



John L. Salomone
Town Manager

TOWN OF NEWINGTON

131 CEDAR STREET
NEWINGTON, CONNECTICUT 06111

MAYOR JEFF WRIGHT

Minutes – Public Hearing

Newington Town Council

March 15, 2010

Mayor Wright called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM in the Council Chambers of the Newington Town Hall.

I PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

II ROLL CALL

Councilors Present:

Councilor Banach
Councilor Casasanta
Councilor Cohen
Councilor Lenares
Councilor McBride
Councilor Nasinnyk
Mayor Wright

Councilors Absent

Councilor Nagel

Staff Present

John Salomone, Town Manager
Dr. Collins, Superintendent of Schools
Dr. Schumann, Asst. Superintendent of Schools
Lou Jachimowicz, Business Manager – Board of Education
Ann Harter, Finance Director
Lisa Rydecki, Deputy Finance Director
Jaime Trevethan, Exec. Asst. to the Town Manager
Mary Richard, Council Clerk

III PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – ON AGENDA

Jay Bergman, 49 Crown Ridge –As a Professor of History at Central CT State University in New Britain – states that it is in his roll as CCSU faculty member to appeal to you to reduce the cuts to the budget of the Lucy Robbins Wells Library specifically those reducing the number of hours the Library will be open. There are three reasons these cuts should be restored. One, many students at CCSU work either full time or part time while pursuing their degree. The only time they can use the CCSU Library is in the evening, but University libraries like ours sometime eliminate hours for example, i.e. vacation periods during the summer. As a result town libraries are often the only ones many students can get to, to do research for papers, take out needed books, to access data bases that are only available in libraries or just to use the computers if they don't own one. Second, students at CCSU who use the library have limited time, and for this reason it is imperative that they know their way around a library before they come to college. Using the library affectively requires knowledge that only trained librarians can provide and the best way for students to gain this knowledge before they come to college is by using their town library while in middle school or high school. So for this reason the hours that Lucy Robbins Wells Library is open should not be reduced.

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Third, it seems indisputable that to function effectively in today's society requires both literary and mathematical literacy. Libraries such as ours enable people not just students but persons of all ages and all walks in life to acquire this literacy. It seems that a good citizen in a democracy is an informed citizen and the information in need is accessible only in town libraries like ours. For this reason, I urge you not to reduce the hours at the Lucy Robbins Wells Library.

Anita Wilson, 278 Connecticut Avenue – an active member of the Lucy Robbins Wells Library and has been for many years. She said that they have always worked to increase library hours. She remembers when we fought to add Saturdays in the summers to the schedule and fought to add Sundays during school hours to the schedule and had to first demonstrate that if the Library was open on Sunday, people would come. Cutting the Library hours seems like serious regression. The Library is the one service in Town that is available to every citizen of Newington, regardless of age, education, occupation or finances. Because of our current economic situation it is being used more than ever. Newington citizens, whether unemployed, under employed or just being cautious about their spending have cancelled their home internet connections, have stopped purchasing books and CDs have stopped renting DVDs, limited their travel and as a result have visited the Library to fill all these needs. Especially evident are those seeking jobs. They spend hours in the Library benefiting from the programs provided specifically for the unemployed and underemployed using the Library computers and using guidance from the knowledgeable staff. The Library is a very busy place. You may feel that due to the economy Newington cannot afford to maintain Library services at the current level. In fact, we cannot afford not to. For all that it provides our citizens it is probably the best investment of tax dollars possible.

Natalie Harbeson, 319 Lloyd Street - has been a Newington resident for nearly 30 years. The first building she entered besides her home was the Lucy Robbins Wells Library, becoming her home away from home. She stated that as a single mother trying to raise two kids she supplemented her income by using the Library in that she could borrow books, helped the children with reading problems, listen to music, borrow movies, go to programs both educational and entertaining and it was a refuge for us on hot Saturdays in the summer when we had no air conditioning, but the Library did. She is positive that people are using the Library for these same reasons. She is the President of the Friends of the Lucy Robbins Wells Library and in that capacity, she's at the Library a lot. While there she listens to conversations where people have stopped subscribing to the internet and are using the Library searching for jobs. If the hours are cut, we cut services. Too many people are working six jobs like her daughter trying to make it. The only hours she can use the Library is Sunday. Sundays are essential. If anything we should be increasing the hours, not cutting them back. She urges the Council to restore all the budget cuts and if anything, find money to add more.

