



# Town of Groton, Connecticut

## Meeting Minutes

### Town Council Committee of the Whole

45 Fort Hill Road  
Groton, CT 06340-4394  
Town Clerk (860)441-6640  
Town Manager  
(860)441-6630

**Mayor Harry A. Watson, Councilors Heather Sherman Bond, Kathryn M. Brown-Tracy, Catherine Kolnaski, Deborah B. Monteiro, Frank O'Beirne, Jr., Rita M. Schmidt, Paulann H. Sheets, and James L. Streeter**

Monday, January 28, 2008

5:30 PM

Catherine Kolnaski School Media Center

#### SPECIAL MEETING

#### 1. CALL TO ORDER

*Mayor Watson called the meeting to order at approximately 5:30 p.m.*

#### 2. ROLL CALL

Members Present: Mayor Watson, Councilor Bond, Councilor Brown-Tracy, Councilor Kolnaski, Councilor Monteiro, Councilor O'Beirne, Jr. and Councilor Sheets  
Members Absent: Councilor Schmidt and Councilor Streeter

*Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger and Assistant to the Town Manager Lee Vincent.*

*Board of Education: Beverly Washington, Beth Gianacoplos, Jenifer Sim, Peter Bartinik, Brian Shirvell, Rita Volkmann, Patricia Monahan Doyle, Archie Swindell (6:52 p.m.)*

*Board of Education Staff: Dr. Mitchell, S. Keating, W. Greenleaf, H. Hunter, M. Crompton, D. Doolittle, P. Sikorski*

#### 3. NEW BUSINESS

##### **2008-0012 Joint Meeting with Board of Education (2008 Standing Referral)**

*See 1/28/08 Committee of the Whole for discussion under #2007-0310 FYE 2009 Budget, 2007-0305 FYE 2007 CAFR; 2003-0177 Renovations and Additions to Groton School Facilities - Phase I, and 2006-0282 School Improvement Project - Phase II.*

##### **2007-0310 FYE 2009 Budget**

*Chairman Washington said that Dr. Mitchell's budget request included changed parameters for some class sizes but that the Board had reverted to the existing number. However, there would be some additional teachers to provide full-time kindergarten. The Board asked the Superintendent to come back with a budget that increases not more than 4%.*

*Councilor O'Beirne asked about the effects of establishing middle school teaching teams on staffing. Various Board members answered that there has been a reorganization of how time is allocated to subjects within a teaching team so as to spread resources best. Chairman Washington spoke to diverse qualifications that pertain to a teaching team by noting that she is qualified to teach numerous subjects.*

*Councilor O'Beirne asked what the Board of Education's process is for reallocating its budget following a cut in its request by final action of the RTM. Chairman Washington said that the Board itself has to approve the new or revised priorities. Councilor O'Beirne asked if there is a document that shows the revised budget in detail and in total. Dr. Mitchell answered that changes and deletions are made and then the Board approves it. He said that a document is available. He said that the revision of a budget is shown in the Board's minutes.*

*Councilor O'Beirne followed this with a question asking how they reassigned the funds when the Colonel Ledyard School was closed in the middle of a school year. Hugh Hunter said that the formal changes in accounts are made at the approach of the end of the fiscal year when some*

accounts have run into deficit. He said that the Superintendent can make changes at a level that is below that of major accounts.

Town Manager Oefinger opened a discussion of when the Council could have its budget hearing or hearings with the Board of Education. He mentioned Tuesday, April 8th. Dr. Mitchell said that the Board prefers Mondays, its usual meeting night. Oefinger said that on some nights in April there were no rooms available in any suitable town building. A meeting was set for Thursday, April 10th at 6:00 p.m. at the Board of Education Administration Building. Board members said that they follow a rule to end at 9:00 p.m.

Councilors Kolnaski and Bond said they thought that one meeting with the Board of Education was not enough. They recalled that in past years they had a first meeting in which the Board presented and explained its request and received questions from Councilors. Then the meeting for the Council's debate and decision was held later. They also asserted that dates for such a large account should be set when all Councilors can be present. It was then agreed that on Wednesday, April 2nd at 6:00 p.m., a first meeting would be held, at a location to be determined.

Dr. Mitchell said that the CIP process gives the Town Manager the power to prevent items from going into the CIP book. He said that there were items that had to be value-engineered out of the current school construction projects and that they wanted to be allowed to present some of them to get them back into the budget.

Councilor Bond asked for examples of items desired by the Board of Education that have been excluded by the Town Manager. Town Manager Oefinger explained the screening of budget proposals from his point of view. For instance, debt service alone now consumes the minimum capital contribution that is mandated for each annual budget by a town ordinance. He discussed the criteria for deciding what can be classified as a "project" that is appropriate for the capital budget. He said that computers have some times been put in the CIP, especially large-scale projects. He said, however, that he believes that using the Computer Replacement Fund in recent years has worked very well for the Town. It has allowed for varying degrees of purchasing in different years without having to face a spike upward in the budget.

Board Member Gianacoplos asked if the Town Manager's discretion over the CIP is in the Charter.

**2007-0305**

**FYE 2007 CAFR**

Mayor Watson mentioned that the Council had recently met on the annual comprehensive finance report and audit and that there were questions about whether the Board of Education was accurately calculating and disclosing grants, or deferred revenue. It was mentioned that the leader of the outside audit team said she had been told that the Board of Education did not have the time or resources in the past year to make improvements in shortcomings that were noted in the prior year or years. After some discussion of that and other recommendations in the audit that affected Board operations, Dr. Mitchell said that they are already moving in the direction of resolving the audit findings and recommendations for corrective action.

**2003-0177**

**Renovations & Additions to Groton School Facilities - Phase I**

Town Manager Oefinger and Mr. Schneider explained that they would have a meeting with the project manager, Gilbane, Inc., on the next day (January 29th) at which time they will have a good estimate on whether the high school can be completed and occupied during the February break week. Mr. Greenleaf said that the Board of Education is still moving its things out of the Noank School that is being considered for a temporary senior center and that they want very much to finish and turn the keys and the responsibility for heating oil over to the Town Manager.

**2006-0282**

**School Improvement Project - Phase II**

Mayor Watson said that former Councilor John Scott, Chairman of this committee, will come to

*the Council's Committee of the Whole meeting on Tuesday, February 12th to talk about the status of that effort.*

**4. ADJOURNMENT**

*The meeting adjourned at 6:59 p.m.*