

TOWN COUNCIL PUBLIC SPEAKING MEETING

SEPTEMBER 21, 1999

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, September 21, 1999 in the Robert Earley Auditorium of the Wallingford Town Hall and called to Order by Chairman Robert F. Parisi at 6:30 P.M. Councilors Centner, Farrell, Knight, Parisi, Rys, Renda and Zandri answered present to the Roll Called by Town Council Secretary Kathryn F. Zandri. Councilor Papale arrived at 6:33 P.M. and Councilor Zappala arrived at 6:37 P.M. Mayor William W. Dickinson, Jr. arrived at 6:50 P.M. Comptroller Thomas A. Myers' and Town Attorney Janis M. Small's presence are not required at this meeting.

The Pledge of Allegiance was given to the Flag.

Jack Agosta, 505 Church Street, Yalesville asked Mr. Farrell if he has decided yet whether or not to submit the name of Morton Downey for Community Pool?

Mr. Farrell answered, there are a number of groups and individuals who have asked that the matter be reconsidered. I have not yet decided what I am doing with the issue as of yet. There may be some other tribute out there but my thoughts have not yet found one. Perhaps a road would be appropriate but, as for the pool, I think that probably won't happen.

Mr. Agosta stated that he remembers Morton Downey, Sr., however most people only remember Morton Downey, Jr. and don't want a pool named after him. Shawn "Morton" Downey, Sr. was well liked and when I first heard of the suggestion, I thought it was very nice, but most people don't remember his father.

With regards to the paint peeling in the pool; that can happen at any time, with people working on the pool, but not having lifeguards is a much different story. You schedule people at the beginning of the year and you are supposed to know when they are going to leave. There obviously was something wrong with the process used to hire the guards.

Mr. Agosta stated, the Council requested of the Mayor three specific things; to consider leasing the American Legion Building to an architect who would renovate the building. I have not yet heard anything on that matter.

Mr. Parisi answered, we are still talking with the Architect.

Mr. Agosta asked, has the Mayor done anything about the Goldfeder Property? Has he put the fence up?

Mr. Parisi replied, I believe there is a liability factor there.

Mr. Agosta stated, the State of Connecticut paved North Colony Road. The State of Connecticut went on the Amoco Station's property and cut all of the brush down; they chopped it down because they could not see out of Christian Street. They did not worry about liability. There is more liability if someone should get hurt by not doing it. It is going to grow right back. It is a safety hazard and we should take care of it, that is my opinion; I think it is a lot of people's opinions.

With regards to Martin Luther King Day, the Council asked the Mayor to give a progress report to you on a monthly basis and to meet with the unions. According to the papers, he won't talk to the unions himself, directly, is that right?

Mr. Parisi answered, I think it is discussed through the Personnel Department.

Mr. Agosta asked, he is not going to talk to the unions personally?

Mr. Parisi answered, that is not the way the system works.

Mr. Agosta stated, but you (Council) requested that he do that.

Mr. Parisi stated, we requested that the Town make an effort to include this in their negotiations.

Mr. Agosta asked, there are four months to go to Martin Luther King Day. There has been no progress.

Mr. Parisi stated, it has been discussed at one meeting. You have to wait for negotiations to be completed.

Mr. Agosta stated, I would say, "On January 20th (17th) the Town Hall would be closed" because the Mayor has executive privilege. He can close the Town down. I know that is what is going to happen. I think it should have been negotiated properly and done the proper way to make a permanent decision. I don't want to see those trucks (television stations) out there again.

With regards to sidewalks, Mr. Agosta stated that all the sidewalks on Quinnipiac Street needs repairing. That is pathetic; all these years that they haven't been taken care of. There is black top between the cracks and the streets haven't been swept. I was at a wedding on Saturday and was talking to a mailman who lives in Wallingford. I asked him about the hurricane and also about the condition of the streets. He said the streets are terrible and have not been swept since last year; they are filthy, the sidewalks are cracked and the town looks awful.

With regards to the bridges, does the Mayor have any plans to get started on fixing them or are they going to sit there until next time? We got a bad report in the paper.

