

SB1030

3/25/11

Members of the Committee on Judiciary:

My name is Paul Rinaldi.

1. I come before you today wearing two hats, one, as an elected Councilman and the other as a citizen, resident and taxpayer here in the State of Connecticut.
2. The Watertown Planning and Zoning Commission is run, operated, and guided by State Statues and local regulation. Sadly, several lawsuits have been filed as a direct result of their decisions in the past few years.
3. These lawsuits have raised some serious concerns in my mind. Did the Commission act responsibly? If it did why did we lose the first two lawsuits in the courts? Not only did we lose, but the Commission was cited for abuse of power, ignoring regulations, and pre-disposition.
4. The Town Council is ultimately the highest fiscal authority in our town. Somehow I have to watch the legal fees rise astronomically to litigate land use cases. It is one thing to tell taxpayers that their money was spent on supporting a board's decisions but it's another story to explain why their money was spent to defend a commission that made poor decisions that threatened people's rights.

1. Now I'd like to speak as a citizen, resident and taxpayer.
2. This country was founded on the belief that we are a government "of the people, by the people and for the people" where each person has the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. This simply means that they have the right to defend the civil rights given to us by God and protected by our form of government.
3. If these rights are challenged or threatened they have the right to sue. By doubling or tripling damages we are using intimidation or fear tactics to not use a system that was designed to protect our rights.
4. How does anyone but a judge and our judicial system determine what is Frivolous?
5. What may seem frivolous to one person may be very important to another. On the other hand, when a Planning and Zoning Commission loses cases should they also have to pay double or triple the amount of damages.
6. We live in a time when our rights are disappearing like fireflies into a summer night. Our job as leaders is to protect people's rights, not jeopardize them. Leave the job of culpability up to the judicial system where it belongs. Let's not intimidate people or define them as frivolous but rather hold our governments' boards and commissions to a higher standard of integrity.

Thank you. God speed, I don't envy your deliberations on this matter.
Paul Rinaldi