David Korpf, 55 Coles Avenue – states as an eighth grader who loves a good book he says that closing the Library on a Saturday is the worst possible choice to make. He is aware that it has been cut for the summer reading projects which is not acceptable, which one of the best time for the kids to go out and read. As a student of Mrs. Joyce Miller, she encourages students to read and sometime she doesn't have the book we're looking for and most times the Library does. Workers are sometimes working five days a week, leaving the only time to get to the Library is on Saturday. The Library is already closed on Sundays in the summer, and that's one day less we can get to the Library. Busy people like himself, at camp five days a week, Saturday he goes to the Library, looks for music, find a good book, search the internet, talk with friends and all this my parents pay in taxes. Perhaps, if you have to cut hours, consider a week day, not a Saturday. It's important to remember that people who may not have access to huge book stores can get what they need at the Library which is important for helping kids especially who don't have the opportunity read over the summer. Saturday is the best choice for students who want to read. He asks that the Council consider other choices.

Lawrence LeBel, 40 Woodsedge Drive – reduction of hours, closing the Library at any time is clearly short sighted for the Town Council to even consider. While perhaps saving a few dollars does a disservice to the taxpayers and the customer base who use the Library, which is the fourth busiest library in the State of Connecticut. Further he states cutting hours during the week puts a strain on other town facilities for meetings and programs in the various rooms within the other facilities as well as the staff, i.e. custodians at a higher wage scale. Generally reducing or eliminating costs is a good idea, particularly in this economy, but the resources that the Library provides need to be accessible to all it's customer base. He asked how many times does a student leave doing a report to the last moment on Sunday. With the proposed Library closure on Saturdays and/or Sundays you make a short sighted decision with the expectation that the students will actually get a clue and plan ahead so they can do that report while within the reduced hours. He stated that having just stopped at the Library, he saw at the reference desk a homework assignment folder for the staff to help the students. As a member of a family who has supported the Town through donations, as well as volunteer services as well as professional service to the Town, he will have a difficult time explaining to his Mom who has had many years on the Library

board, and being a listed contributor on the Bronze Plaque at the Library that the Town Council did not feel that the Library was important enough to appropriately and fully fund all hours.

Patty Foley, 51 Crown Ridge – speaks on behalf of the Lucy Wells Robbins Library and our life learning center. She stated that this is a hearing about cutting the budget of \$28,000 from the Library, she suggested we do some other numbers. What does the number 412,000 mean? It's the number of items that were borrowed from the Library last year. Books, audios, DVDs, magazine. This year looks like we're going to meet 470,000 items. She stated this doesn't count the virtual Library or the meeting rooms and seminars and lectures that are held there but there because we have hours. Also, the number 245,000, the number of residents who walked through the front door last year. That number continues to grow. As a business she said that she uses the Library for a lot of business purposes along with many other business owners and looks at the bottom line. She asked what does this expenditure generate for our Town people. It translates to a lot of value. Just in the book circulation alone, that generates more than \$8,000,000 of value to each of us in Town. By closing our Library any number of hours, we lock up this valued resource and make it unavailable to residents and by locking the life learning center it just doesn't make sense. She suggested going over to the Library and count 700 people who enter every day. They borrow 1,200 items every day. She holds up 2 cents and out of every tax dollar 1.7 cents goes to our Library and I think we could find how not to cut the budget. She strongly recommended and urge you to keep the budget in tact for the Library as mentioned, it is an amazing resource and amazing place for all of us. Thank you.

Brian Wood, 51 Standard Street – grew up in the Town of Newington and remembers being taken to the Library thru the school year and in the summer time when my parents who were both working were able to take me. When he married it was a decision of himself and his wife to move back to the Town, and one of the major reasons was the Library. It was an asset nearby that other towns did not have, a jewel. And now he brings his son, when he was young and now is in high school, and with hours that he works and other parents who work second or third shift it sometimes is difficult to bring the children when the Library is open. Having the Library open longer hours and different times makes it very helpful for parents to being the children and use the assets that are available to all of us.

Audrey Schuler, 163 Eddy Lane - thinks the Library should be open on weekends because a lot of kids go to the Library on weekends with projects they have to do, like one she had on Colonial Times and she had to go the Library and took a lot of books because a lot parents can't take the children on week days because of their jobs so the weekends are important.

Anne Sousa & Nick Sousa, 26 Hall Street – Ms. Sousa states that one of the reasons she and her family decided to move to Newington was because of the Library. Her husband worked at the Library when he was a teenager and now Nick, her son is asking when he might work at the Library. She said that this is the best Library in the State. It offers so many events and programs for all of her children, music, bugs, chocolate, bakeoffs, CDs, DVDs and in this time when families are making difficult decisions because the finances are tight it seems outrageous that you want to cut the Library hours on Saturday, which is a key time. She also states that we have the best Librarian. If not for them, the time they take to speak with my children about literature, about authors, about many things where they can explore a world of ideas. This is a big community center where we can all go and share our ideas. Nick said that the Library is a safe place to go during the weekends, if they have no place to go or things to do they're teenagers, with no plans or sports or school or work and have no place to go. The Library offers a great opportunity for kids to go , relax, hang out with their friends, read books, listen to music, use the internet and it would be shame to cut this from the weekends.

