

TX byline ...

>>> **By Eliot Caroom**

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>>> **FOR THE STAR-LEDGER**

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>>> **faster, punchier**

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>>> For years, people have tuned into channel 86 in

Roselle to see the sparks fly at council meetings...

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>>> but now the most lively part of the meetings

may not be on tv, or something...

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>>> **Roselle's** council will consider a resolution next

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week to stop broadcasting the public comment

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portion of meetings, which are aired on local cable.

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Proponents say doing so encourages bad behavior,

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but some councilmembers and residents are

decrying the move as censorship of opposition

opinion.

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>>> "When the lights and cameras are on, we use it

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as a venue to act up and not do the business of the

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borough," said Councilwoman Cecilia Dallis-Ricks,

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who proposed the resolution, noting that many

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council meetings run until midnight or 1 a.m.

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>>> **right now, this reads like they're stopping**

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broadcasts entirely, not that they're just excising one

part

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>>> But residents at a Wednesday council meeting

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disagreed with the measure.

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>>> "If there's debate on an issue and somebody at

home sees it, they may be energized to come out to the next meeting," said Rahaman Muhammad who is he? name CQ'd? where does he live? how old is he? how often does he go to meetings? day job?

"Like it or not, you cannot take away the public's right to challenge you on policy."

»»» The borough isn't legally obligated to broadcast meetings, which are formally recorded in transcripts and minutes, but the meetings have been broadcast for six years, according to Mayor Garrett Smith.

»»» public comments come first, last, in the middle? how long do they take?

»»» The new resolution states that long broadcasts of council meetings make it difficult for the public to watch the council's business portion of the meetings, and also says the meeting broadcasts should be shortened, reducing costs.

»»» Dallis-Ricks said Friday that videotaping costs were not her original motivation for the resolution, and said that while long meetings increase police and transcription costs, videotaping costs wouldn't be reduced if public comments were no longer taped. huh? this makes no sense

»»» Harassment from residents was her primary motivation to propose the measure, Dallis-Ricks said, but council attorney John Hudak publicly

advised her that it would be better not to go into a long drawn-out explanation regarding public conduct in the resolution.

»»» "Some of the audience was nasty prior (to broadcast meetings)," Dallis-Ricks said. "quote?" It is politically motivated by the opposition. Each and every election they come up."

»»» Dallis-Ricks also said Smith, who runs the borough council meetings, is at fault for not cutting off abusive comments from the public.

»»» But Smith said Friday that council members should be prepared to take the heat from who? and disagreed with the idea that the public portion is to blame for long meetings.

»»» "The council takes up way more time than the public portion," Smith said. "Very rarely have I seen more than 15 people come to the mic, and that's 45 minutes of public speaking."

»»» Councilwoman Sylvia Turnage, who opposes Dallis-Ricks on the measure, said Wednesday the measure would stifle free speech.

»»» "There will be a public outcry," Turnage said in the meeting Wednesday.

»»» "I'm sure there will be. All five of your friends," Dallis-Ricks responded.

»»» expert?

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»» The council will take the issue up at its next meeting on Sept. 22.

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