



BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Clifford J. Hurgin Municipal Center, 1 School Street
Bethel, Connecticut 06801 Telephone: (203) 794-8501

Matthew S. Knickerbocker, First Selectman
Richard C. Straiton, Selectman
Paul R. Szatkowski, Selectman

MINUTES OF PUBLIC HEARING

Wednesday, March 21, 2012
7:30 p.m.

Bethel High School Auditorium, Bethel, CT

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TOWN CLERK

PRESENT: First Selectman Knickerbocker, Selectman Straiton and Selectman Szatkowski. Also in attendance were Town Counsel Martin J. Lawlor, Town Planner Steven Palmer, and Comptroller Robert Kozlowski.

First Selectman Knickerbocker opened the Public Hearing at 7:30 p.m.

First Selectman Knickerbocker explained that tonight's public hearings was to receive comments on a proposal to raze the "old" town hall and that the Board of Selectmen has not had a final vote on the disposition of the building. He noted several points: (1) after meeting, (on several occasions) with the downtown property owners, one of their major concerns was the need for more downtown parking, (2) any use associated with selling the building would require parking and our zoning regulations do not permit the required parking spaces, (3) the Library project requires an additional 16 spaces for a total of 40 dedicated spots and (4) the sewer allocation of the "old" town hall is 400 gallons allotted to it - this allocation could be banked for another project that would result in more tax revenue than could be derived from the sale of the "old" town hall.

Public Comments:

William Michaels, Hudson Street: Among other comments, offered that in 2000, the architect for the library project assured residents the "old" town hall would be retained and that parking would be found offsite, town could exempt themselves from parking requirements, parking spaces could be worked out with adjoining neighbors, residents should decided the buildings fate and that it could be added to the ballot for the budget referendum.

David Glahn, Elizabeth Street: Among other comments, offered that P&Z voted to tear the building down without listening to public comment and that people should walk more.

Paul Improta, Highview Terrace: Among other comments, offered that we won't get a CO on the Library until the parking issue is resolved, bring in more tax revenue by expanding Clarke Park.

Tom Peters, Bethpage Drive: Among other comments, offered that we shouldn't take a \$400,000 building and turn it into a parking lot, offer the building for sale "as-is", P&Z already made up their minds, rent parking spaces off site for library.

Robert Burke, Greenwood Avenue: Among other comments, offered that the people of Bethel should be given the opportunity to vote on whether to take the building down, use the grant to abate the building and then put it up for sale.

Robert Crnic, Old Hawleyville Road: Among other comments, offered that this is not an issue to be decided upon by the Board of Selectmen; and if they do, would probably petition it to go to referendum.

Will Michaels, Hudson Street: Among other comments, offered that there should be a way to preserve the building and should be decided at referendum.

Fran O'Neill, Taylor Avenue: Among other comments, offered that the Plan of Development makes no recommendation to tear down the building, there are considerable areas to park downtown; they just need to be marked properly.

Don Goodrich, Aunt Patty's Lane: Among other comments, offered that he is in favor of taking the building down; let the Library project finish. Parking at the Municipal Center is not a realistic option. Time to do what's best for Bethel!

Gerard Booker, Rockwell Road: Among other comments, spoke in support of the Library and read his newly published poem, which relates to the subject matter.

Nora O'Neill, Taylor Avenue: Among other comments, offered that there is considerable parking downtown and should be marked clearly, people should walk more, terrible intersection at School/Durant by the post office and the building has a room sized fireproof vault which may be of interest to certain uses.

Gale Dickerman - read letter from Winn Brickmeyer who is in support of tearing the building down to create the parking necessary for the completion of the library project.

Robert Legnard, Evergreen Drive: Among other comments, offered that he is in favor of the building coming down. There is more value to the property as a parking lot than as a

building. 12 years ago, the building was occupied and at that time, offsite parking at the Municipal Center was offered as an option; not in our best interest now.

Cynthia McCorkindale, Elgin Avenue: Among other comments, offered that this should be brought to referendum and wondered if the building had been offered for sale and if neighbors were contacted about using their parking.

Steve Palmer, Zoning Official, among other comments, offered that what held true in 2000 does not necessarily address the parking concerns of today, at that time, the building was occupied and we weren't faced with the same concerns as we are now. This is an opportunity now to address parking issues and look towards the future and building upon our TOD (Transit Oriented District).

Michael McDell, Pell Mell Drive: Among other comments, offered that he is in support of the completion of the library project; there should be dedicated spaces for the elderly, rest can walk. Consider a lease/purchase.

Mary O'Leary, Terry Drive: Among other comments, offered that she is in support of demolishing the building to finish the library project, building is an eyesore.

Donna Boylan, Durant Avenue: Among other comments, offered that downtown parking is a problem; people love the convenience of parking where they want to shop/visit, in support of raising the building.

Nancy Ryan, Walnut Hill Road: Among other comments, offered that taking the building down for parking would be the best solution to a lot of issues; i.e. parking, sewer allocation, etc.

J. Philip Gallagher, Sunset Hill Road: Among other comments, offered that the library project sought offsite parking for its approval back in 2000, Bethel doesn't tear down buildings, we recycle them or sell them, due to reduced revenues from the state any tax dollars received would be helpful, at least try putting the building up for sale. As a member of the Board of Finance, believes that this issue should have been referred to them but wasn't. Board of Finance had taken a vote to sell the building as-is.

Hanson, Plumtrees Road: Among other comments, offered that the building was left to deteriorate, people can park and walk.

Charles Steck, Putnam Park Road: Among other comments, offered that the "old" town hall was built with tax dollars, how can we say it won't sell if we have never offered it for sale, let local tradesmen fix the building and offer it for sale.

John O'Neill, Taylor Avenue: Among other comments, offered that parking on the municipal center lawn is necessary, make an effort to sell the building and there is plenty of parking downtown, it is just not marked.

Thomas O'Leary, Terry Drive: Among other comments, offered that as treasurer, he like the Board of Finance has no role in the disposition of the building and urged the Board of Selectmen to move forward with taking the building down.

Alice Hutchinson, Rockwell Road: Among other comments, offered that at the time, the library project was going to be done in stages rather than scale back the project, the building was occupied at that time, and the offsite parking was a solution at that time, not practical now. Library should have its own dedicated spaces.

David Olson, Wagon Road: Among other comments, offered that he commends the Board of Selectmen and P&Z, proceed with taking the building down.

Jenny Tesar, Chestnut Ridge: Among other comments, offered that using part of the municipal center for parking is not practical giving all the community events,

Leslie Mason, Wildwood Circle: Among other comments, offered that she is in support of taking the building down, no one has expressed any interest in purchasing the building.

Don Dempsey, Greenwood Avenue: Among other comments, offered that the building should come down and that using the municipal center lawn for parking is not feasible

Bobbie Jo Beers, Old Hawleyville Road: Among other comments, offered that she supports the building coming down to provide more parking.

Trisha Lewis, Rockwell Road read a letter from Jane Bickford, Library Board of Directors, in support of more parking for the Library project.

Robin Kahn, Brookwood Drive: Among other comments, offered that she is in favor of the building coming down; the building is not an asset, the benefits of parking far out way any tax revenue and clarified that the cost would be from a grant.

Lorraine Go: Among other comments, offered that parking at the library is inadequate, 75% of the time, can't find a parking space.

As there were no more comments, First Selectman Knickerbocker closed the Public Hearing at 9:33 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Wendy Smith, Recording Secretary

