

MINUTES OF PUBLIC HEARING ON A PETITION FROM MICHAEL PARKER,
CHIEF OF FIRE SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE TOWN OF WEST
HARTFORD REQUESTING CHANGE OF ZONE FROM RESIDENCE PARKING
(RP) TO ONE FAMILY RESIDENCE (R-6) FOR PROPERTY SITUATED ON
THE NORTHEAST CORNER OF ARUNDEL ROAD AND BRACE ROAD KNOWN AS
20 BRACE ROAD.

May 28, 1991 Council Chambers 1251

President Sandy F. Klebanoff called the hearing to order at 7:15 p.m.

Present were Councilors Albert Lenge sitting for Linda I. French, Tom Johnson, Sandy Klebanoff, Charles R. Matties, Madeline S. McKernan, Larry Price, Fran Reynolds and Andy Schatz. Councilor Joseph A. O'Brien was absent.

President Klebanoff: Mr. Feldman, does the administration have a presentation?

Barry M. Feldman, Town Manager: Madam Mayor, we do have slides for this and perhaps you would like to see these.

Donald R. Foster, Town Planner: This is the property right at the corner of Brace Road and Arundel, Arundel being off to the left of the photograph. I was standing on the sidewalk along Brace Road and I just moved back across Brace and we are looking at the intersection of Brace and Arundel. The property in question is over to the right, a one family home at the corner of Brace and Arundel immediately across from the subject property. Now we move just a little further down Arundel, the existing parking lot for the 22,000 square foot lot being requested for re-zoning on the right, a one family home neighborhood. Here we are rotating all the way around and we are looking down Brace to the west and over to the town parking lot, coming a little further around and seeing the central, our town parking facilities and then rotating a little further to the existing fire house which is immediately across the street from the property in question.

Here we have come down into kind of the middle of the property, the northern segment. This is about the point where the property is split by zone boundary. The northern segment of the property, about one third of it is currently zoned R-6, the lower portion of it, back to Brace Road has the RP zone on it. That is the area that is proposed to be changed from RP to R-6.

The lot as you are all aware is used for permit parking, long term parking. That would be lost in the eventual development of the property. There is an interesting aspect that we weren't aware of after we started looking at the

property a little closer. You see the gentleman walking at about right center of the picture. He is entering a gate that goes into the YMCA that apparently we have allowed a pedestrian access to exist over a long period of time there and he was walking his way through there and we saw a number of gentlemen. Here is the gate. It is a fairly substantial issue that might come up in the site plan and development of the property at a later time.

Here we swung around the northern boundary line. We are on the lot and we are looking into the one family home immediately to the north of the property boundary and here looking from the lot down into the neighborhood. That would be it unless there are any questions.

President Klebanoff: Thank you, Mr. Foster. Is there any further information?

Mr. Foster: I would only just note your Planning Commission recommendation which I believe you have before you and it was for approval of the application. The Commission found the R-6 zone to be more appropriate and desirable for the zone in the area and the intended use of the fire station they noted that if it is an R-6 it would still necessitate a special use permit to be reviewed and approved by the Commission subsequent so there would be another level of review after the Council if you determine that this zone is appropriate in that location.

President Klebanoff: Thank you. Any questions for the administration? Mrs. McKernan.

Councilor McKernan: Just to make it clear. We are going to have three bays there now. We have two presently and that will be three and will there be anything beyond that? I don't remember.

Mr. Feldman: Madam Mayor, maybe questions like that maybe the Fire Chief would like to respond.

Councilor McKernan: Oh good. Let's get him up here.

Vice President Price: I want to know why we haven't had any bourbon dogs yet. I don't know.

Chief Michael Parker: There are three bays right there now.

President Klebanoff: Please identify yourself for the record.

Chief Parker: Mike Parker, Fire Chief for the glorious town of West Hartford, Connecticut, a town resident for 36 years. I have a little seniority I believe.

President Klebanoff: I didn't know you were that old.

Chief Parker: Yes, the present station does have three bays right now.

Councilor McKernan: And you will have three?

Chief Parker: Three bays at the new station, hopefully, that will face Brace Road. The business side of the station that faces Arundel will be residential in nature. We have had three meetings with the neighborhood and their main concern is what is going to be done with the old station. We are going to have a fourth meeting with the neighborhood. We invited them here tonight. We'll invite them for all the meetings and then once we have a model made up we will invite them in for hopefully their, without too much criticism. We want them to be a big part of what is in that neighborhood and on that street facing Arundel and Brace Road but we will, any concerns they have had we've sat down and talked to them on at our meetings.

President Klebanoff: Well, now that you are at the podium, did you have a presentation you wanted to make or are you just going to answer questions.

President Klebanoff: Well, in this instance the town is on both sides.

Chief Parker: No, I thought Don was doing pretty good. We have a rendition. Did you want to see the plot plan or the site plan?

Councilor McKernan: The Public Safety Committee saw that.

President Klebanoff: Are there any questions for the Chief or the administration? Mr. Matties.

Councilor Matties: Probably more for the administration, why did we not establish this as an SDD as opposed to what we are doing so that we could establish what is happening there and lock it in?

President Klebanoff: Mr. Feldman.

Mr. Feldman: Madam Mayor, we could. There is nothing that prevents it. We saw it strictly as just a zone change. We can certainly come back to the appropriate committee and deal with all the landscaping, site improvements and its relationship, the building's relationship to the neighborhood if the Public Safety Committee so wishes but just to keep it simpler we just chose a zone change as opposed to the SDD but nothing stops the SDD.

President Klebanoff: Mr. Matties.

Councilor Matties: It would seem to me it would give the neighborhood more assurance that it is locked in for that particular use and that's it.

