

**June 23, 2008**

**The Town Board of the Town of Warwick held a Public Hearing for the consideration of the acquisition of the Warwick Valley Community Center, said public hearing was held on Monday, June 23, 2008 at the Warwick Valley Community Center, 11 Hamilton Avenue, Village of Warwick. Supervisor Sweeton opened the public hearing at 7:00 p.m.**

**ATTENDANCE: Supervisor Michael Sweeton  
Councilman Floyd DeAngelo  
Councilman Leonard DeBuck  
Councilman James Gerstner  
Councilman Mickey Shuback**

**Town Attorney, John Hicks**

**LEGAL NOTICE: The Clerk read the legal notice, which was duly published in the Warwick Valley Dispatch on June 18, 2008. (Copy of this legal notice is printed at the end of these minutes.)**

**Supervisor Sweeton – Before we open for public comment we are going to have three short presentations and I'd like to ask Dr. Skip Rosner to come forward from the Community Center Board of Directors.**

**Dr. Ira "Skip" Rosner – President, Warwick Valley Community Center – I thank you all for coming and participating in the public hearing that has to do with our Community Center proposal for the town to take over this building and property. I don't know if you can see it, but the lawn in the front has miraculously changed literally within this last week and there are two organizations that I would like to thank for that. Councilman DeBuck graciously donated the sod to the Community Center and we appreciate that. The Bellvale Community, between the adults and the kids, did all the labor putting it down and to that community we say thank you. Our proposal is to ask the Town of Warwick to increase their support by purchasing the building and maintaining the building grounds. There already are a couple of models within the Town of Warwick the first being the Warwick Senior Center behind Town Hall and the second is the Animal Shelter. Both of these properties the town owns and maintains, but the organizations that are housed within run the programs and services that they provide. I would like the Town Board and the people here to think of this as an addition of what the town already provides for us. The difference in what we are asking and why we are asking is this building would be a year round park where things other than sports and recreation can take place. All kinds of entertainment can go on here, arts and cultural events, educational programs can take place here and it's a meeting place, a place where organizations can come and hold their meetings, put on a forum or discussion pertaining to something important going on in the town. That is the idea for a community center; a perfect place for people to get together and express their opinions and in addition it's a place where prevention can go on. For prevention I mean it's a place for our children and teenagers to come to a safe, secure and supervised place where positive things go on and help keep them away from the negative**

aspects that are in our society today. What this is not and I'm stressing this is not going to be a Town of Warwick function. We are not asking the town to go into the community center business. The entire operation, the activities, all of our employees, the funds raised and the programs are all going to be run and controlled by the non-for-profit Community Center agency. Again, this is the same type of situation that is happening at the Senior Center and the Animal Shelter. Our organization still has to go out and raise funds and we still have to pay our employees, so that part is not going to change. Currently some of the programs that we have for our youth are Small Fry Pre-school for three and four year olds. We have an after school program for kindergarten through fifth grade youth and vision classes and our teen center, which is on the floor below us and is getting close to being finished with the renovations that we are doing on it. I certainly invite you as part of the open house to go down there and see, it's not finished but you will get an idea of what it is going to be like. For our young people we provide the teaching of self awareness and self esteem as all the adults here know that the greater we can raise the self esteem of our youth the less likely they are going to get involved with the negative pressures, such as peer pressure, so again we are trying to reinforce positive activities. We have school, recreational activities, we have alternative activities supporting positive development in a noncompetitive situation. Translated that means all of our children can't be the stars of the football, baseball or basketball team, so this is a place where they can come and find new interests or pursue interests that they already have, again in a positive environment and in a noncompetitive situation. We provide youth and adults movies and they are in this very room with our sound and projection system. We have concerts, talent enrichment programs, fitness and health programs, resource and informational programs all in a central place for the entire Town of Warwick. Going back to the teen center that is just the artists rendering of what it's going to be. It's going to be very enticing for the teens to come here. There is going to be games, computers, movies, study areas, snack facilities and again positive programming and a place where they can meet and greet their friends, a place where they can feel comfortable, a place where they can learn some responsibility by being on the youth advisory board as well. I think once this is done it's going to be a place that teens are really going to want to go. By the Town Board increasing our support it will help us expand the types of programming for people of all different ages, expand our hours so there will be more evening events, more weekend functions, they'll help modernize the facilities and it will help us obtain the goal of becoming a seven day a week operation, so no matter what day of the week there'll be some place to go and something to do within the Town of Warwick. It will also help us increase our outreach to all parts of the town meaning we'll be in collaboration with the villages we can have activities, concerts and dances that can not only be held here, but in Greenwood Lake, Florida or Pine Island. If we join this with the local bus service it will make it easier for teens and adults to get from one area of the town to another. It will give us an opportunity to get to know people from other areas of the town. We are also going to have a town wide desk calendar, so you can check with us to see if anything big is going on in Warwick, Greenwood Lake or Pine Island that particular weekend. We encourage and provide assistance with joint grant applications. Grant funding agencies do like we did with applications that come from different entities that pool together to try to make something better for the area, so we would help with that collaboration between the villages and the not-for-profit agencies. By supporting this proposal we'll have more programs town wide, we'll help bring together

