



John L. Salomone  
Town Manager

# TOWN OF NEWINGTON

131 CEDAR STREET  
NEWINGTON, CONNECTICUT 06111

**MAYOR STEPHEN WOODS**

## MINUTES

**NEWINGTON TOWN COUNCIL**  
Conference Room L-101 Lower Level – Town Hall  
7:00 P.M.

**September 24, 2013**

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The meeting was called to order by Mayor Woods at 7:05 p.m.

### I. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

### II. ROLL CALL

Councilor Borjeson  
Councilor Bottalico  
Councilor Castelle  
Councilor Cohen  
Councilor DelBuono  
Councilor Klett  
Councilor McBride  
Councilor Nagel  
Mayor Woods

#### Staff Attendees:

John Salomone, Town Manager  
Dianne Stone, Director Senior and Disabled Center  
Peter Boorman, Town Attorney  
Jamie Trevethan, Executive Assistant  
Linda Irish-Simpson, Clerk of the Council

### III. PROCLAMATIONS/AWARDS

Mayor Woods moved the following:

**WHEREAS, the Constitution of the United States of America, the guardian of our liberties, embodies the principles of limited government in a Republic dedicated to rule by law; and**

**WHEREAS, September 17, 2013 marks the 226<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the framing of the Constitution of the United States of America by the Constitutional Convention; and**

**WHEREAS, it is fitting and proper to accord official recognition to this magnificent document and its memorable anniversary, and to the patriotic celebrations which will commemorate it; and**

**WHEREAS, Public Law 915 guarantees the issuing of a proclamation each year by the President of the United States of America designating September 17 through 23 as Constitution Week;**

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that I, Mayor Stephen Woods, by virtue of the authority vested in me as Mayor of the Town of Newington, Connecticut and on behalf of the Newington Town Council, do hereby proclaim the week of September 17 through 23 as Constitution Week and ask our citizens to reaffirm the ideals the Framers of the Constitution had in 1787 by vigilantly protecting the freedoms guaranteed to us through this guardian of our liberties.**

The motion was seconded by Councilor DelBuono and passed 9 – 0.

#### **IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Sandy Lallier, 27 Elton Drive: She stated she was disappointed and embarrassed by the recent ad taken out by the Republican Town Committee in the Town Crier. This was the first time she realized how badly the parties were not working together for the benefit of the Town and asked both parties to take the time to think about the issues and use the Town government to get to the bottom of any issues they might have. She felt the ethical questions should not have gone to the State Attorney and the needed form should have been found and utilized. Ms. Lallier commented the Town Council should work together and not make elementary accusations with no specifics. She stated she appreciated the hard work and efforts by everyone on the Council.

Gary Bolles, 28 Burdon Lane: He commented the State should sell the Cedarcrest property to the Town for \$1. The property might have been environmentally contaminated by the State, and the State should be responsible for any clean up. If the State sold the property to the Town, the Town could leave the property as is and since it would not be disturbing the property, the contaminants could be ignored. Over the past year there have been no offers to purchase the property and asked if that was because the State would want to hold the buyer responsible for any clean up. Mr. Bolles felt it was in the best interest of the State to sell the property to Newington, and the State should be reminded of the valuable land the Town gave up for the building of the DOT.

Alison Clark, 25 Wilbur Drive: She wanted to commend the Conservation Commission and the discussion for purchasing land for open space. She felt it would be a good idea to be proactive instead of reactive when things happened and possibly a line item should be put in the budget for open space. Ms. Clark stated the Town would look favorably on a Town that had money set aside for purchases when requesting a grant.

Rose Lyons, 46 Elton Drive: She agreed with Sandy Lallier's comments and stated that people should do their homework before speaking at a meeting.

Gail Budrejko, 21 Isabelle Terrace: She stated the 20/20 vision statement of the Town had been forgotten when decisions were made regarding development, housing, transit oriented development and open space. The Town did not need the State or anyone to come in and tell the Town what should be development. She commented Newington did not need an Economic Director who said that Cedar Mountain was a prime area for development. Ms. Budrejko wanted to be sure the Town Council did not forget the Vision Statement.

