

TOWN COUNCIL PUBLIC SPEAKING MEETING

SEPTEMBER 15, 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, September 15, 1998 in the Robert Earley Auditorium of the Wallingford Town Hall and called to Order by Vice Chairman Raymond J. Rys, Sr. at 6:31 P.M. All Councilors answered present to the Roll called by Town Council Secretary Kathryn F. Zandri with the exception of Chairman Parisi who was ill at home and Councilor Papale who had a previously scheduled commitment. Mayor William W. Dickinson, Jr. arrived as the meeting was adjourned. Town Attorney Janis M. Small and Comptroller Thomas A. Myers were absent from the meeting.

The Pledge of Allegiance was given to the Flag.

Robert Sheehan, 11 Cooper Avenue had requested time to address the Council.

Mr. Sheehan stated that the Planning & Zoning Commission is getting much attention lately. He is glad to see some Council members in attendance at the meetings taking interest in issues big and small; not just because it was the auto auction but even last night with what seems like relatively small items that affect neighborhoods namely, Tayco. There are more issues coming such as the cellular towers/antennas out on Woodhouse Avenue that he hopes Councilors will be in attendance for.

With regards to Simpson School, Mr. Sheehan stated, in a relatively short period of time the building will be vacant. Our record for empty buildings is less than desirable. I was wondering if we had any plans to do anything with it; sell it or what ever? Last meeting the Mayor stated that the Wooding property is no longer for sale. I realize there is a plan that is being bandied about in the newspaper; a hotel and retail outlet stores, etc., and I guess the investors are looking for the Town to become.....I assume this plan will come before you (Council) at some point along the way. I want you to consider that we are not in the retail or hotel business. The price of \$10 million has been bandied about as the amount the Town is going to spend over there. It goes three ways; it is \$3 million of taxpayer's money; that is your money; that is my money. We would do better putting that \$3 million somewhere ; I don't care where; anywhere but in that venture. It is a nice idea but not a good one for the payer of Wallingford.

Councilor Knight stated, it is my understanding that the Town is not being asked for a direct financial investment at this point. It certainly would not be anywhere in the range of \$3 million. I don't think...at least anything that I have heard does not indicate that the Town is being asked for any financial investment.

Mr. Sheehan stated, the Wooding property has been for sale for three or four years now and all I can do is respond to comments made. The Mayor made the comment that the property is no longer for sale so evidently a plan has been presented to him that he endorses because the property is no longer for sale.

Mr. Rys stated, you have to understand one thing; the Mayor can propose....he can bring a proposal before the Council. Ultimately, it is our decision because we are the financial body of this town and also you, as the public, have the opportunity through a public hearing if anything else is proposed.

Mr. Sheehan reminded the Council to keep an open mind on this issue.

Rys stated, as far as Simpson School is concerned, I believe we have heard from the Mayor time time again that until we know that the Senior Center is in a place where we are going to put it, we don't want to abandon Simpson School as a possibility. It does not mean that it is going to be there but that is one of the locations that was identified.

Mr. Sheehan responded, we don't take care of empty buildings, we never have. We didn't take care of the building when it was occupied. A good example is Yalesville School. We set up a fund of about \$350,000 to take care of the roof and we wound up building a new school. We did the same thing with Parker Farms; we let that sit and when it had to be re-opened it cost us \$4-5 million. I hope we will not just let it sit there. I hope we will expend some money to keep it somewhat in shape. I understand that the auditorium has been leaking for years; the roof and what not. I don't know how sound the other part of the building is.

Mr. Rys stated, I speak for myself when I say that once Simpson School is identified as not a possibility for the Senior Center, it is my intention that we either find another use through another organization which may be involved with the Town or we sell it, but we cannot leave it there.

Mr. Zappala stated, we should be concerned to make sure the building is secure and that no damage occurs inside the building. We would be wise to wait rather than dispose of it. There may be some need on the part of the Board of Education or the seniors who have housing behind the school. They may want to expand their residence.