people from all parts of the town and we'll be closer to the goal of a full time Community Center.

**Carol Chichester – Orange County Youth Bureau – I'm going to take it back through a little history between the years of 1980 to 1985 this building was standing here vacant. They hired me as a program coordinator to come in and develop some programs for young people and they received a grant from the Orange County Youth Bureau. We had a ping pong table, installed a telephone, I found a chair and I sat down and began to do some work and every room in this building was filled with young people. That was 28 years ago. For 28 years the Orange County Youth Bureau along with the United Way of Orange County have made an investment in young people who have been coming here on a daily basis. To see the improvements that have been made. Each director who brought some of their skills and expertise and talent and we've seen this grow and now under Karen's leadership it's become a model in Orange County. Everywhere I go around the county, I have 25 not-for-profit organizations and every municipal recreation that receives funding through the Youth Bureau and everywhere I visit when I sit down and talk with folks especially young folks, I would ask what would you like to see in your community? We'd love a building, a place that is safe that we could call our own, we could help develop programs and we could just be kids in a safe nurturing environment. You've got this gem here in the Town of Warwick. It doesn't exist in other municipalities in Orange County, so I hope you all really; really appreciate what it's become. The town taking it over is like the next step and it's an absolutely marvelous idea, so I hope you do support it. I do want to recognize one person who had a vision many years ago that the Town of Warwick could utilize a school building that is sitting there and make it a community center. John Hicks you were that visionary. You made it happen. Thousands of kids have walked through these doors and have exited to become very productive good human beings and that's what we want for all of our kids, so support the endeavor and thanks for the invitation.**

**Deborah Holton-Smith & Teresa Robertson – We want to thank many people for making this evening possible and Skip has thanked many already, so there are a few others we need to mention, of course the Bellvale Community for their singing, which is phenomenal, EDC Landscaping and the FFA with Nancy Colgan from the High School planted all that you see in the front. We have beautiful flowers outside from the Orange County Correctional Facility Greenhouse and the Generals Garden, the UPS Chester Package Center and the Martini family. After this meeting is over you are going to see some wandering actors and actresses from our high school from the MCC Actor Training School with Donna Haley. We also want to thank Mr. DeLeo from the Warwick High School Drama Club because he let us raid his closet. I would like to thank the Vision Community Church who meet here on Sunday's and the French Country Kitchen and the Orange County Youth Bureau. We have to thank the Councilman and Mr. Sweeton for coming here because I know you believe this is an important place. Last but not least, Karen Thomas who is the Executive Director of the Warwick Valley Community Center. This place is well cared for and loved by her staff and it's amazing what a few number of people can do and we want to thank you very much for having us.**

**Supervisor Sweeton – The plan is to keep the hearing open for public comment through the rest of the summer. The Town isn't going to make any decision until it gets near budget time, which is mid-September. We are going to keep the hearing open for public comment and we'll encourage people through the media to solicit comments and send it to us. The Town has been asked to take ownership of this building and the land for a \$1. It has approximately \$43,000 remaining on its mortgage, which the town would assume. We have done an estimate of what it would cost us to run the maintenance of this building that includes utilities, that also includes hiring a person that would split their time between this building and other town facilities. We estimated that cost to run including paying the remainder of the mortgage to about \$119,000 a year. We have already budgeted for a part-time maintenance person position, which is currently vacant at about \$13,500 a year and the town currently contributes \$32,700 to the Community Center. Those contributions would go to offset the \$119,000 resulting in a cost of about \$73,570 on a yearly basis. That is our nearest estimate that we could make at this point. That equates to about \$.14 per thousand of assessed value. If anybody knows what your assessed value is you can do the math, but the number we use is the average home is assessed at \$50,000 in the Town of Warwick resulting in a yearly cost for the average home about \$7.00 to \$7.50 a year. There are some variables. Utility costs continue to rise, we all know that. Employee benefit costs rise, so those are the issues to be addressed, but that is as close as we can come to what the cost would be for the town in the first year of operation of the center.**