#### **V. REMARKS BY COUNCILORS**

Councilor Borjeson agreed with Ms. Lallier and thanked her for her comments.

Councilor DelBuono did not want to address any campaign issues at the Council meeting but wanted to assure the residents that there were many efforts to find out how to get the necessary document and have emails to prove that. If anyone wanted to see them, they could contact her. Ethics concerns were

not taken lightly and homework was done before proceeding. She stated they had been doing their homework for many, many months and have emails from February that requested information and records.

Councilor Bottalico asked Mr. Salomone about the parking situation at Bone Fish and wanted to speed up the process. Mr. Salomone indicated he had contacted the realtor and said there was no reason the signs should not be put up. He said the Town could not treat it as a fire lane until posted but had notified the Police to try to encourage people not to park there. Mr. Salomone stated the cost of the fire lane was the responsibility of the owner of the property.

Councilor Klett wanted to assure the public that there was nothing that she had said at the Town Council meetings that she would not be willing to swear to as truth.

Councilor Nagel stated he wanted to let the public know since it had been brought up at a prior meeting that the interior of the Deming Farm property was the responsibility of the local nonprofit organization, which did the best they could in raising funds for the project. The exterior of the building was the responsibility of the Town. Councilor Nagel asked Mr. Salomone about the Garfield Street grant and why it was not granted to the Town and if he could get more information. Mr. Salomone indicated he would get the information to the Council.

Mayor Woods read the attached letter into the meeting minutes – see attached.

**VI. CONSIDERATION OF OLD BUSINESS**  
**A. Municipal Master Agreement – Construction Projects**

Councilor Borjeson moved the following:

**RESOLVED:**

**That the Newington Town Council hereby authorizes the Town Manager, John L. Salomone, to enter into an agreement with the State of Connecticut for a Master Municipal Agreement for Construction Projects, a copy of which is attached to this resolution.**

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

**That said agreement shall remain valid for a ten-year term.**

Councilor Cohen seconded the motion and the motion passed 8 – 0 (1 abstention/Councilor DelBuono)

**VII. CONSIDERATION OF NEW BUSINESS**  
**A. Discussion: Cedarcrest Hospital Property**

Mr. Salomone gave an overview of the process involved in possibly obtaining the Cedarcrest property since Mr. Brecher was out of town and unavailable to attend the meeting. At any point in the process, the State could stop the process. The steps were: 1) environmental review – concerned with any issues that would be involved 2) The State would select appraisal firms to do an analysis of the property. After selection they would have 30-60 days. The State could review the appraisals and determine it was not the right time to sell and stop the process. 3) The State would have to offer the property to the Town since the Town would have the right of first refusal. The parties would begin to negotiate and if the property was a gift, it might happen at this stage. 4) If the Town for whatever reason decided not to purchase the property, it would then be offered to business community developers. The State would analyze the proposals and could make a decision not to sell 5) The State could sell the property and would enter negotiations with one or more buyers. If the Town wanted to attempt to purchase at this point, it could and would have to compete with other parties. If all steps were gone through, it might take up to a year to finalize. Mr. Salomone stated the Town would know in a month or two if the State was going to go to Step Two but were under no obligation to communicate to the Town at that point.

Mayor Woods asked what the environmental issues were and Mr. Salomone indicated he did not know but would get some information when the analysis was completed. There have been some buildings

demolished and were occupied for many years with heavy use and could not speculate on what the State had done to clean up the property.

Councilor Bottalico asked if the State could sell or give away the property without doing the clean up. Mr. Salomone stated it depended on the agreement with the buyer. If the buyer wanted to take on the liability and that was taken into account with the price, it could be done. If the State did not clean it up and there were figures to indicate the cost of cleanup, it could be figured into the price.

Councilor Klett said that if \$2 million could be found for National Welding that there should be Federal funds available for Cedarcrest and the Town should encourage the State to remediate and sell it for \$1.