Mr. Parisi stated, I don't think that we have any that are unsafe. There will be bridge work done probably by the end of the year. That is what I was told.

Mr. Knight stated, there are three in particular, West Dayton Hill Road, Wall Street and Pond Hill Road. Part of this is trying to be sensitive to the concerns of the people who live around the area of the bridges. That does not necessarily speed a project up.

Mr. Agosta stated, we got this money from the State and nothing is being done.

Mr. Parisi explained, you cannot just go into a neighborhood....you have all the neighbors who are concerned about the aesthetics of what you do. They don't want their neighborhood changed in any way. It becomes a prolonged process.

Mr. Agosta stated, then we read that we are the worst in the State for pollution. Does the Town have a policy on how to enforce Cytec or the trash burning plant?

Mr. Parisi stated, that is all being monitored by the State.

Mr. Agosta asked, does the Town get involved in that at all?

Mr. Parisi answered, not to any great degree that I am aware of.

Mr. Knight stated, we have operations in Wallingford that, indeed, create pollution but it doesn't stay within the Town borders any more than the pollution created in New York City stays in New York City. The reason we are below the national standard in certain emissions and the reason we have that elaborate, billion dollar emissions program is because of the air quality in the State of Connecticut. And the air quality in our state is directly related to the air quality and the pollutants produced in New Jersey and New York. The pollution that is produced in Wallingford, Connecticut is distributed quite widely throughout the region. I don't think that it is a fair statement to suggest that this is Pittsburgh during WWII. It is far from it. I think you should be very careful about studies written by special interest groups. I would rather go with the people that control the environmental regulations such as the D.E.P. and they monitor the trash plant on a continuous basis and Cytec just produced a report six weeks ago that showed yet another decrease in the amount of pollutions they are producing. Those are the two primary industrial point source producers. The ones that nobody every wants to talk about are the Merit Parkway and I-91 and that is where we are getting a whole lot of it. That is what also throws our numbers. We are between two mega generators of air pollution.

With regards to the Cat Ordinance, the Council spent 1 ½ hours that night discussing the Cat Ordinance. I thought it was silly but it is not to the people who have the problems. Is it possible to have a resident with an open mind serving on the Ordinance Committee?

Mr. Parisi replied, no, it is a Council committee. You are allowed to attend the meetings. They are open meetings. We had a meeting last night and the press does not always publish them. You can always call the Council office to see if anything is scheduled.

Mr. Knight stated, it is a committee of the Councilors; a steering committee if you will, but this committee does solicit public comment. In fact, when we were debating the Cat Ordinance we had people from the public during our Ordinance Committee meeting when we were trying to write it. That is where most ordinances originate.

Mr. Agosta quoted the Town Engineer as saying, "I would have to confer with the Director of Public Works...if he can handle sidewalk repairs and the Mayor has to agree to repair sidewalks in-house." Am I correct?

Mr. Parisi answered, that is if they go in-house, yes.

Mr. Agosta continued, we have a sidewalk inspector. What we have is a Construction inspector, we do not have a Sidewalk Inspector. Our Construction Inspector was hired June 1st. The position, Construction Inspector, was not in the budget for this year, it was an open position.

Mr. Parisi stated, the position was funded.

Mr. Agosta stated, the Construction Inspector makes quite a bit of dollars to go out and inspect sidewalks, if that is what he is doing.

Mr. Parisi stated, he inspects ditches, road construction items and sidewalks, not strictly sidewalks.

Mr. Agosta stated, I don't think we should have a Construction Inspector inspecting sidewalks.

Mr. Parisi stated, years ago the sidewalks were in better shape because the homeowners were responsible for their condition and repair of them.

Mr. Agosta referred to the Town Charter, Page 16, Chapter VIII, Section 1, "Duties" under Department of Public Works; "inspecting of highways, sidewalks, curbs and private drains." That is a job of the Department of Public Works, not a job of the Town Engineer's Department. The Town Engineer's job is to, "supervise construction and repair of sewers, bridges and new pavements....", not repairing sidewalks. That is in the

Charter. The job of inspecting sidewalks is part of the duties of the Department of Public Works.

