

Roxanne Maher

From: Pamela Ball <pcball@earthlink.net>
Sent: Friday, January 24, 2025 11:05 AM
To: Roxanne Maher
Subject: Flying of flags at Town Hall

Dear Council,

I write to disagree with the proposed Ordinance to allow flags other than the American flag and State of Connecticut flag to be at Town Hall.

Town Hall is the "public government property" of every single resident in town and should not be used as a medium for supporting or not supporting any particular group or cause. Flags flown at Town Hall represent every resident in town and it is easy to imagine that each proposed flag will have supporters and dissenters. No matter how well-intentioned, it is not up to any town commission to mark the town as publicly supporting or not supporting any group or cause.

At a minimum, flags represent political, social, and religious affiliations, opinions and activities. It's fine to display a flag on private, business or church property because it was chosen by the homeowner, business owner or church society. If third party placed an offending flag on private, business or church property, the owners or church would have every right to remove it. This proposal is allowing a "third party" of council members and/or town residents to fly a flag on property that belongs to all town residents. What if the town displays a flag that is offensive to a town resident? Can they ask for it to be removed and what are the chances that it will be removed? If it is removed, how can that be reconciled to the supporters? If it is not removed, how can that be reconciled to the dissenters? What if the offending flag is vandalized? What will be the consequences if the person is caught? What if the person isn't caught?

It will be impossible to set forth non-controversial criteria to determine which flags are acceptable or and which are not. Defining such criteria will require making decisions about religions, ethics, ethnicities, gender, LGBTQ+, history, and more. Will flags be voted upon and by whom? Will the town residents be included in determining what flags are acceptable or not? Every single flag that will be proposed will have supporters and non-supporters thus every single flag will represent or insult any given resident; this is a lose-lose situation. If 5% of the town residents do not like a particular flag, will it be removed? 3%? 10% 2%? 20%? Who will tally the responses? Is council going to take the time and energy to address complaints and concerns for every flag? This does not seem a good use of their time and energy. Is council willing to take on the task of making sure proposed flags are acceptable to all? This too does not seem a good use of their time and energy.

Who will buy the flags? I would rather that all of my tax dollars go to support more important issues. I would not want my tax dollars to be used to purchase a flag that I might find offensive or even one that I support.

Consider our veterans and those in active duty service who often salute the American flag. If there is a flag being flown along with the American flag that they find offensive, it puts them in the position of saluting something that they do not support or not saluting the American flag.

Government buildings should fly government flags and should not be used to make or imply political or social statements.

There are many places and ways to show support for political, social, and religious affiliations and activities but flying flags other than the American flag and State of Connecticut flag at Town Hall will just invite controversy and stoke/reinforce social and political divisions.

Thank you for reading.

Pam Ball