Sally Katz, 41 Cortland Way – is here to ask the Council to reinstate the budget for the Library but also as a challenge to all. She is the Director of Facilities at Trinity College and understands the challenges of balancing a budget and understands that it's time to look back at that budget to make the hard decisions, to look at every expenditure. One of those she states that there is one key point that has not been made, and that is when looking at the budget as a whole and for education this Library is a part of our education system and allows people like myself who have been fortunate enough to graduate from college and graduate school to continue our education, through books, CDs, videos and other services the Library offers. This allows everyone living in this Town to participate and understand what life in Newington is like. Ms Katz has lived in Newington for five years but when I go to the Library she sees the one place in Town that crosses socioeconomic boundaries. Senior Citizens, young adults, mid life adults, children all using the Library. There is no other place in Town where that kind of interaction takes place. She considers living in Newington a safe Town because people have things to do and are not the influences that exist in other town. We promote education, literacy, being a good community citizens and any time at the Library you'll see that those values are promoted in this Town. This is so important for the life and vitality of the Town, especially moving forward with renovations. When new businesses come to Town they can see the full

picture, the people, the business, the public services and they see the Library, the Town Hall and get the whole picture. This is one Town and the wellness of the Town depends on all of us and depends on places like the Library. So she urges to reconsider and sharpen the pencils and look at the budget and once again reinstate the budget.

David Muir, 64 Wakeley Road – was able to go to school in Newington for his whole life. When he married he brought someone from the dark side of Wethersfield to Newington, and was able to do so. He believe Newington has bragging rights and that is in the development of our children, be it our Little League, sports, football and well as the Library. Being the proud father of a five year old and a three year old daughter, he told his daughter, in the middle of a temper tantrum, if she does well he would take her somewhere she would want to go. She said, “like the Library or Stew Leonards”. He said that they have made so many new friends through the Library, and is concerned that these things may never come back. In these hard times, if we can keep something valuable, having grown up in the 80’s when things were a lot safer in the world. These days he says he wouldn’t allow his children to go to the end of his street, not because it’s not a safe Town, but not a safe world. He believe that the Library offers a safe haven for our children and the bragging rights of the Lucy Robbins Wells Library.

Iris Larsson, 41 Buckingham Street – she doesn’t want to sound redundant but Patty Foley had covered just about all the facts. As a member of the Board of Trustees, as Treasurer and also a friend of the Library, lived in Town way too long and considers our Library to be top notch. She is requesting is to the Council, those of you who have not visited the Library recently, it is at my invitation personally to have you come in and see what our Library does. She offers a tour and even a cup of coffee if you’d like to come. The invitation is extended by Ms. Larsson but the Staff, Board of Trustees and the Friends would also like to have come and see what you’re providing to the Town and is also requesting that you reinstate that \$ 28,000.

Judy Igielski, 23 Old Musket Drive – also a member of the Board of Trustees at the Library and seconded Iris’s invitation. Our staff and director are the reasons why we are so proud of our Library. She mentioned that the Library is able to reach residents from age 6 months to 12,000 months plus. There is a special program that supports families with special needs and it links them with professionals who come to our building once a week with a program of two or three hours long. It changes as their needs change and this is an outreach program not available anywhere else. When visiting our Library, go to the teen area which is reaching an age group which is sometimes overlooked, not on purpose but as children become teenagers they know what to do and need area to be and our teen section has just been redone. Partly due to the donations from the Friends group they work very actively to help us provide things over and above what the budget covers. Closing on Saturdays and Sundays we would be severely limiting the time needed to prepare for the two major fund raisers which are the book sales in November and May. But that time is needed to meet and work together. We are reaching home bound people now, through the mail system and books are chosen and mailed to someone who cannot get to the Library and an envelope is provided to return the items. She hopes that the \$28,000 will be put back which is desperately needed, That would help a lot of people, those with no computer, or air conditioning, not everyone has access to the books etc, please help us to continue providing that.

