

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Being a mayor sure isn't easy

Former Councilman David McCarthy asked in these pages the other day: What does the mayor do all day? Regrettably, any councilman who asks such a question just hasn't been paying attention. Elsewhere leaders get big bucks to run a \$300 million corporation. And that's without a city council and countless appointed agencies to deal with.

To Mr. McCarthy's credit, he did offer a backhanded compliment to Mayor's Assistant Laoise King, one of the best hires the city has ever made. Such hiring is called leadership.

The lack of progress on the ECS education formula also troubles Mr. McCarthy, as well it might. The formula is rotten. And granted, the mayor may have gotten a bit carried away suggesting he could change it. Nonetheless, every politician and most citizens realize in their hearts that the state constitution and the organization of our towns is rigged so that every mayor could spend every day in Hartford, but have precious little effect on that formula. Connecticut isn't called a Home Rule State for nothing. The suburbs rule.

The library is another issue that draws Mr. McCarthy's ire. Unfortunately, the Moccia Administration basically sat on its hands for years as development loomed on Wall Street and properties bordering the library grew in value. Then all at once a developer bought the adjoining parking lot to put up apartments. Now in Norwalk, there's a surprise! Imagine, apartments! And that developer turned out to be — we might say — feisty.

Will acquisition be successful in the end? Probably. Will it be unduly expensive? Probably. Are there years' worth of multiple fingerprints on the blame? You bet. Fortunately, the mayor has now hired a sharp new planning director to try at last to identify such impending fiascos well in advance.

And, oh yes, the mosque. As it chances, the mosque has landed across the way from my old house on Berkeley Street, which I still own and cherish. Suffice it to say, we could not have a better neighbor. Let's hope that those who raised hysteria about its original place-



ment are pleased that they fended it off. We, the ultimate recipients, are pleased too. If you find any more, send them around.

Bill Collins
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Bill Collins is a former mayor of Norwalk.

Norwalk's mayor — figurehead or captain?

A commentary appearing in this paper Sept. 15, "Questioning Mayor's Effectiveness," brings to light a typical pre-election assault. It is safe to assume the writer sits on the other side of the political aisle than does the mayor.

I do believe hires by the mayor might be politically motivated. Judging from the health of the schools facilities, bad choices are and have been made. I do believe Norwalk's idea of a mayor is to be a figurehead. In fact, the only really active, accomplished mayor that I recall in my 50-plus years of living here was Jennie Cave! Her administration defined the difference between a figurehead and a captain.

The council, which the author of the aforementioned piece was part of, is a divisive segment of city government that runs this city. It's that body that causes the issues within the city. This city is stagnant. The mayor, Harry Rilling, needs to think out of his comfort zone. Realize fact from politics. Leadership and politics are two different things.

Harry is a very likable guy. The city has had previous mayors who weren't. So all this said instead of the typical pre-election finger pointing, what does the other side of the aisle plan to do? Be honest, truthful and realistic. Speculative goals are false hopes.

The city is in need of a flushing. Does Harry know this? Yes he does! The primary goal of a politician is to get re-elected. Their motto is act on nothing, but react to everything. So Mr. McCarthy, have your party step up or shut up! Try a tactic other than finger pointing. It's old, boring, and insulting.

Be original and present something the residents haven't heard before. A plan! How refreshing would that be. The city needs a captain.

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