Councilor Borjeson commented the Town Council had a fiduciary responsibility to ensure the Town was adequately represented and to do what was in the best interest of the Town. He said at the last meeting they needed more information before proceeding and was glad for the information Mr. Salomone provided. He felt the Council acted in the best interests of the Town and to compare the \$2 million for National Welding was comparing apples to oranges.

Councilor Nagel asked what prompted the State to again go through the process and Mr. Salomone indicated the first time it was unsuccessful and because of budget concerns the State could 1) determine alternate uses for the property and build on it again or 2) dispose of the property, make a profit and put the money into an account to help balance the budget. Councilor Nagel asked if the buildings could be renovated, and Mr. Salomone said they were very large, old and would be a big project to renovate.

Councilor DeIBuono stated the reason for asking at the last meeting to waive the rules was to request information the Council wanted, to have a discussion and not to make a decision on anything since the Council did not have enough information and still did not. She was interested in discussing the property further especially in light of the 20/20 plan since the property was specifically mentioned. Mr. Salomone said it was an exciting opportunity and large parcel of land (over 80 acres).

Councilor Klett stated she had heard that about a year ago the State was going to put their IT headquarters at the location and did not know what happened to that idea. Mr. Salomone commented that Mr. Brecher was very good at researching information with State agencies and the property would be high on his radar.

Mayor Woods said that all the State representatives were looking into the property and would try to secure the property for Newington at an affordable price.

#### **B. Award Bid: Senior and Disabled Center Roof Contract (action requested)**

Councilor Castelle explained that three contractors had presented bids but only one provided costs within the range of \$805,500. The contractor's base bid was \$700,500, to make the project ADA compatible \$18,500 was added along with design fees of \$25,500, hazardous material abatement \$21,500, and contingency money in the amount of \$39,500. The committee was unanimous and pleased with the design MDM presented since it included all the enhancements the Town wanted. He also stated there was a bid protest that he would be happy to answer any questions about.

Councilor Bottalico asked why the contingency was only 5.5% when the amount was usually around 10%. Councilor Castelle commented that since there was not extensive renovation and the contractor allowed for more than the expected amount of damage to decking it was determined the 5.5% was adequate. Councilor Bottalico said it seemed as though the Town was back to normal pricing and there were no deals. Mr. Salomone indicated he was correct about the pricing since cost of commodities like structural steel, roofing material and other building materials had gone way up but labor costs had stayed about the same.

Councilor Klett asked about the specifics of the bid protest since she did not recall this happening in the past. Councilor Castelle said there were two items- 1) it was alleged that MDM did not have a DAS pre-qualification vendor certificate in general construction. The way the RFP was worded, it did not state the contractor had to have it but only a certificate in roofing and masonry. The sub-contractor has all the needed certificates for the project. 2) it was alleged that MDM was licensed only as a home construction

contractor and not as a roofer. This was not true since there is not a license for roofing but only a DAS certificate.

Mayor Woods asked for a motion to waive the rules so a vote could be taken. Councilor Klett asked for a five minute recess before taking a vote. The meeting went into recess at 8:15 p.m. and reconvened at 8:20 p.m.

Councilor Nagel stated due to the tight timeframe the roof would be completed before the bad weather set it but the canopy might not be.

Councilor Borjeson moved to waive the rules to allow a vote on the bid for the Senior and Disabled Center Roof Contract. The motion was seconded by Councilor Borjeson and the motion passed 9 – 0.

Councilor Nagel moved the following:

**RESOLVED:**

**That the Newington Town Council, pursuant to Chapter 8, Article X, Project Building Committees, of the Newington Code of Ordinances; and upon the recommendation of the Senior and Disabled Center Roof Replacement Project Building Committee; hereby accepts the bid of MDM Engineering of Quinebaug, Connecticut for project construction services for the Senior Center Roof Replacement Project, for the fee of \$719,000, including alternates.**

Councilor Cohen seconded the motion and the motion passed 9 – 0.

