

Public Hearing – August 07, 2008

Ordinance to exempt Fuel Efficient Vehicles (40 mpg, city) from local property tax assessment.

Present: First Selectman Woody Bliss; Selectman W. Glenn Major; Selectwoman Gayle Weinstein; Town Administrator Tom Landry; Administrative Assistant Judy DeVito.

Mr. Bliss opened the public hearing at 7:00pm

Martin Strasmore chairman on the Global Warming Committee said Connecticut is a leader in environmental regulation. In the State both Republicans and Democrats voted to make this particular ordinance possible in the Town. First, it is for the public good because if we reduce gas consumption, we lower demand. Secondly, it is an incentive for car companies to be more innovative and to give us better cars sooner. Thirdly, this will help people take some action that financially does not pay off in the short term. He said this was just a small incentive that may have an impact on how people make this decision.

Mr. Strasmore said that he saw something that showed \$21,000 to be lost in tax revenue. This amount is less than .03% of the budget. We could use solar panels to off set that cost. He said that you can argue about any form of taxation. Another argument is that you can wait for better technology.

Don Saltzman said Weston is a very small part of the global issue. Weston public policy should not be taxing the great majority of this Town to pay for a tiny little bit of 20 some odd cars. It is not cost effective to own a hybrid. If you can afford to pay \$8,000 above a gasoline engine you can well afford to pay the taxes and should not tax the large majority of people in this Town. If the Selectmen want to do something socially responsible for the people in Town save your money for where it is needed. He felt this was not good public policy.

Clem Malin said he was here to speak against the proposal. It is not energy or economically efficient and simply a subsidy to people who did something publicly, because they wanted to have car that used less gasoline. The money is already spent and we are giving them back a rebate on something they have already done. He suggested that the Selectmen postpone this until it could be a budget item.

Bob Machson said that he generally agreed with Don Saltzman. We have ordinances that favor one group over another. He asked if we could not put the \$27,000 to use to hire engineers, who could evaluate the long standing needs of the Town to find a way to reduce the energy cost in general. He would prefer that we do that.

Diedre Doran said that they have just begun to work on this. She wanted to have more conversation about this.

Hal Mathews built an energy efficient house in 1985. He said this was vested interest for a few people who have noble cause. He did not feel that this was the type of cause which we should subsidize with tax payers dollars that could be used for other causes.

Robert Schaaf spoke in opposition to the proposal. An exception for a few is a tax increase for everyone else. There was a 2006 study that the overall energy cost from dust to dust associated with various cars and came out with a price per life time mile which was the Prius at \$3.25 and the Chevrolet Tahoe \$2.94. The report concluded that the hybrid cost significantly more in overall energy cost. He said the proposal was misguided.

Margaret Wirtenberg spoke in favor of the proposal.

Martha Strange said that \$21,000 cost for the program can make a statement to the rest of the country that Weston is doing something as far as global warming. It should be a thank you for the people who have incentive to look ahead at reducing dependency on foreign oil.

Steve Goetz asked if the ordinance could include motor cycles. Mr. Bliss said the legislation is specifically directed to four wheel vehicles at this point.

At 7:37pm Mr. Bliss closed the public hearing.

Respectfully submitted

Judy M. DeVito
Administrative Assistant
Approved 11/06/08