

12 August 2013

ATTN: Chairwoman, Stamford Planning Board

SUBJECT: U.S. NAVAL SEA CADET FACILITIES JUSTIFICATION

As a matter of introduction, my name is Captain Jarett Berke, U.S. Marine Corps. I am currently the Acquisitions Integrated Project Team Lead for the Joint Mission Planning System Expeditionary in Patuxent River, MD. I recently completed a six year tour as a CH-53E Helicopter Pilot during which I completed four deployments and over 300 combat flight hours in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. I am a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy, and alumnus of Dealey Division, U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps. I have had a very successful career, and have unlimited potential to continue my upward trajectory as a Marine or as a civilian. Much of my success can be attributed to the values that the USNSCC imbued in me, and the multitude of positive experiences that help me achieve my aspirations.

For me, the age of 13 was a pivotal time in my life. It should suffice to say that at the time my friends were objectionable, and the choices I was making would have led me down a very different road than the one I am currently on. Unfortunately, this is a hard time in most people's lives and is a socially, academically, and morally formative period. Personally, I mark the start of my path to success to a friendly invitation to attend a Sea Cadet Drill at the Marine Center in Stamford. Needless to say, I was intrigued and came back the next week and every week following. During the five years that I was a cadet, I had the opportunity to sail on ships, learn the values of the Naval Service, and experience innumerable events that solidified my ethics and values as a patriot and individual. The Sea Cadets even gave me the tremendous opportunity to participate in a four week international student exchange to Japan. The Sea Cadets taught me integrity, self-reliance, respect, and leadership. I partially attribute my acceptance to the U.S. Naval Academy to the years I spent with the Sea Cadets, and I doubt that I would have had the same opportunities if the Sea Cadets didn't exist.

Although the values and traits of the Sea Cadet Corps are held by the outstanding personnel whom lead and administer it, the setting in which these lessons are taught must be carefully considered. At a minimum, this facility must be large enough to conduct a formation of the entire division. It must have six classrooms in which classes can be taught (by both the staff and the cadets themselves). It must have administrative spaces to conduct operations planning, personnel administration, and counseling. It must have an area outside to conduct physical training, firefighting training, and close order drill. It must have storage space for uniforms and issued gear. For me and for current Cadets, the Marine Center provides a near perfect setting. Although it is somewhat dilapidated, it provides the appropriate space and layout to successfully conduct a sea cadet drill. If the decision is made to seize the Marine Center from the Cadets, an equivalent or improved space must be provided. Not providing this space would be prohibitive to proper administration of the Sea Cadet's mission and would risk eliminating an organization that provides so much to the Cadets in its ranks and the city in which it resides. Furthermore, it would violate an agreement made many years ago between the U.S. Navy and the city of Stamford.

I realize that this is a complicated problem, however, I implore you to consider the importance of the organization which you risk harming. The Dealey Division has helped hundreds of kids and devoted thousands of man hours to the City of Stamford's community service efforts, parades, and veterans events. If the division does not have an appropriate facility, it will severely restrict the effectiveness of its execution and prevent future success stories like the one above.

Respectfully,

Jarett M. Berke