**C. Collective Bargaining – AFSCME Contract**

John Salomone said the Town and the union reached a tentative agreement about a month ago which then had to be ratified by the union membership and the final step would be approval by the Town Council. The union affirmed the contract on September 14. He said it was a four year contract dating back to 2012 with wage increases of 2% each year. The cost of the contract would be partially offset by cost sharing of insurance that each employee would pay. The Town was able to establish a work schedule other than Monday – Friday, which was a change for the union. Over the life of the contract it would be phased in for one – two people to work Tuesday – Saturday which would allow the Town to have someone, working straight time, to prepare fields, do clean up, etc. on a weekend. Mr. Salomone stated the union had withdrawn its labor complaint which would save \$40k that would have had to be spent along with half of the arbitrator's fee. He said the meal allowance would be increased for employees who worked extended hours and there would now be a tool allowance for mechanics, who owned their own equipment. The Town also offered a long term disability policy to an engineering person.

Mr. Salomone commented that in addition to savings the Town would also see the parks in better shape over the life of the contract. The Town would be able to hire seasonal employees for a period of 180 days instead of the 120 days, which would allow them to work from April – September during the period of time where the parks were intensely used. He indicated there was an explanation of their responsibilities in the Council packet and assured the union they would not be used to take overtime away from permanent employees.

Mr. Salomone stated another issue addressed was abuse of sick time. Most of the employees did not abuse this but there were a certain percentage that did. The new contract gave more flexibility to allow abuse to be addressed but was very general. If the Town saw a pattern of abuse, they could bring the employee in to discuss and it could lead to discipline.

Councilor Borjeson commended Mr. Salomone on his actions during the bargaining process, Ken Plumb, and all the AFSCME employees who did fabulous work. It was a long term process and the union voted for the contract because they knew it was fair.

Councilor Bottalico asked if the Tuesday-Saturday schedule was for one or two employees and if they were new employees. Mr. Salomone stated it could be up to two employees the first year and the

employees had already been hired with the stipulation their schedule could change. He said that if one was sick, the other would cover for the employee. Councilor Bottalico asked about the size of lawn mowers the seasonal employees would be allowed to use, and Mr. Salomone explained they had reached a compromise on that issue. The lawn mower blades to be used would be within two inches of the size he wanted originally, which was a little smaller than the employees were used to. He said the present equipment could be altered to avoid having to buy new equipment.

Councilor Klett thanked the Town Manager for his hard work at negotiating the current contract. She stated she was concerned about the vagueness of describing the pattern of abuse of sick time. Mr. Salomone said that he could have been very specific about the pattern or could have made it fairly loose and be aggressive on his part to have the union prove there was no pattern. He chose to go with the second option because he wanted to have flexibility in the process. Councilor Klett felt it was important to ensure consistency and have a policy in place to identify and describe a pattern of abuse. The policy would ensure everyone was treated equally.

Councilor DelBuono also thanked Mr. Salomone for his hard work during the negotiations. She wanted the public to know the Town Council did not take part in any of the negotiations but were kept informed of the progress. There were passions on both sides of the negotiations and was happy with the process and glad that it worked.

Mayor Woods agreed with Councilor DelBuono that there were passions on both sides as evidenced by the phone calls he received or the people who would stop him in Town. He stated the process worked and it was important to remind everyone that there would be no layoffs of Town employees. Mayor Woods commended Mr. Salomone on the way he handled the negotiations, put the Town and union in good positions and hopefully trust was established on both sides.

Mr. Salomone indicated there would be a resolution for the Council to vote on at the next meeting in October.

#### **D. Administrative Group Salaries**

John Salomone stated last year since there was no agreement on the contract, he asked the Council to approve the administrative employees' increase, which it did. He wanted to combine the two increases this year and proposed a 2% increase to the administrative group. An evaluation process will be established beginning this year for all administrative employees. He and Jamie had worked hard on the implementation and had the software and procedures to begin in October. Mr. Salomone indicated that in the April budget there would be a line item for variable raises based on range and merit.

