dickinson: I don't see how we have more control over the Electric Division than any other source. Thirty percent of their revenues are from four or five firms. If any one of those firms significantly cuts back its operation, the amount of revenues is drastically impacted. I think that a member of the public has the right to believe that when they pay an electric bill they are basically paying for electric service.

Mr. Killen: Our water, sewer rates and taxes have gone up and we are sitting on \$18 million in the Electric Division. We are taking it on the chin.

Mayor Dickinson: Only \$8 or \$9 million dollars became available through the rate case. It was a conscious decision made to hold that money until such time as a decision is made on the Pierce Plant. Everyone was aware of that decision made several years ago. Until Black & Veatch presents their report we will hold that money and make a decision based upon their findings.

Peter Gouveia, 39 Lincoln Drive felt that it would be a travesty to go through a budget session without having the workshops. He felt that the Mayor was all wet and that it has been proven over the past four or five years that the budget set by the Council has been the right budget. No one believed the Council when we stated that the Town of Wallingford, as owners of the Electric Division, deserves a better return for their money. A study reinforced that belief. He urged Mr. Zandri not to go forward with his intent to spend less time and energy on the budget session. Continue exposing them because it is the only way to get more from them.

Mr. Philip Wright, Sr., 160 Cedar Street stated that the taxpayers in town should be given more credit than you are giving them, Mayor. If you tell them that you can give them half a mill decrease this year but cannot guarantee it over the next ten years, they would still

be happy to have that half a mill decrease this year no matter where it came from. They are a little more sophisticated than you give them credit for. Geno, as far as I am concerned, we elected you and the rest of the people of here, for a two year job. It is your responsibility, however disappointed you may be in the outcome, to do the best possible job in getting a budget. I do not believe you are discharging your responsibility to the taxpayer if, for any reason, justified or otherwise, you don't go through with doing a proper job. If the Mayor chooses to veto it again, you cannot do anything about that, but you can do something about doing a proper job on the budget.

Mr. Killen: Geno and I come from the same corner of the world in our frustration with the budget sessions and I know where you are coming from. As I have said we have been shot down because the Charter says very simply that the Mayor may veto it unless we have seven votes to overturn it, it stands. Also the Charter says that the Town Council shall adopt a budget. That is all it says. It does not put any labors on us at all. If we want to sit down on a particular night and say, let's take the Mayor's budget or let's knock half a mill off of it or add three mills, technically we are home free. What you have to do is appeal to Geno as a man who believes in his town to do his work. He is not obligated. I am not scolding you, I'm just telling you that there are pitfalls in the Charter.

ITEM #5 Remove From the Table for Discussion and Possible Action on Approving the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report for Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1991 as Requested by Vice Chairman David Doherty

Motion was made by Mr. Doherty, seconded by Mr. Killen.

Mr. Doherty compiled a list of eighteen questions pertaining to the financial report of which Mr. Myers, Comptroller, addressed individually and responded to.

Upon questioning Mr. Myers on the Pension Fund it was discovered that it may be possible to access funds in the pension fund if, and only if, it was determined that the pension was over-funded. Mr. Myers will look into the issue of whether or not the town could access those funds under such a condition. We are in excellent shape with our pension fund for if everyone eligible for retirement decided to retire at this very moment the fund would be only \$3 million to \$3.5 million short of funding the pensions entirely.

Mr. Zandri questioned Mr. Myers on whether or not the Unappropriated Fund Balances are part of the budget process since he does not recall ever being made aware of the fact that the Mayor picks and chooses how much he will draw from the fund and where he will distribute it to. He asked the Mayor, when you do the budget book are these figures made available to you or is it because you have the knowledge of the budget process that you know they are available?

Mayor Dickinson responded that he does not have any document that reflects what is available. He is generally aware, year after year, it is the same questions, what is necessary to budget in any area...

I don't receive any document from Mr. Myers. It is a product of our discussions on the budget in general.

Mr. Zandri felt that maybe it would be good for the Council to occasionally ask, what funds are in different balances that are available for use? I, myself, have missed this over the past four years that I have been on the Council.

The question and answer period on this issue proved to be very informative to the new, as well as existing, Council Members.

VOTE TO APPROVE THE REPORT: Holmes & Parisi were absent; all others, aye; motion duly carried.

Motion was made by Mr. Doherty to Adjourn the Meeting, seconded by Mr. Killen.

VOTE: Holmes & Parisi were absent; all others, aye; motion duly carried.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:35 P.M.

Meeting Recorded and Transcribed by:

Kathryn F. Milano

Kathryn F. Milano, Town Council Secretary

Approved by:

Iris F. Papale

Iris F. Papale, Chairperson

February 25, 1992

Date

Kathryn J. Wall

Kathryn J. Wall, Town Clerk

February 25, 1992

Date