

## Special Board of Selectmen's Meeting – July 30, 2018 (Approved Minutes)

Lizz Milardo called the meeting to order at 6:30 P.M. at the Firehouse, 439 Saybrook Road, Haddam CT 06438

Larry Maggi and Melissa Schlag were present.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Maggi made a motion to move Public Comment to #6, move the minutes to #3, Appointments to #4 and new business to #5. No discussion, Approved unanimously.

**Approval of Minutes:** Schlag made a motion to approve the July 16, 2018 minutes. No discussion. Approved unanimously.

### **Appointments:**

Maggi made a motion to approve the hiring of Rachel Francisco as the Part-time Land Use Admin Coordinator. There was a brief discussion. Milardo and Maggi: Yay Schlag abstained.

### **New Business:**

**Town Lawn Care:** Maggi made a motion to accept the bid from IPM in the amount of \$21,500.00 for a two (2) year contract. There was a brief discussion, approved unanimously.

**Public Comment: Mario, Wiess Albert Road** Commented that what Schlag did, kneeling to the flag is disrespectful and commented that she lacks common sense.

**Pablo Arroyo, 131 Wig Hill Road:** Commented that he respects Schlag's right to protest, take a knee, lay down, burn the flag and suggested she do that on her own time and to stop disrespecting his flag, his America and stated he is a combat veteran who lost 18 of 24 men in a suicide bombing.

**Bob, Higganum:** Stated he is a Vietnam Veteran, his father was a WWII Combat Veteran. He is 100% disabled due to Agent Orange. He stated he sings the National Anthem with anger and sorrow. He fought to defend all rights and it shouldn't be taken away from Schlag.

**John Perry, Thayer Road, Higganum: He read a letter to Selectman Schlag:** *I am appalled by your taking a knee at the Pledge of Allegiance at the Selectmen's meeting. My 97 year old father in law is very alert, mobile and agile. He fought in the Battle of the Bulge in WWII. He would be very disturbed by your lack of love and respect for America as exhibited by your actions. Elections have consequences. President Donald Trump won. Get over it. On two (2) occasions I didn't vote for President Obama, but I didn't sulk and burn an American Flag. I accepted the legal outcome of an election. If you feel your hatred for President Trump precludes you from properly representing the citizens of Haddam, then you should immediately resign. I urge you to do so. Thank you.*

**Arthur Abbot, Candlewood Hill Road:** Commented that protesting the President is not part of the job duties of the Selectman. He stated he was going to take a knee to the Haddam Bulletin, where Schlag is a staff member, he will no longer do business with anyone who advertises with them and urged other residents to do the same. God Bless America.

**Chrissy Amenta, Beaver Meadow Road:** Commented that she was unaware Schlag was a staff member of the Haddam Bulletin. She also commented that Schlag's sorrow for Trump should be on her own time and she express how offended she was by Schlag's actions.

**Clifford Potter, North Branford:** Commented that he drove all the way to Haddam because Schlag has offended him. What Schlag has done is inappropriate. She has put a black eye on Haddam and is insulting our Country.

**Rick, 63 Weiss Road, Haddam:** Commented that he is very proud to say he voted for Schlag every time she was on the ballot. He agrees with her position and is happy she took this right to protest and is glad she represents the town. He also commented that the closing of Haddam Elementary School is a big decision and urges the three (3) Selectmen to work together on the decision on what action to take with the school closing.

**Kate Wessling, Gunger Hill Road, Higganum:** Commented that she respects Schlag's right to peacefully protest and should not be met with harassment.

**Ryder Page, Parker Hill Road, Higganum:** He is 13 years old. He commented that he does not agree with the way this protest has gone. He does not want to be represented by someone who will take a knee during our Pledge of Allegiance. He plans to serve in the Navy to protect our Flag and our Country.

**Sean Moriarty, Little Fawn Trail, Higganum:** Commented that he is a Veteran and Police Officer and supports the Constitution, First Amendment. He commented that kneeling during the Pledge has been happening by two (2) Republicans on the Board of Education for over a year and no one made a big deal about it until a Democrat did so. **Milardo** commented that this is not a Democrat or Republican issue.

**Tom Levine:** Commented that when you do these kinds of things as a Politician it makes the town look really bad. He stated he agrees with the right to free speech but not when you are representing us, the town people.

**Richie Anderson, Cromwell CT:** Commented that he is there to speak on behalf of those who can no longer speak. He wonders, what would Schlag do at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and if that was the time to protest? He spoke and wondered for the thousands who never came home, what they would think. They all defended Schlag's rights. He asked Schlag "What was she thinking when she kneeled down to the sacred Pledge of Allegiance and the sacred flag, what those people died for, gives you the right to disrespect them?"

**Calvin, Meriden CT:** Commented that the first thing he learned in elementary school was to respect the flag. He also commented that you don't turn your back on the flag. He spent 6 years in the Navy on an air craft carrier. He also commented that she should be out of office for her disrespect to the flag.

**John Sibley, Saybrook Road, Haddam:** Commented that he is an Army Veteran and served as an elected official. He asked Schlag "Did you kneel when President Obama sent a plane full of cash to the Iranians saying death to America?" **Schlag:** No I did not, sir.