Councilor Borjeson felt since the process was being done with administrative employees the Town should have negotiations with the union as well. There should be no across the board 2% increase for all employees he said and hoped it could be implemented in the future.

Councilor Klett asked if any thought had been given to review of all pay grades within the Town. She indicated it had been a long time since a review had been done and it was important that all people be treated fairly. Mr. Salomone said this was important and was something that took a lot of time. He said that possibly someone would need to be hired to do a survey of all the surrounding towns, and determine the correct ranges for each pay grade. Mr. Salomone felt the cost to hire someone might be around \$15-20k.

Councilor Bottalico asked if Mr. Salomone would work with the 2% increase for next year or would he go higher than that. Mr. Salomone said it would be a range, the average would be 2%, and outstanding would be above that. If a person was below average, they would possibly get less than 2% or no raise. Councilor Bottalico asked if the Council would see individual raises and Mr. Salomone indicated it was a delicate situation and he would try to be sensitive to it. Councilor Bottalico stated it was not fair to have a 2% increase across the board increase since it was not true everyone was doing a good job.

Councilor Cohen stated that over the years the Council did vote on an average increase and those who excelled got a little more and those who did not, got a little less but the Council never voted on an individual basis.

## **E. Discussion: Town Attorney Legal Opinion**

Attorney Boorman was asked his opinion regarding the vote taken by the Town Hall Renovation Committee by the two Park and Rec Department representatives. Councilor Bottalico indicated he did not feel they should have voted on the issue of picking the architect even though it would not have changed the result. He stated they were allowed to vote on site selection, building size and configuration, and relocation. Councilor Bottalico did not feel the picking of an architect fell under those conditions. Attorney Boorman was asked to interpret when the representatives could vote but nothing specific. His opinion gave general guidelines on when they could vote and did not deal with specific questions relative to previous meetings. Councilor Bottalico felt only elected officials should have been allowed to vote on the spending of the Town money and was against putting the Park and Rec representatives on the Committee and thought the resolution was written to disallow them a vote..

Attorney Boorman explained his opinion and said the Committee did not spend money but made recommendations to the Council who had the power to vote the money. He said that the contract discussed Town Hall renovations and new Community Center, and was part of the architect contract and therefore, the representatives should have been included in the vote. Since both items were included in the language and the architect would discuss site selection for both facilities as well as the size and relocation of facilities Attorney Boorman felt the representatives could vote on the selection.

Councilor Bottalico stated since the resolution specifically stated when the representatives could vote, he disagreed with Attorney Boorman since the architect did not fall under the three areas mentioned.

Councilor McBride stated the Committee was not a political body and all worked together. In the selection of picking an architect they talked about what would go into the buildings, conceptual ideas, what could be done with the building and the vision for the process if selected. Councilor McBride agreed with Attorney Boorman since the entire meeting involved site selection, relocation, etc. the representatives should have been able to vote.

Councilor Castelle agreed with Councilor McBride and indicated the architects' presentations were all about site, reconfiguration and building size.

Councilor Bottalico stated that the representatives could not vote on Town Hall and disagreed with Attorney Boorman. He said that when they were added to the Committee, he wanted to ensure the Park and Rec representatives could only vote on that complex and not Town Hall. Councilor Bottalico felt that they would now be able to vote on matters concerning Town Hall. Attorney Boorman said that the items were intertwined and if the resolution included language that pertained only to Town Hall, his opinion did not say the representatives would vote on that. Councilor Cohen said that the two members should have voted since it involved a separate building and if something concerned Town Hall itself, they would not have a vote. She saw no problem with them voting on the architect.

Councilor DelBuono thanked Attorney Boorman but said her concern was that when the resolution was written, she felt that the representatives would have a vote when the site was actually selected and not when an architect was hired who would have input into site selection.

