



# Town of Groton, Connecticut

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

## Meeting Minutes

### Town Council Committee of the Whole

*Mayor Harry A. Watson, Councilors Peter J. Bartinik, Jr., Heather Sherman Bond, Catherine Kolnaski, Frank O'Beirne, Jr., Rita M. Schmidt, John F. Scott, Paulann H. Sheets, and James L. Streeter.*

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Tuesday, April 24, 2007

6:00 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

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#### SPECIAL MEETING

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1. **CALL TO ORDER**

*Mayor Watson called the meeting to order at 6:10 p.m.*

2. **ROLL CALL**

Members Present: Mayor Watson, Councilor Bartinik, Jr., Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., Councilor Schmidt, Councilor Scott, Councilor Sheets and Councilor Streeter  
Members Absent: Councilor Bond and Councilor Kolnaski

*Mayor Watson noted there was an accident on I-95 which delayed the arrival of Councilors.*

*Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Assistant to the Town Manager Lee Vincent and Executive Assistant Nicki Bresnyan.*

3. **Calendar and Communications**

*None.*

4. **Approval of Minutes**

**2007-0104 Approval of Minutes (Committee of the Whole)**

**RESOLUTION ACCEPTING COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MINUTES**

RESOLVED, that the minutes of the Town Council Committee of the Whole of March 27, 2007 and April 10, 2007 are hereby accepted and approved.

**A motion was made by Councilor Scott, seconded by Councilor Schmidt, to adopt.**

**The motion carried unanimously**

*Councilor O'Beirne noted that he did not want to be on the School Design Committee.*

5. **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

*None.*

6. **NEW BUSINESS**

**2007-0099 Resolution Approving Budgets for FYE 2008**

**Discussed**

*Director of Finance Sal Pandolfo referenced a document showing the reconciliation from the Town Manager's budget and CIP with actions taken by the Town Council, as well as a comparison of adjusted budget to adopted budget by function and for other funds.*

*Councilor Bond arrived at 6:17 p.m.*

*Consideration of this item was tabled to later in the meeting to allow for reconsideration of the budget under 2007-0074 Proposed FYE 2008 Budget Deliberations.*

*Councilor Kolnaski arrived at 6:22 p.m.*

2007-0074

Members Present: Mayor Watson, Councilor Bartinik, Jr., Councilor Bond, Councilor Kolnaski, Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., Councilor Schmidt, Councilor Scott, Councilor Sheets and Councilor Streeter

**Proposed FYE 2008 Budget Deliberations****Recommended for Deletion**

*Councilor Sheets explained her intent to move a different figure for the Board of Education as follows:*

*Restoration of 6-12 mathematics - \$199,770*

*Restoration of 6-12 music - \$108,190*

*Restoration of 6-12 sciences 6-12 - \$100,980*

*for a total of \$408,940, and a bottom-line budget figure of \$114,628,124.*

*A motion was made by Councilor Sheets, seconded by Councilor Schmidt, to reconsider the Board of Education budget.*

*The motion failed by the following vote:*

*In Favor: 4 - Councilor Bartinik, Councilor Schmidt, Councilor Sheets, and Mayor Watson*

*Opposed: 5 - Councilor Bond, Councilor Kolnaski, Councilor O'Beirne, Councilor Scott, and Councilor Streeter*

*Councilor Kolnaski asked for a clarification of the motion.*

*A motion was made by Councilor Kolnaski, seconded by Councilor Schmidt, to reconsider the Board of Education budget.*

*The motion carried by the following vote:*

*In Favor: 5 - Councilor Bartinik, Councilor Kolnaski, Councilor Schmidt, Councilor Sheets, and Mayor Watson*

*Opposed: 4 - Councilor Bond, Councilor O'Beirne, Councilor Scott, and Councilor Streeter*

*A motion was made by Councilor Sheets, seconded by Councilor Schmidt, to increase the Board of Education budget by \$408,940 as outlined earlier in the meeting.*

*Councilor O'Beirne noted that the Council cannot direct where the Board of Education money goes and expressed concern with returning \$400,000+ to the Board without the ability to control where it goes. Councilor Sheets noted the Board communicated to the Council that they felt strongly about these programs and she hopes the Board will direct the money to these programs. Discussion followed on staff positions identified in the Board of Education budget. Councilor O'Beirne expressed concern that a gifted and talented program has not been instituted, but the strings program is being expanded to the middle school. Councilor Bartinik asked if any Councilors had spoken directly with a Board member or RTM member regarding the Board of Education's budget. Councilor Bond stated that there is no precedent that if the funds are restored, they will go where the Council wants them to go.*

*Councilor Sheets noted that this motion reflects a change in her position on the Board of Education budget and she noted that the pending phase-in gives her a comfort level and strikes a balance in the community. Councilor Streeter felt it was a slap in the face when the Board said they were going to close schools and save money, and then came back with a proposal to spend the savings. Councilor Kolnaski felt the reductions to the Board of Education budget were too much. Councilor Bond noted that if the Board has a crisis, they can come back to the Council for more funds. Councilor O'Beirne noted that Colonel Ledyard School is fully funded for the entire*

year and the plan is to shut it down mid-year, creating a \$300,000 to \$400,000 cushion in the Board's budget. Councilor Schmidt noted that contracts must be honored for the full year even if the school shuts down. Councilor Scott does not feel the phase-in should be considered since it has not yet been approved. Councilor Bartinik feels the RTM supports the Council's previous action on the Board of Education budget.

