

MINUTES OF PUBLIC HEARING ON AN ORDINANCE REPEALING AN ORDINANCE REQUIRING PERMITS FOR PARADES, ASSEMBLIES, DEMONSTRATIONS AND OTHER USES OF PUBLIC PROPERTY, INCLUDING SIDEWALKS, ROADS AND PARKS, BY PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS AND GROUPS OF PRIVATE PERSONS

January 13, 1998

Council Chambers

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President Rob Bouvier called the hearing to order at 6:30 p.m.

Present were Councilors Holly Aberly-Wetstone, Rob Bouvier, Kevin Connors, Carl Donatelli, Liz Gillette, Jim O'Brien, John Shulansky and Alfred Turco. Councilor Patrick McCabe arrived at 6:35 p.m.

President Bouvier: This is a public hearing on an ordinance repealing the ordinance requiring permits for parades, assemblies, demonstrations and other uses of public property, including sidewalks, roads and parks, by private organizations and groups of private persons. Is there a sign up sheet, Mr. Alair?

Mr. Alair: Yes, there is, Mr. Mayor.

President Bouvier: The first person to sign up is Loretta Devine.

Ms. Devine: My name is Loretta Devine and my address is 57 Geneva Avenue. I oppose this ordinance because I consider it unnecessary and undemocratic. Unnecessary because we really have on the books already several laws that can be used very effectively to cope with this unfortunate situation that we have with the fur shop owners. We have laws that pertain to breach of the peace and disorderly conduct, and I imagine our Corporation Counsel could probably list a great many more so therefore, I do consider this ordinance unnecessary.

Secondly, on the idea that I have that it is undemocratic, it really focuses in on our right to assemble and secondary to, maybe not as severely but secondary on our right of free speech. On the right to assemble we should really be able to come in small groups and be able to use our public parks and our sidewalks that we really own in the last analysis. The residents through all kinds of taxes that we pay really do own our public property and we should be able to come and to use it in peace.

So those are the two reasons that I oppose this ordinance. I certainly would like to help with the furrier shop owners but perhaps the Council can think of some other way that they could be helped. Thank you.

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President Bouvier: Thank you, Ms. Devine. Domenico Genduso.

Mr. Genduso: Domenico Genduso, 80 Blue Ridge Lane, West Hartford. Mr. Mayor, members of the Town Council. The last time I talked about this one I was the only one unfortunately it was never reported in the news media what I said and I said at that time that I felt it was unconstitutional, undemocratic, and I said most of the acts of violence that those people not what a wise guy they are, they go breaking windows and stuff like that. We already have a law in the books. We don't need it but unfortunately it was the last Town Council meeting, and I hope, I want to suggest something. Next time when after the election in 1999 and this Council has the last Council meeting please don't pass an ordinance because most of the people that voted yes except some Republicans who are still here, they are not here anymore. You see, they left to you now the repeal of the ordinance. I know it don't take long but why waste fifteen or twenty minutes. Finish with the old Council. Do something else. Talk among yourselves and say good-bye. It has been nice to work with you but don't pass an ordinance the last time that you are here especially when you know you will not be here. Thank you very much for listening. I agree with the resolution to completely destroy it at the time I said it.

President Bouvier: Thank you, Mr. Genduso. Linda French.

Ms. French: Linda French, 61 Ridgewood Road, West Hartford, speaking on behalf of the business community both for the Chamber of Commerce and for the West Hartford Center Business Association. I believe that the businesses in the Center and in other areas appreciated the intent which was to support business when you passed this quickly at the last minute in the previous Council. However, I share some of the concerns about freedom of speech, all of the freedoms and I would be more than happy to see it repealed on one condition that you don't just say okay, and forget your business community.

This is not a fur issue. This is a meat issue, a milk issue, many different components. I have no objection to anyone who wishes to protest or to support an issue as long as I am neither threatened, sworn at, or in any other way insulted and I have been all three of those. I know that there are probably hundreds of others who have been. In recent weeks since you passed the ordinance the groups that have been protesting have not been doing those things and that is fine. If people wish to protest quietly, to speak to people, to hand out their information, no one, we may not like it but we can't object to it. That is their right but to have someone stand and swear at me into my face as a citizen I object to that strenuously and I would ask that if

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you do decide not to continue with this ordinance that you make a commitment to yourselves, to the town at large and to the business community that this will not be ignored whether it be through police or Corporation Counsel or whatever.

West Hartford Center is the shining star for West Hartford at the moment and if you let it be defaced you will damage this entire town. So please, please do remember those components whatever your decision is this evening. Thank you.

President Bouvier: Thank you, Mrs. French. Does anybody else like to speak to this ordinance? If not, any comment? If not, I will close the public hearing.

The hearing adjourned at 6:40 p.m.

Norma W. Cronin  
Town Clerk/Council Clerk