**Lou Marquet – Resident, Village of Warwick – My property adjoins the Community Center and I've been there for 19 years and I've been involved in the center improvements for 18 years off and on helping various people here. I think it really doesn't take a lot of consideration to look at what we're going to get for \$43,000 or \$70,000 or \$80,000 a year to run a center. What's really going on globally is that more and more centers are happening in urban places and village places where kids can come spend some time, walk down town, meet people down town, get ice cream, come back and all those things that teens and younger people want to do. This is the closest facility that we are going to find in our community for the price and I'm proud to have been a part of it, but I want everybody to understand that there is no way that we can build this facility for 20 or 30 times the amount of money that we are going to spend.**

**Patricia McCoy – Resident, Village of Warwick – My daughter has been coming to the Community Center since she was 8 years old and it's been a wonderful resource to my family. My daughter is a counselor in training and it's a good safe place for her to be and I'd like to see my tax dollars put into this.**

**John Hicks – Resident, Village of Warwick – I have a long association with this building. I've went through 7 years of my education in this building kindergarten through sixth grade. I want to give a little history of how this Community Center started since my wife Judy and I were involved on the original board of directors for this organization. It started in 1976 when the Warwick community participated in a nationwide effort called "Town Meeting 76" where old fashion town meetings were held across the country as a part of an effort of a bicentennial year to reacquaint people with what a town meeting was like. It was a day long event and it included at the end of that day all the focus of the comments**

during the day were designed to come out with one conclusion at the end of the day and the conclusion was that Warwick needed a community center. Rather than let that idea die we organized a follow up event in September of 1976. We invited everybody in the community that was interested in participating in getting the community center going come to the follow up meeting to say, how do you do this? As a result of that meeting we decided to have it in 1977 what we called the first Bandwagon Day. I am in total support of this idea and I think it's the best investment this town can make after nearly 30 years of having this place run as a community center for the benefit of our adults and youth, but when we began this organization it was called Warwick Community Bandwagon Inc. a not-for-profit organization and this one person that was on that original board of directors who is still on the board of directors of that organization and that's Skip Rosner. If it had not been for the persistence of Skip Rosner this might not have been the wonderful facility that it is today. When we decided to have the Bandwagon Day we had it at the Warwick Valley High School and we decided to mock or give people an idea of what a community center could be all about. We subsequently decided to ask the school board if they were thinking about selling this building at one point and we had no money. The Warwick Community Bandwagon Inc. had no money, but lots of ideas. When the school board finally decided to put it up for bid the minimum bid was \$50,000. Warwick Community Bandwagon Inc., in the presence of yours truly, went to the bid and we bid \$50,000 for this building and we were the only bidder. Now we had to come up with \$50,000 and we had no idea how we were going to do it. I had happened to be having a conversation with a wonderful woman from Florida New York who's name is Marjorie Zapp. She was formally the owner of the Craft Barn on Wheeler Road in the Village of Florida. I told her we just submitted a bid for \$50,000 to buy Hamilton Avenue School and she said, "How are you going to do that?" and I said "Marjorie I have no idea. We have to come up with a \$10,000 down payment and we have to somehow come up with the other \$40,000." Marge took out her checkbook and wrote Warwick Community Bandwagon Inc. a check for \$10,000 and I said "Marge what do you want me to sign, do you want me to sign a promissory note?" and she said "No, I know that you will pay it back when you can. It's such a great idea and if I never get it back it's ok with me." She literally wrote me a check for \$10,000 on the spot. With that, I went to the school district office and said here's our down payment, which we had to come up with in 10 days or so after the bid opening. The next step was to figure out how we were going to finance the other \$40,000. Tim from the Warwick Savings Bank was on the Board of Directors as well as George Conklin who was the President of Conklin and Strong as well as many other people and we asked Tim "Will the Warwick Savings Bank give Warwick Community Bandwagon a mortgage for \$40,000, so that we can complete the purchase?" He said yes and he gave us a very favorable rate we closed on the loan and we paid the school district the \$40,000. The interesting part about this mortgage situation is, we came to signing on the mortgage and I asked Tim Dempsey, "Who would you like to have guarantee the loan? We have a number of substantial people from the community on the Board of Directors many of whom would be delighted I'm sure to guarantee the loan." Tim Dempsey the President of a community minded bank, Warwick Savings Bank said "We don't need anything but your signature." Now that is a pretty big risk to take for a bank. They had no personal guarantees for that loan. If that loan folded the Savings Bank would have been stuck with this building and they would have never gotten their \$40,000, so that is how we came up with the \$50,000 to buy this building and with the help of Carol