The motion failed by the following vote:

In Favor: 3 - Councilor Kolnaski, Councilor Sheets, and Councilor Schmidt

Opposed: 6 - Councilor Bartinik, Councilor Bond, Councilor O'Beirne, Councilor Scott, Councilor Streeter, and Mayor Watson

This referral was recommended for deletion by consensus.

**2007-0099 Resolution Approving Budgets for FYE 2008**

A motion was made by Councilor Scott, seconded by Councilor Bond, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.

The motion carried unanimously

**2007-0100 Computation of Tax Rate for Groton Sewer District (FYE 2008)**

A motion was made by Mayor Watson, seconded by Councilor Scott, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.

The motion carried unanimously

**2007-0101 Computation of Tax Rate for Mumford Cove (FYE 2008)**

Discussed

Councilor Sheets disclosed that she is a resident of Mumford Cove.

A motion was made by Councilor Schmidt, seconded by Councilor Scott, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.

The motion carried unanimously

**2007-0102 Computation of Tax Rate for General Fund (FYE 2008)**

A motion was made by Councilor Streeter, seconded by Councilor Scott, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.

The motion carried unanimously

**2007-0097 FYE 2007 Fourth Quarter Transfers**

A motion was made by Councilor Kolnaski, seconded by Councilor Bond, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.

The motion carried unanimously

**2003-0177 Renovations & Additions to Groton School Facilities - Phase I**

Staff distributed newsletters on the three school projects and updated the Committee on the window issue.

**2006-0239 Animal Shelter**

Discussed

Mayor Watson noted that the representative from the Humane Society who was scheduled to speak with the Council will not be coming, and discussion of this item was tabled to next week.

Councilor Kolnaski noted receipt of a letter from Wendy Eckholm on this issue.

**2007-0105 Community Swimming Pool**

Discussed

Ken Berg, the Fitch High School swim coach, outlined his proposal to build an aquatic center

through his company called Splash Classic Inc. which does swimming lessons, swim camps, etc. Mr. Berg intends to raise funds and work with the Town on the project. Mr. Berg is seeking non-profit status, and the IRS would like a commitment from the Town that they will take over the activities if the non-profit ceases to exist. Mr. Berg's desire is to work with the Town on a location. Discussion followed on the type of facility envisioned by Mr. Berg. The minimum goal to raise funds for a pool at the high school, similar to East Lyme's facility, but Mr. Berg hopes to raise \$1.6 million within five years through private and corporate donations, and grants. Councilor Sheets asked if the Board of Education was approached about taking over the facility if necessary, and Mr. Berg stated no. Parks and Recreation is currently conducting the activities envisioned by Mr. Berg, but at rented facilities. Councilor Schmidt expressed concern with the liability associated with a private venture operating on public land.

Councilor Scott suggested putting this in committee and conferring with the Town Attorney. Mr. Berg stated that the business plan from East Lyme is being used as a guide for this project. Mr. Berg's intent was to share his ideas with the Council. Councilor Bond suggested meeting with representatives from the East Lyme project. Councilor Bartinik feels this is an innovative way to move a project forward and he supports this effort.

Town Manager Oefinger feels this is a tremendous opportunity for the Town. It is primarily a fundraising opportunity. The Town will not be in a position to know all of the details for some time. The question is whether or not the Town would like to have a community pool. Councilors Streeter and Kolnaski expressed support for Mr. Berg's efforts. Mr. Berg would like to respond to the federal government and he noted that the suggested wording of the agreement can be changed. By consensus, the agreement was referred to the Town Attorney for review.

2006-0314

**Charter Revision****Discussed**

Councilor O'Beirne noted there are six volunteers for a Charter Revision Committee. Councilor O'Beirne outlined the requirements to establish the Committee.

**A motion was made by Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., seconded by Councilor Bond, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.**

**The motion carried unanimously**

2007-0008

**Legislative Policy (2007 Standing Referral)**

Assistant to the Town Manager Lee Vincent updated the Council on budget issues including a bill to increase MM&E, the call for an increase in state income taxes, and the governor's proposal for more ECS and a cap on spending. There has been no serious discussion on property tax reform. The unfunded mandate on police and firefighters occupational exposure has been resurrected. There is also a move to have a major study of municipal ethics. Councilor Sheets asked Mr. Vincent to look into health care cost sharing discussions at the state level.

**7. Consideration of Committee Referral Items as per Town Council Referral List**

None.

**8. OTHER BUSINESS**

None.

**9. ADJOURNMENT**

A motion was made by Councilor Schmidt, seconded by Councilor Kolnaski, to adjourn the meeting at 7:35 p.m.

The motion carried unanimously.