

BOROUGH OF ALLENDALE

ALLENDALE, NEW JERSEY

October 21, 1963

A DISSENT

By Councilman Joseph F. Waldorf

I would hope that those who are not thoroughly convinced by the sugar-coated promise of the majority letter will read these thoughts and weigh them carefully. They represent but a single opinion, to be sure; but a measure of strength in our representative system lies in the freedom to publish and in our willingness to hear and explore each side of an issue.

The basic thought of the majority letter is, in my opinion, altogether unsound. You have had proposed two questions, in themselves carefully worded, to which all voters must answer "Yes" or "No", or else be deemed disinterested. Yet the question remains whether these proposals on the ballot can be so simply answered and whether such answers are a reliable index to informed public opinion. In my view, they cannot, and they are not and never will be a reliable expression of opinion.

Note that each proposal seeks your expression "in principle", then proceeds to outline particular details. Now, everyone knows that "principle" is a general, an abstract idea. One cannot see a principle nor picture it in detail. For example, the principle that an employer should pay wages to his employee is a general idea, a rule of action, which is not specific nor particular. No one questions this principle; difference arises over the particular amount of wages. Let us ask an employer, therefore,

"Do you favor, in principle, a revision of salary to increase this man's earnings to \$7,900. per year?

Answer "Yes" or "No"."

The employer may indeed desire the man's services yet consider him entitled to a lesser salary, say \$6,000. He does favor the principle but not the particular. Ought he to vote "Yes" and later express his true preference? Surely not; his answer would have to be "No". Compare this example with the ballot proposals, then note the instruction in the next-to-final paragraph of the majority letter.

The general propositions on this ballot will not be agreeable to all. Some residents are undoubtedly opposed to all industry and to any apartments in Allendale. Others would agree to limited amounts of either or both. The proposals are so worded as to bring out as many affirmative votes as possible. This device is not new. Inevitably, the "Yes" answer will be interpreted

as favoring the particular part. The door will then be open wide, and all thought of limitation will be set aside until it is too late.

It is precisely on this ground that I differ strongly from the Council majority. While recognizing that industrial zones do exist in Allendale, and that apartments, while not provided for in our Master Plan, may eventually have a limited place and reason for existence in our town; I am thinking in terms of limitation with respect to both, lest the essential character of our community be drastically altered beyond hope of recall. The majority of our governing body, without due regard for consequences, are blissfully embarked on a course of action which will open the door to further industrial expansion and additional apartment construction in various areas of town without any plan or control to limit such growth.

Your Planning Board, after full discussion and study, came to the conclusion that the industrial zone adjacent to Route 17 could be effectively constituted and stabilized within an area of some 60 acres, squared off in conformity to property lines and existing ownership. Due consideration was given to the suitability of this land for its proposed use. The increase from 31 to 60 acres was, in fact, more apparent than real, since the existing zone of 31 acres crosses property lines and is susceptible to expansion on grounds which could support zoning variances. When approached by the Mayor for its opinion on the increase to 79 acres, the Board refused to recommend this change and considered the same unwarranted.

In point of fact, the additional 19 acres proposed then and now includes approximately two-thirds of a property known as the Allendale Riding Academy, used for instructional and recreational purposes. The land in question is highly desirable for its present use and is suitable for a number of purposes other than industry. It is situated on Boroline Road, relatively remote from Route 17. Implied in the proposal to zone the greater part of this land for industry is the option to have included the southerly part, some 10 acres, at a later date.

Proposals have been made at the Council for the creation of new industrial zones in (1) the area now occupied by Crestwood Lake, and (2) in the southerly part of town, near Chestnut and New Streets, along the Waldwick boundary. Neither of these conform to the Master Plan upon which our Zoning Ordinance is based. Yet the majority gives its attention to expansion of industry, with less and less concern for its limitation. The philosophy "Zone now and plan later," soon makes a mockery of the terms "good zoning" and "balanced community".

The apartment proposals illustrate the same habit of thought on the part of the Council majority. When the referendum was first proposed, at the meeting of September 26th, a particular location was stricken from the ballot proposal before being

approved by a 5 to 1 vote. It was stated orally, however, that the area in mind was the West Crescent Avenue site, now occupied by an old saw-mill. During this short space of time the concept has apparently grown to include two additional sites. The recently added assurance that "only one" will be selected cannot be relied upon as binding. Again we see no comprehensive plan, no thought of limitation. This is a journey without map or guidance. How then can we be sure of our destination?

The arguments of the majority are attractive on the surface. They promise increased ratables and reduced taxes. They ignore the fact that Allendale has had industrial zones in existence for many years, yet none of this land has to date been used for industry nor taxed as such. What guarantee have we that this proposed zone will be used or occupied? The figures outlined with such promise in the majority letter are grounded on the assumption that buildings will be erected in the near future or the land developed as part of some ambitious project. Have we any right to assume this will happen? The majority appears to have adopted a typical sales approach, at the same time glossing over to easily those harmful side-effects which may render the cure far worse than the disease.

I shall not attempt here to answer, point by point, some very questionable statements made in the majority letter. Perhaps these can be explored to good effect at a public meeting, which I would hope could take place prior to any vote. Whether or not this opportunity arises, no responsible citizen of Allendale should neglect the chance to be counted among those interested on November 5th. However ill-conceived and poorly timed this referendum may be, it is now a reality. Your voice should be heard, your vote counted.

If you favor limited growth as opposed to unbridled expansion, intelligent planning as against "hit or miss" legislation; then your vote should be "No" to both zoning proposals. A negative vote will not rule out further planning and discussion in the areas indicated. It will rather direct that the journey be undertaken with benefit of road map, with guidance and plan. No other course is safe. We cannot afford to gamble with the future of our community.

Respectfully submitted,

Joseph F. Waldorf