Mr. Parisi stated, you had better let Henry (McCully, Director of Public Works) know that he has another job.

Mayor Dickinson stated, there is an ordinance that establishes the appointment of a sidewalk inspector and that is why there is an individual in the Engineering Department with that title.

Mr. Agosta stated, the Town Charter has to be revised then because it says that duty falls under the Department of Public Works.

Mr. Parisi stated, there is an ordinance which supersedes the Charter.

Mayor Dickinson stated, no, it comes down to the meaning of the language in the Charter. I think the language there is meant for general purposes. The ordinance establishes how particulars can be accomplished and I don't think there is a conflict. That is the way it has been for years, that the assignment regarding sidewalk inspection, not necessarily anything beyond inspection...but the inspection is assigned through the ordinance.

Mr. Agosta read the Charter once again, stating that it is very clear in where the responsibility lies. I believe it was done in-house years ago; I believe it was under the Department of Public Works.

Reginald Knight, 21 Audette Drive was the next to speak. I thought the person signed up for the least amount of time went first. Mr. Agosta asked for forty minutes and I had requested thirty minutes.

Mr. Parisi replied, I took the first name on the list; I beg your pardon if I didn't do it right.

Reginald Knight asked, when you (Mr. Parisi) were Sidewalk Inspector, was that a full-time job?

Mr. Parisi answered, no, it was not. It was a part-time job.

Reginald Knight stated, I don't see anything in the Town's Personnel for a Sidewalk Inspector, per say.

Mr. Parisi stated, I would speak to the homeowner and give them a citation and turned one into the Town as well.

Reginald Knight stated, now it is the Town's responsibility. I am still puzzled as to which department this employee is in, if we have one (Sidewalk Inspector). I have asked the Mayor several times, "do we have a Sidewalk Inspector?" and up until the last meeting, the Mayor has always responded, "no we don't." All of a sudden Mr. Thompson (Town Engineer) says, yes we did, we hired one two months ago. Which is it, Mayor, do we or do we not have a Sidewalk Inspector?

Mayor Dickinson answered, We hired one as Mr. Thompson said, the beginning of the summer.

Reginald Knight replied, since the beginning of summer I have asked you and you have said that we didn't have one.

Mayor Dickinson stated, I don't believe that is the record, but if it is, then I was mistaken because Mr. Sandillo was hired the beginning of the summer and his job is Construction Inspector and part of his duties is Sidewalk Inspection.

Reginald Knight asked, which department is he in, sir?

Mayor Dickinson answered, Engineering.

Reginald Knight replied, as the other gentleman said, the upkeep of the curbs and inspection, etc., should be in the Public Works Dept.

Mayor Dickinson answered, it comes down to how you interpret the language in the Charter. There is an ordinance that also deals with sidewalks. The ordinance specifies the appointment of an individual as a Sidewalk Inspector.

Reginald Knight replied, we have to find what "is" is. It seems to be some sort of a problem. Everyone else seems to know what "is" is, and some people don't. Most of the issues that I had were addressed by Mr. Agosta. I would just like to comment that Mr. Zandri mentioned a sidewalk going to nowhere. On your street, Mr. Chairman, (East Main Street), I see the Clover Company working for the town, putting sidewalks in near West View Drive. They are putting a sidewalk from West View Drive to the driveway of Regency House. From there the sidewalk will go nowhere because there are fire hydrants and things blocking it. They are putting in new sidewalks when we have old sidewalks.... I wish one of you would call me up and say, Mr. Knight, show me some of this mess, show me what you are talking about but nobody does.

Mr. Parisi stated, I know where this one is; I will go look at it.

Reginald Knight replied, that sidewalk from West View Drive going towards your house, that also ends up at an oak tree at the junction of Constitution Street so you have to step into the road; this does not make sense either.

Mr. Parisi stated, It must be a crosswalk or something.