Maddie Kenny, 53 Crestview Drive – she stated she had gone to visit her daughter and children, and if she mentions Chevy Chase, besides the comedian, or Silver Spring Maryland, you would think of wealth a lot of affluence, and services beyond belief. Having the opportunity of going to the library in Chevy Chase with her daughter, her granddaughter and her grandson and was amazed at how small it was, with hardly any books, the children has two small tables and small chairs. Her daughter told her that the Silver Spring library has a summer program is Tuesdays at 10:45 AM they have a book reading, and repeat the same book at 11: for those who didn’t make it to the earlier showing. Ms. Kenny was appalled. She stated that our Library is a gem, with a creative staff with creative programs. She was able to participate with Henry, her dog, where students can sign up to come and read to dogs because firstly it’s fun but also any students with difficulties it is a less threatening situation. She strongly encourages replacing the money taken from the budget for the Library,

Eric Rothausser, 28 Partridge Drive – notes that the history of summer Saturdays and Sundays were added to the budget in 1997. He stated that having worked so hard to have Saturdays added to the budget, it would be so hard to add it to the budget again. The reason it was added was because of the demand for those hours, and there still remains a demand. Our usage has gone up, not only because we are in a depressed economy and free services get more attention. As many know we have a famous former member of the Library Board, Marie Dowling who often said that the Library is the best publicity that the Town has. That’s not through any small part due to the Town Council and partnership that you have with us on the Library Board, Friends of the Library and most importantly our staff. Our staff has shown that excellence does not have to break the bank. The staff has done an amazing job with a reasonable budget. Much has been said about economics recovery. He submits that

economic recovery does not happen in a vacuum, it happens in places like this and the decisions you have to make. He respectfully submits that cutting Library services and potentially the jobs going along with it is not in the best interest of economic recovery and not in the best interest of the Town. He thanks for the support that the Council has shown the Library for all these years.

Lee Blum, 117 Jeffrey Lane – has been notes as to what folks were saying and that if the Town didn't feel the need to air condition the Town Council Chambers in the middle of March, we probably wouldn't be arguing over this \$28,000. This isn't a lot of money and I think we all understand why we're talking about it this evening. The following figure will make Mayor Wright twitch. 3.03 %. If his math is correct, the \$28,000 would change the proposal that Mr. Salomone has presented by 3/100 of a percent. So the Town tax increase would be 3.03% and Mr. Salomone would dare present that proposal to the Town Council. The Town Library probably adds more to the quality of life to the Town of Newington than nearly anything, and yet we're debating \$28,000. He believes we could probably find it. If the President of the US were to come to Newington and give a speech, it would probably cost the town more than \$28,000. If a roadway were in need of serious repair that wasn't covered it would cost the Town more than \$28,000. He believe that Saturdays and Sundays for our children's benefit and for those of us who work 60 hours a week, we can probably find \$28,000 or 3/100 of a percent of a tax increase.

Dennis O'Neil, 306 Robbins Avenue – felt the need to say that the Library is very important to him and his family. The staff is an excellent, friendliest and nicest people he has ever come across. Having been involved with the teen center for 30 plus years and it still goes on a Friday night, but when he started it was for six night a week. Now it's down to a couple of hours on a Friday night. He makes the point that as the young man who spoke earlier, how important it was for him to be able to have a place to go, and he repeatedly heard the teens saying to please keep the teen center open, because they don't want to be on the street. The Library is filling a bit of the gap from the limited hours of the teen center, he has noticed the Library becoming extremely involved with adolescents and it's a happy moment to see and he hopes the Council will take a look at the big picture and take a look at \$28,000, not a whole lot of money, and try to put it back in.

Rose Lyons, 46 Elton Drive – as she listens to the \$28,000 needed to be put back into the budget, she things that the \$28,000 figure was also kicked about with the Charter Revision Referendum. Perhaps if we had thought twice about that we would have had the money for the Library today.

Budget Review – Town Manager's Proposed Budget - 2010 - 2011

John Salomone, Town Manager presented a Power Point presentation regarding the Town Manager's proposed 2010-11 budget. (Presentation attached.) After the presentation. Mayor Wright afforded the public opportunity for additional comment.

Maddie Kenny, 23 Crestview Drive - would like to request a copy of this Power Point presentation available to the public when attending the meetings. It's difficult to digest all this information.

David Korpff, 55 Coles Avenue – thanks the CIP for the \$600,000 for the new roof which had just collapsed.

Note: Peter M. Arburr, 133 Tremont Street, was not in attendance at the meeting but submitted a letter to the Council and requested that the letter be made part of the record. (Letter attached)

Seeing no further comments from the public, Mayor Wright asked for a motion to adjourn, and noted that the Town Council's Special Meeting would follow at 8:25 p.m.

**Motion by Councilor Casasanta Seconded: Councilor Nasinnyk Motion passed 8 - 0
Councilor Nagel absent**

Respectfully Submitted,

Mary Richard
Clerk of the Council