

TOWN COUNCIL PUBLIC SPEAKING MEETING

OCTOBER 20, 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, October 20, 1998 in the Robert Earley Auditorium of the Wallingford Town Hall and called to Order by Vice Chairman Raymond J. Rys, Sr. 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 Centner, Chairman Parisi who was ill at home and Councilor Zappala who was attending to a family medical situation. Mayor William W. Dickinson, Jr. Arrived at 6:34 P.M. Town Attorney Janis M. Small and Comptroller Thomas A. Myers were absent from the meeting.

The Pledge of Allegiance was given to the Flag.

Reginald Knight, 21 Audette Drive had requested ten minutes time to address the Council.

Reginald Knight asked Mr. Rys if he had researched his (Reginald Knight's) request for the Board of Assessment Appeals to hold additional meetings prior to September for residents to appeal their motor vehicle assessments? He had spoken to a member of the Board who stated that the Board was only committed to one meeting and that they would not hold additional meetings. He referred to a letter he received from the Mayor on this issue which included a copy of the State Statute which sets out the requirements of the Board to hold its meetings. No where in the State Statute does wording appear which precludes the Board from holding meetings in August.

Reginald Knight is of the opinion that the residents should be given the opportunity in August to appeal their motor vehicle assessment which is mailed to them in July and due for payment by September 1st. This will give both the Town and the resident the opportunity to settle any dispute the resident may have with the bill prior to paying it. Currently, the resident pays their bill by September 1st then must schedule to meet with the Board to appeal the assessment. If the resident is successful then they are owed a refund by the Town. It would make sense to issue the bill, appeal it, then pay the amount which the Board deems as the proper assessment upon hearing the resident's appeal.

Mayor Dickinson stated that we could look into changing the State Statute to allow for earlier hearings. He did not believe the Board of Assessment Appeals is restricted to holding only one meeting but is unsure if they are authorized by State Statute to meet prior to September. He will check into the matter.

Mr. Farrell stated that he recalled Reginald Knight's initial request was to have the Board of Assessment Appeals hold meetings on Saturdays for those individuals who are unable to make weekday meetings. He has spoken with Gerald Labriola, a member of the Board, who has agreed to research the State Statutes on this issue. He also pointed out that the Board may be in need of additional secretarial services and funds should the Board hold additional meetings.

Mr. Zandri recalled that residents are notified of an impending change to their residential tax assessments prior to the change occurring. Why can't this also occur with motor vehicle assessments?

Mayor Dickinson was not aware of such notification and will look into the practice to see why the same cannot apply to motor vehicle assessments.

Next Reginald Knight commented that he felt that Town should assist the Seiter Hill Road residents with their problem by picking up a bit more of the financial burden. He asked if the Town could pay percentage of the cost to bring the main pipes to the houses? The fact that the pipes are going past the house and/or being lateral to the house would raise the assessed and sales value of the house which had previously been of a lower value. This way the Town could get normal water/sewer usage bills inflow and the increased value on the property tax. It would be a win/win situation while letting them off the hook a little bit on the cost of the mains.

Mr. Rys stated, the ordinance is passed after the thirty days is up and that is it. What ever happened with the Council as of that day will stand the way it is.

Reginald Knight next commented on the hiring practices of the Chief of Police which was the subject of a newspaper article recently. He stated that the headline was aggravating and inflammatory. The article stated that the Town is deficient in its hiring of minority applicants. He did not believe this to be the case. He read the following into the record, "I would like to compliment the Chief (of Police) on his hiring practice of non-discrimination. The taxpayer who is apparently paying too much in the first place with forty million odd dollars excess in the pension funds, etc., etc., has the right to get the best police force possible. The requirements, regardless of race, color, religion, etc., and free of cronyism and nepotism and partisan favoritism should be....the requirement should be intelligence, education, compassion, courage, physical fitness and common sense, not necessarily in that order.

Being politically-correct should not be part of the process because the safety and the welfare of the citizens and property should be the primary consideration. A good policeman is a good policeman. I feel the Mayor should make a public statement backing the Chief to hire the best no matter what their race, color, creed, etc., I think he is doing the proper thing. I would like to feel that the policeman on the corner is the proper man for the job; he is not just in there to suit someone's fancy.

At this time Mr. Rys asked if Reginald Knight was through covering his topics of discussion he had need up to speak about, because he had signed up for ten minutes and had been speaking for a total of twenty-five minutes to this point.

Reginald Knight stated, it is hard to know how much time I would need.....

Mr. Rys stated, all you had to do was ask for one-half hour and if you did not use it.. I discounted some of the time used by people responding to you but we do have one other speaker.

Patricia Sittnick, 139 Prince Street asked if the meeting could be held with just one Councilperson officiating in a roundtable sort of fashion in the event that you decide to discontinue the third meetings due to the sparse attendance at them?

Mr. Rys pointed out, it would not be a Council meeting then but there has been in the past, hours where a Councilor is available; listening hours so to speak. At any time the public has a question or an issue to discuss, they are more than welcome to call any of the Town Councilors at home. If you can't get your answer from one, you can call two or one from each party. My phone is open; I am willing to listen as I am sure others are.

With regards to the flower beds on Route 5 and Center Streets, Ms. Sittnick asked if the highway bumper-type of structure can be removed from the front of the gazebo area in Johanna Manfreda Fishbein Park? It detracts somewhat from the beauty of the flowerbed.

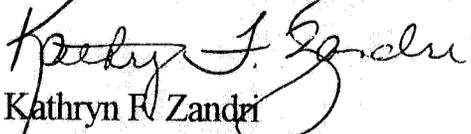
Mayor Dickinson will speak to the Director of Public Works about the matter.

Ms. Sittnick concluded her remarks at this time and no other speakers had requested time to address the Council. To this end, motion was made by Mr. Farrell to Adjourn the Meeting, seconded by Ms. Papale.

VOTE: Centner, Parisi and Zappala were absent; all others, aye; motion duly carried.

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 7:01 P.M.

Meeting recorded and transcribed by:


Kathryn F. Zandri
Town Council Secretary

Approved by: Robert F. Parisi RR
Robert F. Parisi, Chairman

11-10-98
Date

Rosemary A. Rascati
Rosemary A. Rascati, Town Clerk

11-10-98
Date