Mayor Dickinson explained, that portion of sidewalk has been a long standing request from Regency House that their residents be able to get to the sidewalk across the street. I believe there are grave differences and the effort was to provide a sidewalk for walking to a point at which the street can be crossed to the other side where there is a sidewalk and they can go on down and they often visit at the senior housing.

Reginald Knight stated, I am glad to see that because on the other side of the street there is a continuous sidewalk all the way from Eastside Market all the way to the grave yard and past it.

Mayor Dickinson stated, this is to allow them to be able to cross and to get onto the other sidewalk and go down to the Senior Housing complex and use the Community Room and it is meant to make it a more convenient method of travel other than the way they had to do it. Up until this was finished, they had to climb over the curb and for people who were not walking well, that was difficult.

Reginald Knight replied, I drive, walk and jog past it. The number of pedestrians there that are coming out of that development to go into the Regency House is negligible to nil. But the people out walking or anything like that start out on the west side of the street and head north on a continuous sidewalk. You only have to cross one street; Constitution Street. If you go on the side you are talking about, you have to cross West View Drive and then there is another one going into the senior housing complex. I think they (Clover Construction) is busy doing something when there is a lot of stuff that really needs doing, so be it.

On a separate matter Reginald Knight stated, on Grieb Road where it intersects North Elm Street, they did some pipe work in the road. I have complained about the condition of the road a number of times. There was a gentleman from the Electric Division who was talking on his telephone to headquarters and I showed him the pothole there where you could drop a Jeep in and lose it. He called the problem in and within a day it was fixed. Isn't that amazing; you talk to the Electric company and get a pothole in the road fixed.

With regards to Quinnipiac Street between Cherry Street and the railroad, we had a situation where a young man was struggling to get a wheelchair across. These accesses are very poor. On Tuesday, traveling from Cherry Street towards the railroad station, I saw a police officer. He was supposed to be directing traffic and helping workmen there with this huge truck they had. He had to break away from that and get something that he could block against the curb and help a middle-aged lady with her wheelchair across the street. I think they could have done a better, temporary job for people in wheelchairs or

with disabilities in that section. They have a tough enough life as it is without having to fight to get across the street.

Reginald Knight next stated that there are a couple of trees at the junction of Sylvan and South Elm Street. They have been posted since the 29th of August to come down because they are dead; they look dead, they are desolate. They have no leaves, they are withered and they are large. I don't know why it takes so long to take them down. If they are that dead then they are a danger. One of them is outside the fence of the house on the corner and one is inside the fence but the notices still come from the town that the tree will come down because it is dangerous dead.

Mr. Parisi stated, the fence could be in the wrong place. If the tree is within so many feet from the road... the Town's land may... they won't take the tree down if it isn't on Town property.

Reginald Knight asked, who is going to pay for the tree inside of his fence?

Mr. Parisi stated, if it is on our property, we will pay for it. How many feet in does the Town own?

Mayor Dickinson answered, it would vary according to the circumstance. Surveyors are the only way to determine the exact width of the right of way. A subdivision is fairly standard but for older roads it would be far from standard and it comes down to determining the right-of-way for the highway. It would be a case by case basis.

Reginald Knight asked, there would be no ruling that says the Town's property is fifteen or twenty feet from the center of the road?

Mayor Dickinson answered, no.

Reginald Knight stated, that is another sidewalk that goes nowhere; you walk right into those trees and bushes going down Sylvan from Main Street to S. Elm.

Mr. Knight stated, you may find that there are some people that don't have sidewalks out in front of their house. If the Town came to them and offered them sidewalks in front of the house, they would not want them; they don't want the responsibility for shoveling them, for having their land cut up, there are a lot of people don't want them. They were grand fathered not to have them and they are happy with that. If you go down any street in town and depending on when the house was built and what the requirements were, some won't have sidewalks, but adding them, a lot of people are not interested.

Reginald Knight answered, I understand that, East Main Street was an example of that. The people further north of the corner store did not want the trees to come down because they wanted it to stay in the state that it was; a country lane.

