

This story begins In March 2019, when the Knox Town Board passed Resolution 61 to develop a policy for how to make letters written and read by residents and submitted in writing to the Town Board available to the public. It was decided that these types of items would be available as an addenda to the meeting minutes online as a separate link from the Minutes. This policy was in response to a decision made by the Town Clerk not to include a letter with the February board minutes. I had written the letter to be read at the February Board meeting since I could not attend. My letter documented the Supervisor's January explanation for his failure to comply with general municipal law section 30 and file the Town's annual financial documents with OSC within 60 days of fiscal year end (or 120 days if an extension is requested) as well as document all his prior responses as lies. He had lied to me and the Board several times since April 2018, stating that the Town was up to date and OSC was providing bad information about the Town being out of compliance.

— Brigitte McAuliffe

April Board Meeting

Supervisor Vasilios Lefkaditis made a proposal to rescind Resolution 61, stating professionalism, and that politicking, campaigning and potshots were no place for Board minutes. He stated that “we need to return a degree of respect, decorum and civility to the minutes.”

The discussion continued for several minutes and then Supervisor Vasilios Lefkaditis began to poll Councilman Barber “are you in favor of submitting every letter that gets read or submitted to the Board to the minutes” he added “via addendum or whatever fashion” (*The March resolution had not been discussing reading letters, rather making the written letters submitted to the Board easily accessible online by including a link next to the appropriate meeting minutes vs having to drive to Town Hall and request to see if any letters had been submitted in order to review them.*)

Barber responded “yes, but separate from the minutes”

Then the Supervisor turned to Councilman Barcomb asking him the following question “Earl, are you in favor of reading every letter that goes to the Town Board?” (*note the slight changes in wording*)

Barcomb “as we approved at our last, the policy at our last

Lefkaditis interrupted asking “so you don’t think some minutes shouldn’t be read?” (*again note the question shifts yet again*)

Barcomb responded that as he had proposed earlier in the evening, “If a letter a super majority felt a letter was offensive that certainly that would be a mechanism to do that.”

Lefkaditis “that’s not in the policy though”

Barcomb “no, it’s not”

Lefkaditis “as it stands, you’re ok with every letter being written & submitted to the minutes?”

Barcomb “I have not had a problem with any of the letters that have been submitted since I’ve been on the Town Board, you?

Lefkaditis “we’ll revisit that”

Pritchard “it should be up to the decision of the Board, some letters shouldn’t be in there, but granted we haven’t had one. But we don’t know what we’ll get in the future.

Saddlemire “I liked what Ray (?) said about being an addendum versus actually being part of the minutes. I kind of agree with also what he says about liability. I wouldn’t want to be liable as a Board member to take a position where somebody would sue the Town because they felt they were slandered or something. I think I would like to be able to have that option to remove.

Lefkaditis “Earl, you were incorrect, back in 2017, so let me get something out. Ok? Back in, 2017 Earl, you brought this up at the last meeting and Earl you were incorrect, not only were you incorrect you insulted me in front of my children. You called me a hypocrite. OK, which, by the way, I think you owe my family an apology but we, you called me a hypocrite because you said in February 2017 when a letter was written about Mrs. Pokorny, that I wanted it added to the minutes and you were holding up your phone, remember that? Do you remember that, do you remember that?

Barcomb “I read it in the minutes. I read it as it was written.”

Lefkaditis “I’d like you to read that please and the gallery’s going to read it too. I sent an email 3/9 to the Tara at the time. Item 9B (which was the letter). *I don’t want the letter added to the minutes.* See I don’t believe in politicking, I don’t believe in slandering someone. This was a letter that was written by someone about Mrs. Pokorny and I thought the letter was extremely inappropriate. I wrote in March 9, 2017 *I don’t want the letter added to the minutes. I read the letter because it’s common practice to read correspondence regardless of its content & I will continue to do so. However, the nature of the letter was such that no one, especially the Town will serve by memorializing it in the minutes. Please just write Supervisor Lefkaditis read a letter from Josh Von Hogue (sp?) in opposition to the electric vehicle charging station.* That sentence captured the intent of Josh’s letter and I did not want the incendiary letter back in February 2017. Now, wait, excuse me, excuse me. I got the floor for a second. You on the other hand Mr Barcomb, your response the exact opposite of what we’re hearing now. Here’s one for everyone. Now reading Earl’s email *Please in the future, perhaps we don’t READ every letter regardless of its content , returning some level of respect, decorum and civility to our meetings should be a priority. Letters like that one do not reflect well in Knox. Just my 2 cents.*”

Lefkaditis continued on “so as far as I’m concerned you know where I live, you know all my children’s names. You owe me an apology because my little boy Gigi (?) asked his mother why did Mr Barcomb say those things about his Daddy? So you know where I live. My question is why the 180 degree turn? Help the Board understand.”

