

My Five Minutes of Time Last Night Did Not Allow For a Complete Reading of the Following Please Include This Statement in the Public Record:

May 8, 2012

Good evening, I'm Arthur Smith, Mulberry Road, Mansfield Center. In learning about local politics, talking and research is necessary. One comment from Mayor Patterson was telling, she stated that the voiced discord from opposition in town was a reflection of the national partisan debate during an election year. I don't agree. I'm here this evening to state in this public forum why I believe that the proposed budget should be rejected. But let me begin by giving my bona fides as a registered Democrat. At the age of eighteen, the first year 18 year olds were allowed to vote I was the youngest democrat in state history working at the election polls. Now in late middle age, many years later, I have never voted outside of the Democratic Party, not even when sorely tempted by Ralph Nader. At the national level, I am a strong supporter of President Obama, and when I volunteer to teach civics to those wanting to become U.S. Citizens, it is his picture that hangs behind me as an inspiration. You don't have to come from money to succeed. I strongly endorse Chris Murphy for Senator, and fully support Governor Malloy, and his valiant efforts at educational reform in the state. As a Democratic, I believe in strong unions, but admire Governor Malloy's courage in taking on that formidable constituency for educational reform.

In short, I am not here to reject the Town Council's proposed budget because of my opposition to the Democratic Party, the party of the majority here in Mansfield. I reject the proposed budget because it fails to reconcile the demands of the current economy,

given economic forecasting of rising unemployment numbers and foreclosures, with prudent spending. Equally important to me is the failure of the Town Council to acknowledge and account for the “hidden costs” associated with its decisions. The Storrs Center project is a fait accompli of financial commitment, an investment with years’ worth of tax payer dollars promised for its gambled success. We will have to wait and see if revenue is ever generated for the town. A roll of the dice for future returns, but what we do know is that now we are being asked to pay for 5.88 additional full-time salaried town employee positions as hidden costs of that throw. Moreover, despite apologies made by our Town Manager Matthew Hart for his lack of attention to detail, the parking garage for that project will still be a million dollars over budget. On a similar note, lack of attention to detail may have also necessitated that the Department of Labor assess whether the Storrs Center construction hired undocumented workers at that site. Was it also a failure to pay attention to details when the Town Council supported Town Manager Hart’s request to hire the current Town Attorney’s wife to also represent the interests of the Town of Mansfield? There is no discussion on record that she, Susan Johnson, is the state representation for Windham. And this is at a critical time when the water supply interests of our town, as the university continues to expand, may differ from the interests of her constituency. Why wasn’t this discussed? Water is a known major concern to informed residents. Growth has hidden costs and they may not all be knowable, but prudent governance demands assessing the risks of the foreseeable. Working with the University is essential to the town’s economic well being, but local resident interests must be vigorously protected by the Town Council.

Also, it is worthy of note that millions of state dollars for the development of bio-research technology park are being allocated here at a time when Senator Blumenthal is proposing legislation, at the national level, the GAIN (Generating Antibiotic Incentives Now) Act, to extend patents rights to a ten year period to promote pharmaceutical investment in anti-virus research. Will our town host genetic biological research on H5N1 (bird flu) studies in the 70% occupancy of the private labs at this newly constructed site? What hidden costs to the town will be associated with maintaining the safety in our town, once voted as the safest in the country? The outbreaks of E. coli from the Yale laboratories give us a history lesson on the costs of the unforeseen. Where in the public record can we see that the Town Council has looked into the foreseeable risks to the Town from this university/state investment? Are the interests of local residents being protected?

Will numerous construction projects occurring at the same time allow sufficient attention to detail? The new schools project is too much of an undertaking for the present. Best guess pricing per square foot leaves many following the discussions between the Lawrence Associates architects and Town Council members in dismay. In Town Hall meeting discussion, Council Member Shapiro could not get any agreement with them that his estimate of a one dollar per square foot cost for the new schools versus an over a two dollar per square foot for renovations was a true reflection of the difference in construction costs between the two options. Basic construction cost knowledge, not just the speculative hidden costs assessments, seems elusive to many on the Town Council. Too much is going on too soon for our town. Will the construction of two new elementary schools increase the costs of special education? Larger schools, studies have

found, have a direct negative impact on parent satisfaction and employee retention. Will there be a hidden cost of increased special education litigation? Where in the public record has this issue been discussed? Will others in Mansfield feel the loss, as those living by Storrs Center, of the ethos that vanishes when tunnel vision decisions are made?

At this time of unsurpassed expansion and expense, the Town Manager has suggested ways in which public discourse can be limited in Town Hall meetings, and Town Council member Kochenburger has even taken to publicly rebuking, by name, an individual who questioned spending practices and then ascribed to her vindictive motivation for her actions. This is not a time to give up 1st Amendment rights. We value our ability to express our views; it should not take a legal action for Mansfield residents to establish that anti-war works of art shouldn't be censored in our Community Center. And it shouldn't take legal action to establish that those violating our current Ethics Ordinance, in place since 1995, can not vote to make it inapplicable to them. Commitment to high standards in Town Ethics should not be weakened by abdicating responsibility over Board of Education actions on non-educational matters. Conflicts of interest should not be narrowed defined to financial interests alone; language that prohibits the advancement of personal interests must be retained in the code for the broadest protection to the Mansfield community.

There is bipartisan agreement here, of that I am sure, that good government is in the best interest of all the residents of Mansfield. And I am a proud watchdog Democrat that still believes in the bumper sticker- think globally and act locally.

Thank you.