With regards to the Power Plant, Reginald Knight pointed out that an article appeared in the newspaper which reported that the five major power plants in Connecticut, in one year threw out 500 tons of pollutants into the air. I would not like to think that we are going to throwing any more out.

With regards to Community Pool, Reginald Knight asked, where is the tank that is going to hold the vast majority of water currently stored in the pool? Is it under the pool?

Mr. Knight answered, it is on the west side of the pool. It is fairly large; it is between the filters...towards the street, if I am not mistaken. It is probably not an accurate description to say that it is going to hold 500,000 gallons of water. It is a surge tank that is meant to help balance different flows. That water that we are having to replace is being paid for by the contractor; that is part of the pool project.

Reginald Knight replied, I think it was misinforming the public to say that the majority of the water was going into those tanks. I can't see one that is that large that can take that volume of water. I don't think it could hold half of it. The way it was presented to us, it sounded like 80% of it was going to be in the tank and the other 20% was going to be released. We are talking about releasing water that has been treated and I don't know that that is very good for the countryside.

Mr. Knight answered, by the time it is released in the Fall, a lot of the chlorine is long-gone. It isn't treated. Most of the chlorine and chemicals are put into the water when the people are swimming. Once the pool closes, they don't continually treat it at that same level. The chlorine will dissipate into the air so that by the time the water is flushed into the stream, it is pretty benign. It is benign to begin with but it is not a hazard.

With regards to the Cooke Property and the possibility of a golf course; here we go with fertilizers. People will say it is farm land and it is fertilized but I would think that the fertilizing that a farmer puts down for crops that is going to be eaten by humans probably contains a lot different stuff than what would go into lawns. They are talking about elements such as Mercury, Cadmium, Zinc, Copper, Arsenic and others for grass fertilizers.

Mr. Parisi answered, the Agricultural Center will lay out a program whereby everything is absolutely harmless to humans. They are doing it for golf courses right now.

Reginald Knight stated, that area is an aquifer for that area, for Northford, North Haven and New Haven and I don't think it should be used for any other purpose but left in its pristine state.

In closing, Reginald Knight stated that he was glad to see that the third meeting (Public Speaking Meeting) was listed in the newspaper yesterday. He was hoping that the Mayor would have been more active in seeing that it got into the paper and in properly.

Mr. Parisi reminded Reginald Knight that it is not the Mayor's meeting.

Reginald Knight replied, on the public service side of it, the Mayor should see to it that the public gets a chance to speak in their community. It is not his duty to snatch a child off the sidewalk if it is in danger of being run over by a car, but the human side of us tells us to do those things.

Mr. Parisi stated, I would also think that the press would assume their responsibility to the public and realize that this meeting is as simple as the secretary sitting over there.

Reginald Knight stated, perhaps more people would come and talk if they knew they could. The notice of the meeting did not mention the stipulation that if you wish to speak you have to have your name in by Monday at noon. Most people don't know that and I would hate to have them show up only to be turned away. Someone should talk to the newspaper and make that stipulation known.

He asked that the Council watch their microphone switches. When certain people come up to the microphone, there are comments and side remarks that are passed back and forth that are picked up by the tapes. Some remarks are not very nice. Some of them are down right derogatory. The people who attend the meetings do so with an open heart trying to make this community a better place as we all want to do. I think they deserve better than to have one make a disparaging remark about them just because they are coming up to the microphone.

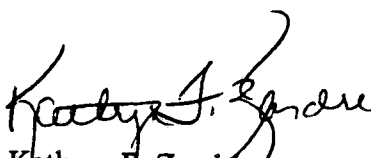
This concluded the public speaking meeting.

Motion was made by Mr. Zappala to Adjourn the Meeting, seconded by Mr. Knight.

VOTE: All ayes; motion duly carried.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:15 P.M.

Meeting recorded and transcribed by:


Kathryn F. Zandri
Town Council Secretary

Approved:

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

10-12-99
Date

Rosemary A. Rascati
Rosemary A. Rascati, Town Clerk

10-12-99
Date