**Tanja Moriarty, Little Fawn Train, Higganum:** Commented that if you are going to rag Schlag then you also need to rag the two Republican's on the Board of Education who do the same.

**Maggi, Lori:** Commented that she is a resident, business owner and member of committee's in Town and has many family members who made the ultimate sacrifice for our country and that's what the flag means to her. Maggi respects Schlag's First Amendment right and asks everybody, Republican, Democrat, Independent, Unaffiliated, on the Board of Ed etc... if you want to protest something peacefully then protest at some other time in some other way. Maggi respectfully asks Schlag to resign.

**Amenta, Beaver Meadow Road:** Commented that she sees troopers standing in the audience and no one knows what their party affiliation is. They are not clapping or booing or hissing or taking a knee. They are just doing their job and would like Schlag to do the same.

**Paul White, 249 Plains Road:** Commented that he believes in the First Amendment at all times not just part of the time. He believes the First Amendment allows you to have Free Political

speech anywhere, anytime. Whether he agrees or not does not matter, Schlag has the right to do so, especially as a political figure to convey a political message.

**Andy Munson, Hidden Lake:** Commented that he was once a selectman in Haddam, there is a time and place for everything. He disagrees with her point but it is her right to do so, but not on Selectmen's time.

**Maggi, Lori, Fireworks Home & Hearth:** Commented that her business does not sell "Don't Schlag the Flag" shirts. But does sell flags for \$2.00 and all money will go to Haddam Veterans.

**Karen Blashik, East Haddam:** Commented she owns a business and property in Haddam. She stated she agrees with the First Amendment and commented that when she was growing up there was respect and respect for the flag.

**Timothy Morrell, Higganum:** Commented that his Father was in WWII and Brother in Vietnam. Everybody in this room has the right to express how they feel and it is Schlag's right to express hers.

**Calvin Potter, North Branford:** Commented that Schlag is bothered by some action and she gets to kneel, by Schlag not honoring our flag offends me. Schlag makes him sad and hurts his feelings and that doesn't bother her. The very thing she is trying to get across - she's only creating a bigger mess.

**Megan Peterson, Haddam:** Commented that free speech is not an absolute right like all of the rights contained in the US constitution. The Supreme Court has made rulings on time, place and manner, based on safety concerns and other matters that the Supreme court and deemed important.

**Sean Moriarty, Little Fawn Trail, Higganum:** Commented that it doesn't make any sense saying "I believe in the First Amendment but..."

**Sal Mangali:** Commented that the reason he agrees with Schlag because it was in response to President Trumps meeting in Helsinki and could not believe Trump was doing this on the world stage. He continues to applaud Schlag. Thank you Melissa.

**Chip Frey, Crabapple Corner, Haddam:** Commented that there are consequences to actions. We are all taught respect to not use racial slurs, but it's our First Amendment Right to do so and there are consequences to those actions.

**Sharon Challenger, Higganum:** Thanked the State Police and Veterans for their service. She commented that the Flag is a symbol of our Constitution. She also commented that Schlag has not saluted the Flag in many years and no one has called her out on that. We need to get things done in our town and in our Country and we all need to respect one another.

**Melissa Schlag:** "With Liberty and Justice for all" is the last line of the Pledge of Allegiance. She commented that while there are injustices in the country she will kneel with both knees. What has developed in Haddam over the past five (5) days is overwhelming hate. If people don't want to bring their businesses here or shop here it's because of the hate they saw on Facebook and social media and Fox and Friends. I have a right to kneel, you have a right to dislike it. She stated her father was in the Air Force and family members prior to her also served in the military. Schlag means no disrespect to any Veteran and suggested we need to continue this conversation because if we don't the hate will fester. Schlag thanked all residents for coming out to the meeting.

**Discussion of Purchase of Haddam Elementary:** The Board still does not have information from the Board of Education regarding the cost of operating Haddam Elementary. There were comments at the last meeting that we rehab the building, East Haddam just did this with one of their schools and it cost 15 million dollars. The Board of Education is moving forward with closing the school. I have until August 15<sup>th</sup> to let the Board know of our decision and can request more time if needed. The laws that dictate Regional Schools are Connecticut State Statute laws.

They have nothing to do with the town. It is a separate regulatory board that makes those decisions.

**Jessica Eason, Haddam:** Asked if the decision to close the school is final. **Milardo:** The Board of Education told me they were going forward with the closing.

**Ed Munster, Haddam:** Commented that residents in Haddam look at that school as an icon in town and suggested the Board of Selectmen or Board of Education put a codicil on the property, maintain the façade of the building.

**Jessica Eason, Haddam:** Commented that she chose a house in Haddam because of Haddam Elementary School and would hope that the school be used as a Community Center.

**Mary Alice Hughes, Haddam Neck:** Commented that she is on the Parks & Recreation Commission and would like this issue to go to referendum. There is a lot of opportunity for the community to utilize that space.

**Bill Bowles, Higganum:** Asked if there was a price and if there was an appraisal on the building.

**Milardo:** No price and no appraisal.

It was decided that we would have a Public Hearing to discuss further.

Maggi made a motion to adjourn at 7:41 pm. No discussion. Approved unanimously.

Minutes taken by JoAnn Ricciardelli