Barcomb responded that he had merely read what was reflected in the minutes.

***I think it is important to note that everyone on the Board in Feb 2017, including the Supervisor voted to approve the minutes as written which included the letter the Supervisor read. As the Supervisor has stated repeatedly during the approval of the minutes is the time to correct anything the Board members feel is inappropriate. Additionally, the letter was actually part of the minutes, not just available with the minutes.*

March Board Meeting

Barcomb "I also think before we vote, we've had a long history and I know we're talking about it later tonight. About changing the policy of putting letters in, but we've had a long policy. I remember someone asking about it last time so I went back and looked in the minutes. Back in February 2017 was the first one I found, but at that point in time Vas read a letter from a resident very critical of Amy Pokorny and even though Vas was in the voting minority at the time, we certainly, we put it in verbatim, no question. It's tradition and that's what we did. Now all of a sudden, we're getting letters that are critical and they're not going in and I think if we're going to change a policy, until we have the discussion, we should be following that tradition of putting things in."

Lefkaditis "Wait a minute, I remember that letter. I was the one pushing not to have it added."

Barcomb "I have the minutes right here"

Lefkaditis "No, the minutes had added it in, but I'm the one that asked Tara not to add it. I thought it was inappropriate and I didn't want it added. I sent her emails. I remember that"

Barcomb "This is what it says here. Supervisor Lefkaditis opened up the floor for public comment. Several of the present Town residents spoke out against the charging station. Upon request, Supervisor Lefkaditis read a letter into the record from a Town resident so you actually"

Lefkaditis "I'll get back to you. I remember vividly sending an email to Tara saying it was a little off color, but I'll get back to you"

Barcomb "But, what I'm saying, we had a history of putting this in there and we can certainly discuss later on changing that policy and I certainly have some concerns as to how we're going to retain public comment, but there were some letters with some very important information that is kind of, not even. You know, Jean read a letter and it just says Jean read a letter. It doesn't say anything about the letter. There was something I thought was very specific in there. It talked about the Comptroller's, the annual report we were supposed to submit to the Comptroller. Vas had said at least 3 times he had submitted it, and he hadn't. According to the minutes she went back through and she looked. Went all through and documented this and it was very clear that we were misled by the Supervisor into thinking/believing that the annual report was/had been filed over several years and it was very clear from the record that it hadn't been. That's not anywhere in the minutes and that's not part, that will not be part of the permanent record if we approve the minutes as they are written tonight."

Lefkaditis "Got it. Anyone else? Do we want to vote on it or push it off until after the policy? It doesn't matter to me"

Saddlemire "I think this whole issue should be resolved when we adopt, when we adopt the policy. I mean, I don't really see we're going backwards at history is going to make a difference."

Barcomb "I have no problem with going forward, but the past 2 meetings we haven't been following our old policy which was to include these letters in there and I can see that being a problem where if we come up with a new policy where records are preserved for a period of time then that's one thing, but as of right now."

Lefkaditis "Let me just make a suggestion, right now we're just talking about the February meeting minutes. I think these are good comments, but let's save them until we get to 7b if that's ok?"

Barcomb "Fine with me"

Approximately 1 hour and 4 minutes into the March meeting the Board reached item 7b on the agenda the following is the only content from that discussion that related to anything past practice related everything else was directly related to what the wording should be for Resolution 61.

Barcomb "What is the issue with including in the minutes like we've always done?"

Lefkaditis "but, that's not true, we haven't always done that."

Barcomb "Since I've been on the Board we have"

Lefkaditis "Hold on, hold on. Let me speak. That is not true. The previous clerk was pretty extensive in her minutes there's no question. And we all know why that happened. We don't have to rehash it. Prior to that, if you go back, I had to go back as far as 1984 recently to research something. There's nothing. 80's, 90's, 2000's it's nothing. It's very short, very abbreviated, very professional, so to say it's a past practice is a little misleading, unless you're only counting the last 2 or 3 years and I'm not sure that qualifies as a past practice."

From this point forward there was no further specific interactions between the Supervisor and Councilman Barcomb about anything that had transpired in the past.