## **VIII. RESIGNATIONS AND APPOINTMENTS**

### **A. Constable**

#### **1. Accept Resignation of A. Neal Forte**

Councilor DelBuono moved the following:

### **RESOLVED:**

**That the Newington Town Council hereby accepts the resignation of A. Neal Forte from his position as Constable, effective September 1, 2013 in accordance with a communication received September 10, 2013.**

Councilor DeBuono indicated the reason he was resigning was a potential conflict of interest since he was recently elected to be Chairman of the Republican Town Committee.

The motion was seconded by Councilor Nagel and the motion was approved 9 – 0.

**IX. TAX REFUNDS**

Councilor Castelle moved the following:

**RESOLVED:**

**That property tax refunds in the amount of \$2,405.93 are hereby approved in the individual amounts and for those named on the "Requests for Refund of an Overpayment of Taxes," certified by the Revenue Collector, a list of which is attached to this resolution.**

Councilor Borjeson seconded the motion and the motion passed 9 – 0.

**X. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

**A. Regular meeting: 9/10/13**

Councilor Cohen stated there was a clarification regarding the discussion on the basketball event with money earned for graduates and a separate item was the idea of Human Services looking at possibly having a fundraiser to take up a shortfall. This was separate from the basketball event and in the minutes she thought they were mentioned together.

Councilor Klett mentioned that under Public Participation the second paragraph should include the name of Gary Bolles, under the fourth paragraph the name should read Gary Byron and the last paragraph should read Keith Trott. She also stated that under Remarks By Councilors it should read in the second paragraph one piece of equipment and not two.

Councilor Cohen made a motion to accept the amended minutes of September 10, 2013 and was seconded by Councilor McBride. The motion passed 9 – 0.

**XI. WRITTEN/ORAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE TOWN MANAGER, OTHER TOWN AGENCIES AND OFFICIALS, OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES AND OFFICIALS AND THE PUBLIC**

None

**XII. COUNCIL LIAISON/COMMITTEE REPORTS**

Councilor McBride said the Town Hall Renovation had not met since they were waiting for the architect to get back to them with more information.

**XIII. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – IN GENERAL**

Gail Budrejko, 21 Isabelle Terrace: She wanted to thank the members of the Council who were willing to entertain discussion on the Cedarcrest property. Mrs. Budrejko said they realized the need to be proactive and with the size of the property how it would be used would have either a positive or negative effect on the Town. She requested vigilance and awareness on the issue and said it was vital to determine how it fit into the 20/20 plan of the Town. The environmental impact was unknown at the present time but the magnitude of the situation would depend on how the buyer planned to use the property. If the property were to be developed, it would be a significant factor but if the property was left for open space, perhaps the environmental issues would not be that big a challenge.

Dan Dinunzio, 153 Superior Avenue (phone call): He stated that by 2030 the citizens over the age of 60 would increase by 30% and people would not be able to afford the tax increases at the current rate. Mr. Dinunzio commented the Mayor ran with the promise not to raise taxes, however, the mill rate has increased from \$32.64 to \$33.23. He indicated the rainy day fund was at \$16.7 million and the current fund was at \$14.1 million. He wanted the Mayor to not make promises he could not keep in the future. Mr. Dinunzio indicated the National Welding site was given \$2 million in grant money after the busway became a reality. He said there was no clear picture for the marketing and development of the area and wondered what the State's long term plans were and the potential impact on the Towns the busway ran through.

Madeline Kenny, 53 Crestview Drive: She stated that the Council meeting was not the place for politics and felt Mr. Dinunzio's phone call was nothing more than commercialism for his run for Town Council. She wanted to thank all the members who worked on the Senior Center renovations and the efforts were appreciated.

#### **XIV. REMARKS BY COUNCILORS**

Councilor Borjeson congratulated the Mayor on his restraint on what was political assassination and the phone call by Mr. Dinunzio was a political witch hunt and should not be included under public participation. He felt the Republicans should have gone through the ethics process and not directly to the State Attorney's office.