Mr. Zandri stated, I feel that once the building is empty we should do something with it as soon as possible. It is my understanding from all of the preliminary plans that I saw on the Senior Center that they have no intention or desire to relocate up there. I think that we should get that issue finalized immediately and then see if any other Town departments or Board of Education has any use for it. If not, we should market it as well. To go through another winter with it is just going to mean more damage up there in a vacant building. I think we should act on it before the year's end.

Mr. Rys stated, I agree with you.

Mr. Sheehan next stated, I assume they are almost done with the roof on the Town Hall because they have removed the blockades out of the parking lot. I thought we would have had a parking lot next door at least started by now on the Lacey Property. Does anyone know anything about that?

Mr. Zandri answered, I brought that issue up when that presentation was made, it was my understanding that it was supposed to be started this Fall and completed by the end of the year. Whether that is still the timeline, I am not positive. I know they wanted to get the roof done first.

Mr. Rys stated, I will find that information out for you.

Patricia Sittnick, 139 Prince Street asked, has anyone thought of offering the use of the American Legion building next door to Wallingford Center Inc.? It seems that more people would be able to pop in to find out what is going on, particularly with the Silver Museum that will be opening up. Sometimes, as a tourist, you go into towns which have a Chamber of Commerce that you can go into to get flyers and encounter someone who can tell you what is happening. I know their title is Wallingford Center and maybe that is why they want to be on Center Street. I would like to see the building stay because it is a nice cluster and it is historic I believe.

Mr. Rys thanked Ms. Sittnick for her comments.

Mr. Zappala stated that he does not mind coming to the meetings but he would like to know ahead of time whether there will be speakers or not. Some kind of guidelines should be set for when people should sign up by. I had a meeting scheduled of the Ordinance Committee tonight at 6 P.M. which had to be canceled. Although it was nice to listen to Mr. Sheehan and Ms. Sittnick but I think they ke because no one else was here.

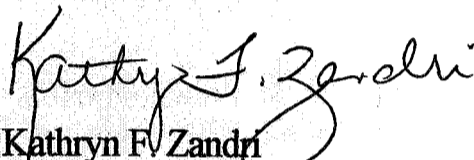
Mr. Knight informed Mr. Zappala that an item appears on the agenda of the September 22, 1998 Town Council Meeting dealing with the issue. It will be taken up at that time.

...tion was made by Mr. Farrell to Adjourn the Meeting, seconded by Mr. Centner.

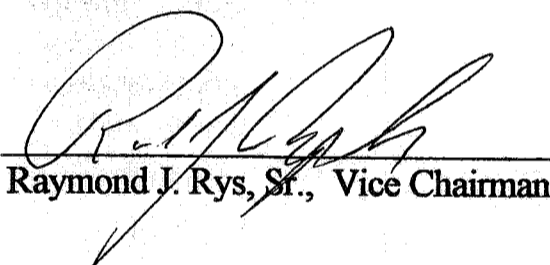
VOTE: Papale and Parisi were absent; all others, aye; motion duly carried.

There being no further business the meeting adjourned.

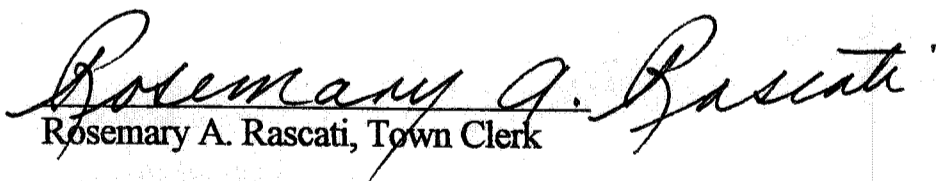
Meeting recorded and transcribed by:


Kathryn F. Zandri
Town Council Secretary

Approved:


Raymond J. Rys, Sr., Vice Chairman

11-10-98
Date


Rosemary A. Rascati, Town Clerk

11-12-98
Date