**Chichester and Debbie Monahan who was our first counselor here and along with Carol they began a lot of the youth programs here. There are so many people that I would like to thank and could go back those 30 years. Really it's been 32 years since all of this started, that's hard to believe, but it all began with the Town Meeting 76 and followed up in 1977 by Bandwagon.**

**Judy Hicks – Resident, Village of Warwick – Bandwagon Day was our day at the high school. Over 1200 people came to that day and it lasted all day. It included swimming and crafts and everything you could think of that might happen in a community center. What was most encouraging was there were 250 volunteers and 100 of them were teenagers. It's so great to be here and see this.**

**Steve Regan – Resident, Greenwood Lake – I'm a member of the Board and the Community Center is here and doing a wonderful thing. What this is really about is doing more. When I stop by and drop in on Karen Thomas unfortunately more than half the time we are talking about a leaky roof or a contractor that didn't show up or we're looking at bids. We have all of these wonderful ideas of what could be happening here and she's trained to take care of that and instead she's taking care of the building. What we envision is when that burden is lifted off of her and the rest of the Board this place will flower like it never has before. This is incredible to see this level of involvement and I'm sure everybody is involved in some way, nobody wandered off the street. Everybody has children here and history here and we hope we can move this forward. I have an e-mail list for all of the members of the groups here and Skip did a presentation to the villages giving them an idea and getting their support. One question was asked who uses the center and where do they come from and we don't track our programs, but I decided to track who comes to who and I got 59 responses. Twenty one had a 10990 zip code, 7 were from Greenwood Lake, 11 were from the balance of the Town of Warwick and the rest were from North Jersey, Chester, Monroe and Middletown. There are people coming here from Pine Island, Westtown and Unionville and that's what we love to see. Transportation possibly provided in the future so that we can get kids from all areas of the town here.**

**Lucia Aloï – Business owner in Warwick – With the town taking over the building would you offer services to the community that would change the physical facility such as building extensions, parking lots any of that?**

**Supervisor Sweeton – No I don't anticipate that we would have to change the building. The concept was we would enter into an agreement with the Community Center to run the programming for us. We'll continue to do what we do now, which is sponsor community development block grant improvements to the building and that could be outside amenities, inside amenities we don't know. What ever comes up to maintain the building in an up to date fashion. Does that answer your question? Because I'm not sure what you're trying to ask.**

**Lucia Aloï – That's a little vague sir. Are you going to expand the building, are you going to put some big parking lot out there? You're talking about people coming from all over.**

**Supervisor Sweeton – I don't anticipate putting a big parking lot out there, no.**

**Neil Sinclair – I'm actually the President of the Warwick Valley Rotary Club and we're very, very excited to support this particular endeavor. There are a lot of Rotarians involved in the center as well and one of the things that we like to do is things for the community. We talked for the past year on looking for something to sink our teeth into and this is what we came up with as one of the possible projects. We are very supportive of this and I think you can tell by the amount of people that are here.**

**Don Trone – Education is great, but extra curricular activities at a school or a place like this is what really rounds out our young people and as far as I'm concerned it's a very cheap investment.**

**Annie Colonna – I worked with the Warwick Valley Community Center for 10 years and I can't believe all of you guys are grown up. To piggyback Mr. Trone's comments, one of the most protected factors that you can have is kids bonding to their community and this is a place where that happens; kids bond to their community. I can't give a number, a voluntary number, of how much you save a kids life, but I know we save lives here and I know that's important and I work very hard to do that. I have now graduated and I work over at the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counsel of Orange County and I see what happens when kids aren't involved and kids don't have a place to go. I think a penny saved is a dollar earned. You don't know how much of our time was spent taking care of the building instead of taking care of the kids. Like Steve said our programs could really flower. I can't believe what we did in the 10 years I was here to make the programs grow. I can't believe what could happen once we don't have to worry about washing floors.**

**Helen Cahill – Resident, Town of Warwick – My children go to the Warwick School District. My son has spent a bit of time here in a number of programs and made wonderful friends, but I also want to say that particularly in our school district we have constant budget votes that are turned down and programs and sports that are being canceled. A place like this is needed more than ever and I don't know what weight I bare in saying that, but I'm definitely in support of what you're doing.**

