

Robert J. Cook

2018 APR 30 A 8:46

TOWN COUNCIL CHAMBERS

APRIL 25, 2018

TOWN CLERK
EAST HARTFORD

SPECIAL MEETING/PLACES OF ASSEMBLY

PRESENT Chair Richard F. Kehoe, Majority Leader Ram Aberasturia, Minority Leader Esther B. Clarke, Councillors Marc I. Weinberg, Shelby J. Brown (arrived 7:17p.m.), Patricia Harmon and Caroline Torres

ABSENT Vice Chair Linda A. Russo and Councillor Joseph R. Carlson

Chair Kehoe called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. He announced the exit locations in accordance with Connecticut General Statutes §29-381, after which the Council joined him in the pledge of allegiance.

Chair Kehoe explained that the origins of this special meeting started when the Town Council was discussing the town's purchase of Blessed Sacrament Church to use as a Senior Center. Attending the February 13th meeting, several citizens commented on the difficulties that religious organizations have in finding properties in East Hartford that are suitable for a place of worship. The Chair further explained that – pursuant to state law – while the Town Council has no authority over the Planning & Zoning Commission, the Council felt an obligation to follow up these comments with discussion on what the town's zoning policies are for places of worship.

Jeff Cormier, Town Planner, led a PowerPoint presentation that (1) outlined the duties and responsibilities of the Planning & Zoning Commission; (2) reviewed the zoning map with the Council – highlighting the zones where places of worship are allowed; (3) explained the process for submitting an application to be approved by the Planning & Zoning Commission for a House of Worship; and (4) showed the differences in application type, zoning districts and criteria for places of worship when East Hartford is compared to South Windsor, Windsor, Manchester and Glastonbury, noting that East Hartford has a significant percentage of properties where a place of worship could be located with a special permit approval. Mr. Cormier also presented to the Council a list of 28 tax exempt Places of Assembly (Churches) as determined by the town's Assessor.

Gregg Grew, Director, Inspections & Permits Department and Zoning Enforcement Official, explained that state statutes dictate that a denial of an application from the Planning & Zoning Commission goes directly to the Superior Court.

At this point, the Chair opened the meeting up for public comment. The following citizens came forward:

Jon Petoskey, 147 Jessica Drive, pastor to the Pentecostals of Greater Hartford, spoke to (1) the lack of dialogue between the town and faith-based groups; (2) the short notice of this meeting; (3) the possibility of renting town and/or Board of Education facilities for use by religious organizations; (4) a way to allow a religious organization to explore the

possibility of applying for a Special Permit in a particular area before expending an excess amount of funds; and (4) the hope for a positive partnership with East Hartford.

Susan Kniep, 50 Olde Roberts Street, (1) spoke to her lawsuit against the town regarding the Mt. Carmel issue and the Zoning Board of Appeals; and (2) stated that if there is the intent to change the zoning regulations as it affects residential zones, homeowners should be aware of this prior to that change.

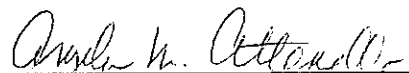
Rev. Leonel Sanabria, 306 Tolland Street, Pastor of Iglesia Fuente de Salvacion Misionera, stated that he has not had a good experience dealing with the town – that he and his church have not been embraced by the town. Additionally, he thought that there was a zoning issue on his property. Since there is pending litigation on this issue, Gregg Grew could only briefly explain that there are state and local building code compliance issues on his property, not zoning violations.

Donald Sugalski, 1736 Main Street, believes that currently the town has enough tax-exempt property (including churches) and is concerned about the financial burden to East Hartford taxpayers if more property is designated tax-exempt.

The Chair reiterated that the intent of this meeting was informational and educational only. The Town Council is not aware of, nor advocating for, any change in existing zoning ordinances related to places of worship.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION By Esther Clarke
 seconded by Caroline Torres
 to **adjourn** (8:30 p.m.)
 Motion carried 7/0.

Attest 
 Angela M. Attenello
 Town Council Clerk