

BOILER BREAKDOWN ICES ORANGE COUNCIL MEETING

BY WALTER ELLIOTT

ORANGE : The municipal council, for the want of a working Orange City Hall boiler, decided to adjourn its Feb. 1 meetings to a later time and venue.

When and where the conference and regular meetings will be has not been settled as of "Local Talk" press time. Council President Hassan Abdul-Rasheed, after the 7:38 p.m. adjournment, was seen talking with Acting Clerk Claude Wallace and Clerk's Officer Shinell Smith. Abdul-Rasheed, who is also West Ward Councilman, and Smith said that they want to properly announce the time and place through the city's official mediums.

The council, on one hand, had talked about meeting 7 p.m. Feb. 7 either in City Hall chambers or in the Orange Preparatory Academy auditorium at 400 Central Ave. At-large councilwoman Donna Williams indicated that Feb. 8 would conflict with the Orange Board of Education Meeting.

Orange's elders, on the other hand, have until its next scheduled set of meetings on Feb. 15 to hold the adjourned meeting.

When and where also depends on when the contracted plumber can get a new boiler in. Both Business Administrator John Mason and City Engineer/Public Works Director Arlene Kemp said that the vendor may have the boiler up and running on or by Feb. 11.

"The plumber has been able to get the boiler running on some days and not able on others," said Mason. "Unfortunately, he could not get it running today."

Mason said that the boiler in question has been off a total of 10 days this year. He said that he has not received complaints or union grievances so far about the heat being off. The administrator said that radiant heat from the Sun coming through the building's windows had helped comforted employees and visitors until 3 p.m. Feb. 1.

Williams had asked Kemp and Mason if there were space heaters from other City Hall offices that can be used during the council meeting. They knew of electrical heaters about the building but not how many.

Mason and Kemp said that the plumbing vendor, "Magic Touch" has been able to find parts for the current boiler. The new boiler, which both officials said will be installed in five major pieces, is an emergency installation to cost \$50,000.

A Google search found a Magic Touch Construction, Inc., of Keyport. The Raritan Bay shore plumber, founded in 1972, serves "central, northern and southern New Jersey."

"When this building was renovated in the 1970s, state law required the installation of two boilers," explained Kemp. "One boiler would take up the load of the other."

Kemp was referring to the rear addition to City Hall's second, third and fourth floors done in the early 1970s. City Hall was originally built as the first Orange High School in 1871.

"It's to my understanding that the first boiler broke down six or seven years ago," continued Kemp. "We've been running on one boiler since. Parts for that boiler have become scarce."

Council members, should they meet at Orange Preparatory Academy Feb. 7, would be moving from one former Orange High School building to another. 300 Central Ave. was built as Orange's third high school structure in the 1920s. It became Orange Middle School - replacing Central and Tremont junior highs - when the current OHS opened next door Labor Day 1973.

OHS moved to the Colgate Building on Main Street - where the Rosa Parks Elementary School now stands - early in the 20th Century. OMS became OPA after the Orange Public Schools restructured its Sixth, Seventh and Eighth grades last year.

"Local Talk" first noticed council members and other officials still wearing their overcoats while holding a closed meeting in the council chamber 6:30 p.m. They were conferring with two legal representatives regarding details of the restaurant Essex County wants to build alongside the Orange Reservoir.

The county is poised to start building a marina-style restaurant between the reservoir and its Turtle Back Zoo/Richard Coday Sports Arena complex in West Orange's St. Cloud section in March. Orange has not drawn drinking or potable water from its namesake reservoir since the 1980s.

Abdul-Rasheed polled his six colleagues about whether to adjourn the meeting shortly after Wallace called the session to order 7:18 p.m. The council president received a 5-2 split vote about 20 minutes later.

"Mr. President, I think that health should be our first order," said South Ward Councilman Edward Marable, Jr. "My toes are getting numb. I can't imagine how we our chamber audience can endure this when our meetings usually run four or five hours."

"I see I'm in the minority on this," said Abdul-Rasheed. "We're all here, I'm ready to go, and we may have a shorter meeting. I will, however, abide with the majority."

The 20-minute meeting's adjournment - one of the shortest in recent memory - left some 27 chamber gallery members heading for the exits. Some, like first scheduled public speaker Doris Clarke, kept their overcoats on.

"This is fine," said Clarke of the indoor climate. "I'm ready to get this meeting on."