**Garrett Durland – I want to speak to all these great folks who've been making this thing work over the many years. I've had the privilege to be part of the Applefest, which is a huge fundraiser for both the Community Center and the Warwick Valley Chamber of Commerce. It's been a privilege to work with Karen, Steve, Ira and Annie these many years and it's just an important fundraiser for them and you try and squeeze every dollar. I'm listening to the numbers you're talking about Mike and in my mind it's a no brainer because all that money that goes into the facility to keep it running for the programming. It's a wonderful thing for the kids in our community, so I'm in full support of it.**

**Cathy Kenney – Resident, Town of Warwick - I started coming here about 16 years ago to a mothers group and some of my dearest friends are from that time 16 years ago. This place has been great. My kids went to preschool here and have taken other courses and it's a great place and we need this and everybody will benefit.**

**Tammy Artusa – I'm also on the Board here at the Community Center only I've only been on the Board for a year, but getting back to what Steve said, Karen has put so much hard work into it; everyone does trying to maintain what's going on. I could only imagine what this place would be like if the town took it over.**

**Zack Adler – I've been going here for about 18 years and I think it's a great thing for the community and the kids. I know everybody works hard here and they deserve it.**

**John – When I first moved here in 8<sup>th</sup> grade I didn't know anyone and I started coming here to take classes and it was the first bond that I had with the community and it helped me feel a lot more connected with the community coming from out of state and not knowing anyone. I met kids from across the county and it gave me something to do on the weekends and that's a positive thing.**

**Laurie Angle – I have been coming to the Community Center for about 17 years I started out with the mothers group and not only have my children been to many events here, but I've been to many events here as well. I think it's an important community resource.**

**Linda Blake – I am a retired attorney and my husband is involved in the Community Center. I know there's property associated with this building and maybe it will give the community the opportunity to check out a venue for the skating rink and the swimming pool that this community sorely needs.**

**Don Heatly – Pastor, Vision Community Church – I want to point out what this building enables us to do especially in the lives of kids and adults in terms of service to the larger community, because this room is one of the only rooms that's available for rent in our community that can fit a substantial number of people. We have over 100 people here every week from all sections of Warwick, Pine Island, Greenwood Lake, the Village, the Town of Warwick and the surrounding communities like Chester and New Jersey as well. What this enables us to do is connect special kids like you saw before, sing . Every year they do a Christmas musical and they raise money for the Center of Missing and Exploited Children. That's something they couldn't do in the other building they used to work out of, so I'll speak on behalf of the tenants here because there's a lot of other groups that do amazing things that really connect with people. Our kids have worked with autistic kids in the community and they've helped out in the food pantry. We've been here for 7 years and love being here and we hope we can continue as a renter with the town this year. We are looking for a bigger more permanent home some day, but I know there are other groups in town that don't have that either that want to do service in the community, so this is a vital asset to our family.**

**Supervisor Sweeton – Because we want to give you an opportunity to go around the building to see some of the events that have been staged for you this evening we'll take a few more comments until 8:15 p.m. The hearing is going to remain open and you'll be able to submit written comments to Town Hall, 132 Kings Highway. You could e-mail the Town Clerk at [townclk@warwick.net](mailto:townclk@warwick.net). This hearing will remain open until September 15<sup>th</sup>.**

**Joan Tracy – My daughter is a counselor here and she started as a CIT when she was 13 years old and she’s been here for 7 years now. All I can say is it helped her self esteem go right through the roof, it has made her a better person and it has made her get an education to become a teacher herself. We talk about bonding and we can’t forget about the staff of these children here that put their time in and they work so hard and the children bond with the staff, so I think a lot should be said for the staff.**

**Dan Mack – President, Community 2000 – We function as an umbrella organization for groups that are just starting out and I see this as the bricks and mortar of that same kind of facility. This has supported us for many, many years for many of our committees, for many of our different meetings and I see this as kind of an incubator for lots of newborn community groups that are trying their wings. I support what you are asking for tonight.**

**Dr. Ira “Skip” Rosner – I want to thank everybody for coming out and giving the support that we heard, it meant a lot to us. There’s a lot of things that are planned as far as the open house and we really would like you to make yourself at home and go about the building and see what goes on at the Community Center because it’s really an amazing thing. We had our troubles, but we are getting there, so again thanks to the Town Board and thanks to all of you for coming out and we appreciate it.**

**ADJOURN: Motion Councilman Gerstner, seconded Councilman DeAngelo, that the public hearing will remain open until September 15, 2008. Motion Carried (5 ayes, 0 nays)  
8:14 p.m.  
06-23-08**

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**Marjorie Quackenbush, Town Clerk**