Mr. Feldman: Madam Mayor, I have to say Mr. Matties that I think Michael has made real significant effort at reaching out to the neighborhood, not that the SDD wouldn't be appreciated except that he has been wide open as far as what can be done and should be done.

Councilor Matties: I'm kind of at a loss now as to our ability to change this to an SDD without a lot of wrangling.

President Klebanoff: Perhaps Mrs. Wilder could explain what the process would be if there were a desire on the part of the Council to do that.

Marjorie Wilder, Corporation Counsel: Madam Mayor, I'm thinking as I'm talking.

President Klebanoff: We can see the wheels going.

Mrs. Wilder: Clearly, the administration would have to come back to you with the detailed kind of plans that a special development district would require and certainly as the Town Manager indicated they would be willing to do that. Exactly the process now if you were to change the zone now or to perhaps seek withdrawal or delay your decision on the zone change, because you would have to change the zone anyway, the underlying zone would have to be a residential zone. Perhaps if the Council chooses could then consider the SDD and the zone change at the same time. An application for an SDD would have to be made.

President Klebanoff: And that would not be able to be heard until the fall.

Mrs. Wilder: Right.

President Klebanoff: And what would that do to the timetable on this?

Mr. Feldman: Madam Mayor, that is a significant problem and there is a timing issue that is connected with the whole thing. There is an architect that has been retained. They are beginning now to work on the plans. Our hope is to begin construction by the fall of this year, have the building up and occupied I would hope by summer of 92 or late summer of 92. Again, I don't think it is fair for me to tell you that it is not within the realm of possibility if that is your prerogative and decision that you want an SDD but we will be as open, as communicative and as informative as we can to the neighborhood and I hope that would be sufficient to allay

any fears that you might have about what we can or can't do with the site.

President Klebanoff: Are there further questions? Mrs. McKernan.

Councilor McKernan: Are any other fire houses SDD's?

Mr. Feldman: No, I don't believe so.

Mr. Foster: None of them are. Madam Mayor, we have only had a few modifications to fire houses over my tenure anyway and they have been for minor additions and so on. Each of those has been regulated through the special use permit vehicle with the Planning Commission having hearings on Fire Station #5...

Vice President Price: No hot tubs and skylights or anything like that. Actually, I just saw Ron sneaking up in front. Can you help us with anything on this Ron?

Ronald Van Winkle, Director Community Services: Well, one of the reasons we decided to go special use permit. As we met with the neighborhood so many times and there was virtually no opposition from the neighborhood, they weren't concerned about what we were trying to do. They like the Fire Department for some reason, like them as neighbors. The approach of the plan is to give them a structure that fits as a house in that neighborhood and the fire house on Brace Road. They like that approach and in order to try to build a fire house in a reasonable amount of time so that we can get the new equipment in there we went special use permit. It didn't call, the neighborhood didn't call out or there was virtually no opposition from the neighborhood. There was wonderful support so we just opted to take what was an easier road but with the special use permit on public buildings the TPZ does have significant control over what that building will be on that site. In fact you can be more lenient through a special development district approach than they can be through the special use permit.

President Klebanoff: Mr. Matties.

Councilor Matties: Well, that was part of my thinking. Rather than bounce to a couple of different boards or commissions if we did it all on one but I don't want to create a delay. I don't mean for this to be a controversial thing. I was looking for the simplest, most direct and final way of doing it and apparently it would create too much delay to go the other route anyway.

President Klebanoff: Are there further questions? Do you wish to add anything at this time, Chief?

Public Hearing
May 28, 1991
20 Brace Road

6.

Chief Parker: No, I just want to thank you.

President Klebanoff: Is there a sign up sheet?

Councilor Johnson: No, Madam Mayor.

President Klebanoff: Is there any member of the public who wishes to address us who did not sign up? Yes, Mr. Gianni.

Mr. Gianni: Joe Gianni, 41 Wells Road. I come to you tonight in order to open the communicative discussion that Mr. Foster I believe alluded to with the opening. I am a newly elected member of the Board of the YMCA and it was communicated to me through our Chairman Randy Hayes that some of the Y's concerns as an abutting neighbor to this property just neither a proposal in favor or against of the fire station. As a matter of fact they have received communication from the fire station regarding this but just some concerns that should be addressed early on in the process and that members of the Y would be interested in this whole process as it takes part. The Y owns the red house on Arundel which is also behind the property so they are abutting neighbors on two sides of this property. Some concerns they have there would be if there are any safety lighting or any kind of special lighting which would be placed on the fire station that they are not excessive as to shine into the windows or entirely light up the property of that home, that residential home. And also as was pointed out in the pictures that opening in the fence has been there for about four to five years and has been a clear and open publicly used walkway as access from the parking lot to the Y and that is currently used by elderly members and younger members. They find it a means of convenience for accessing the Y instead of going all the way around Brace and into Main Street.

Just as a point, if the Council could just see to give some consideration in the planning out of the fire station to the current foot traffic which does take place predominantly for the safety of the participants of the Y who would use that means of now getting onto the parking on Brace Road, the parking lots there and as I understand the plan of the fire station is not to have any trucks back into the fire station. There will be one means of exiting and one means of entering so it will always be a flowing type of situation. So if that walkway is to stay or if that path is to stay just maybe perhaps a sidewalk or some consideration for the safety. Thank you.

President Klebanoff: Thank you. Are there questions for Mr. Gianni? If not, I'm sure the administration will heed your concerns as the project goes forward, thank you. Are there further questions or comments? Hearing none, I will close the public hearing.

Public Hearing
May 28, 1991
20 Brace Road

The hearing adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Norma W. Cronin
Recording Secretary

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