Councilor DelBuono was angry that she was being told there was an ethics form in place when it was requested. She stated she had emails from an employee stating she did not have the form and after consulting with the Town Manager's office was told there was no form. At that time the Councilor was told what steps should be taken. She stated the ordinance stated a specific form had to be used to issue a complaint and she would not go against the ordinance.

Councilor Klett wanted to state again that there was nothing that she had stated publicly or privately that she would not be willing to swear to as the truth.

Councilor McBride commented that this was a sad time and after four years on the Council left the meetings shaking his head. After receipt of the letter from the State Attorney's office the matter should be put to rest. He stated he was glad there was so much support for the Senior Center roof from not only committee members but members and volunteers of the Center.

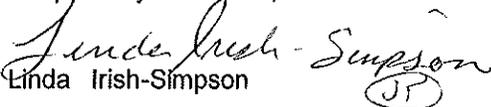
Councilor Castelle said he hoped the conversations continued with regard to Alumni Road and Cedar Street redesign since he thought often about possible accidents along Alumni Road. He thanked Mrs. Budrejko for bringing up the Cedarcrest property, which led to an interesting and productive discussion.

Councilor Bottalico stated he heard a lot at the meeting from people who did not have the facts and said he had all the information which he could give to anyone who called him. He commented he felt there was something wrong and it would come out. The Mayor agreed with him that it would come out and was disappointed with the continued attacks even after the State Attorney's letter.

#### **XV. ADJOURNMENT**

Councilor Borjeson moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:50 p.m. and was seconded by Councilor Castelle. The motion passed 9 – 0.

Respectfully Submitted,

  
Linda Irish-Simpson

Linda Irish-Simpson  
Clerk of the Council

## OPEN LETTER TO NEWINGTON RESIDENTS

On Friday September 13th, Neil Forte, and the Republican Town Committee, took out a paid advertisement to make personal, unfounded, false and slanderous allegations against my company, Stonehedge Landscaping and me. Shame on them! I should have been surprised. I wasn't. This is the kind of dirty politicking that seems to be everywhere. The allegations accused me and Stonehedge of serious criminal activity and of unfair dealings with the Town. Mr. Forte, claiming he had no other choice, turned the matter over to the State's Attorney. I can now say that *the State's Attorney's office has informed me that it received the complaint on August 8<sup>th</sup>; investigated; and closed the investigation because it found there had been no criminal violations.* In other words, contrary to Mr. Forte and the Republican Town Committee, there has been no bid tampering and no contract steering.

Not only were the claims of criminal activity false, but also the advertisement contained a number of other false statements. Mr. Forte says he didn't go to the Ethics Commission because there were no forms. Not true! There is a form available in the Town Manager's office. He didn't go because it would not have served his political purpose. The Ethics Commission deliberations are confidential, unless it finds probable cause. That would have provided no campaign fodder. He wanted these naked allegations out there in the public prior to the election and assumed they would not be found untrue in time to matter.

What else is untrue? There is no Charter provision preventing public officials from having business dealings with the Town. The Code of Ethics sets out rules to be followed by the Town employees when dealing with the elected officials doing business with the Town. Through our company, my brother and I have provided services to the Town for more than 30 years. We have been actively involved in the Town government during much of that time. By alleging that we have received preferential treatment, Mr. Forte and the Republican Town committee is impugning the reputations of, at least three Town Managers, two Finance Directors; two School Superintendents; three Parks & Recreation Department Supervisors; one Purchasing Agent and two Business Managers of the Board of Education, who found it to be in the Town's interests to do business with us.

The Town of Newington has an Ethics Code and bid and purchasing guidelines. Those are followed and administered by honest, hardworking and dedicated professionals who have now been accused of conspiring with me and my company to defraud the Town. No campaign should be so important as to justify maligning the honesty and character of so many. Local business people should not be afraid to serve the community on boards and commissions because they might be accused of improper dealings. I have a family and a business, as does my brother. We give of our time without seeking compensation or favoritism. We should not be the targets of personal attacks. I am proud of my record and will run on it. Fair criticism is justified. False personal attacks are not!