**Suzanne Viscomi 3-31-21 Public Comments**

I am truly humbled and a loss for words over the public and private support I received over the past week. - Thank you.

I wanted to have the opportunity to publicly address the Council and Community about what occurred during the last meeting and the accusations that I received. Directly after the last council meeting, I made a public statement and posted the video of the whole interaction on social media. I apologized publicly for flubbing over my word and mispronouncing Z’s name. There was no other malicious intent PERIOD

Over the last several months, we have been listening to four councilmembers asking all of us to “believe in the process” - a direct quote - because they do not want to make a rushed decision about the future of the Senior Center. Those same four council member is asking the public to believe in their heart-felt sincerity and asking for time to get the right information to make a healthy decision. Yet, ironically, these same four were the first to rush to judgment and label me as a racist after the incident at the last meeting. Furthermore, Councilman Yazim doubled down to take it to another level of hatred by taking it to the media. Less than 12 hours after the meeting (after I had already made a public statement, I read a shocking quote from Councilman Yazim referencing Islamophobia. Next, the Mayor fanned the flame with his post on Facebook too garnering the support of four councilmembers. Currently, Mr. Yazim is still trying to convince neighbors and public figures that I would do such a disgusting thing and utter a racial slur.  We all talk about not being a bully, but this is a lesson of how to stand up to bullies.

When did common sense end? When is it ok for this cancel culture try to ruin the reputation of a person who has devoted over a decade of time to be a good neighbor and public servant, is this acceptable? A person whose typical responses to anyone needing help is: “when and where?”.  I think some councilmembers are desperate to distract us from the issues. But we will not fall for it.

So, I ask Boris Kofman, who took down his post, Mike Dupont, who wrote an apology after the fact on Red Bank Green, and the four councilmembers who jumped on the bandwagon and the Mayor where is my CANCEL button? How do I explain this to my young niece and nephew when they google our last name and see racial accusations from a community I have served for years?

Councilmembers, you are the first to preach about being a welcoming town, the first to pass a resolution to condemn hate, and yet you were the first to throw stones and rush to judgment. . What a contradiction! In my opinion it was for political gain.

Now let us go back to what triggered this incident. It was the shock I felt after hearing the Business Administrator mock and disrespect the public speaker comment before me. That was true bullying. I have attended council meetings since 2010, and I have seen some crazy debates back and forth. However, this past year, it has gone beyond debating the issues. It has been councilmembers laughing at speakers or playing on their phones while you are talking. We are at a sad point when that is the reaction a concerned member of the community gets when sharing concerns with elected officials. After tonight’s meeting, I will share other examples of disrespect that have been captured on video. This is why good people are scared to stand up and why I get calls and questions texted to me to ask. Residents fear retaliation and disrespect.

**So, why are we at this point now?**

Party politics have become more important than our**town & our neighbors**. Candidates should run-on their actions and their position on issues. We should not just vote for representatives because of an “**ism”**. You do not hear me saying I want to be the **first lesbian** on the council or **first Hispanic** on the council. There is not a Republican park bench or Democratic sidewalk. Political party games do not belong in our town, it should not divide us. **Just stop it.**

Actions speak louder than words.

Kate, Hazim, Eric, Kathy, Mayor, and any future elected officials who jumped so fast to spread hate and try to ruin my reputation without making sure something happened or even talking to me, have no right to represent anyone.

So, let us get back to the issue and work together as neighbors.

With I have a follow up on 1/1/21 I asked why not all council members phone number was not put up on the public website and I was told the information will be added promptly. Well, is 3/3 and this is little but if you cannot complete the little tasks, why should we believe you will complete the big ones. Residents want to be able to reach our election officials

   