



Town of Groton, Connecticut

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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., John F. Scott, Paulann H. Sheets, James L. Streeter, and Elissa T. Wright.

Tuesday, November 28, 2006

7:00 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

REGULAR MEETING

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Watson called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

2. **ROLL CALL**

Members Present: Mayor Watson, Councilor Bartinik, Jr., Councilor Kolnaski, Councilor Scott, Councilor Sheets and Councilor Streeter

Members Absent: Councilor Bond, Councilor O'Beirne, Jr. and Councilor Wright

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

3. **Calendar and Communications**

Councilor Streeter requested a referral on the study of the fire departments, and Mayor Watson referred it to Public Safety.

Councilor Sheets noted that the revaluation numbers will be available on the web site and she asked Finance staff to confirm that.

Councilor Sheets noted the formation of the Friends of the Animal Shelter and the first meeting on December 7th at the Noank Fire House.

Councilor Bartinik asked that referrals be made in writing so that it is clear what the referral is about.

Town Manager Oefinger noted there was no quorum for Group I earlier in the evening, and he asked that a grant be added to the Committee of the Whole agenda for consideration.

Town Manager Oefinger explained that a challenge grant of up to \$60,000 has been offered by an anonymous individual for the Tercentennial Legacy Playground. During the month of December, staff will be making an extra effort to get the word out and to seek contributions to take advantage of this grant.

Mayor Watson asked if any Councilors wanted to participate in the Holiday Lights Parade.

4. **Approval of Minutes**

None.

5. **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

None.

6. **NEW BUSINESS**

**2006-0295 Overview of Town Departments
Discussed**

mission of Groton Parks and Recreation, stating the adopted inclusion statement, and providing an overview of his divisions. Mr. Silsby described the role and function of the Parks and Recreation Commission. He then noted a Recreational Services Leadership and General Support organizational chart for programs, and reviewed general information, highlights, and concerns associated with the four divisions.

In Recreational Services, the current issues are lack of facility space, identifying alternative resources, the effect of the school project on programs, employee recruitment, teen programming, youth obesity, transportation, and the Tercentennial Legacy Playground.

Future needs are indoor and outdoor facilities, transportation in the form of a disabled bus, a community center, and inclusion programming for the elderly.

Mr. Silsby reviewed the successes of the Senior Center. The current issues in that division are space for classes, employee recruitment, transportation of frail seniors, expansion/renovation of the center, and community awareness.

The future needs are driven by the impact of the baby boomer generation retiring which means more space, in home services, and expansion of the Meals on Wheels program.

In the Parks and Forestry division, the current issues are subdivision (open space) growth, safety, park monitoring on nights and weekends, park maintenance on weekends, turf management, and implementation of the trail plan.

Future needs are resources to care for park/open space growth, provision of weekend maintenance at Sutton Park, drainage at Poquonnock Plains Park, monitoring of Poquonnock Plains and Sutton Parks, continuation of the Park Improvement Plan, and development of master plans for Sutton and Farquhar Parks.

At Shennecossett Golf Course, the current issues are implementing a Point of Sale/Automated Tee Reservation System, e-marketing, growing the fund balance, improving playability through physical changes, installing a wash station, and expanding volunteer training.

Future needs are more resources for marketing, a master plan for physical improvements, implementation of physical improvements including cart paths and drainage, expanded use of the website, and renovations to the clubhouse and maintenance building.

Councilor Kolnaski commended the department on providing programs for all ages.

Councilor Sheets asked about the total number of Groton residents who were enrolled in the programs. Mr. Silsby noted there are 7500 registrants, but some programs do not collect names. The number for meals served at the Senior Center are 100 Meals on Wheels daily (Monday-Friday) and 80 daily at the Senior Center. In response to a question from Councilor Sheets, Mr. Silsby noted that a task force on youth obesity has been organized with representatives from many areas including schools, Parks and Recreation, and Ledge Light Health District. 90% of Parks and Recreation's programs are self-supporting of direct costs. The total FYE 2007 budget for Parks and Recreation is approximately \$2.5 million for three divisions, and \$1.1 million for Golf Course. Mr. Silsby noted that many people are taking advantage of the expanded transportation funded by a recent grant.

Councilor Scott asked for a referral on future open space acquisition. Discussion followed and the Mayor made a referral Committee of the Whole.

Mayor Watson requested a copy of the Trail Plan.

The Committee recessed at 8:01 p.m. and reconvened at 8:19 p.m.

2006-0045

2006 Revaluation

Discussed

Director of Finance Sal Pandolfo, Assessor John Philip, and Melissa Baird of CLT were present to discuss the preliminary results of the 2006 Revaluation. Mr. Pandolfo reviewed a table showing the increase in assessments from 2005 (2001 values) to 2006 for total taxable real estate (not including new construction or remodels), single family homes, condos, and all residential units. Preliminary results were also tabulated by residential neighborhoods for residential units not including condos or mobile homes. Mr. Pandolfo reviewed the percentage of change in assessment and number of residential parcels affected. Formal reviews with CLT begin on Friday and continue through the end of December. The appeal process was outlined in a letter to property owners.

2003-0198

Public Water & Sewer on Flanders Road/Industrial area

Discussed

Town Manager Oefinger is looking for firm direction from the Council on how to proceed with the extension of public water and sewer on Flanders Road. He suggested that the Council may want to establish a committee to work on this project consisting of Town Councilors, RTM members, EDC members, and people from the residential and business communities in the area. The Town pushed for inclusion of this project in the Governor's Diversification Committee list. If the Town is going to be successful in securing the money, it must build a program rather than trying to answer every single question. The Town Manager cautioned the Town Council against sending mixed messages, which was done when \$8.5 million for the connector road was returned to the state. This is a good project, but it is expensive in terms of cost benefit. Not much will happen in terms of development unless the Town plays a role. Extension of the utilities will open up other lands for private development over time, but there needs to be an investment by the community to guide development.

Discussion followed on establishing a committee.

Councilor Sheets yielded the floor to Dave Cote. Mr. Cote noted the project needs strong long-term support from the Town Council. He suggested that remaining funds should be used to study optimum routes A and J identified by the study, as well as the I-95 utility crossing.

\$100,000 has already been appropriated for this study.

2003-0198

Public Water & Sewer on Flanders Road/Industrial area

A motion was made by Councilor Scott, seconded by Councilor Sheets, to recommend a resolution establishing a committee appointed by Mayor Watson consisting of representatives of the RTM (2), Town Council (2), EDC (2), Business Owners (2), Resident (1), Groton Utilities (1), and Planning Commission (1), with a preliminary report provided to the Town Council in 6 months.

The motion carried unanimously

2003-0198

Public Water & Sewer on Flanders Road/Industrial area

Discussed

Mr. Cote, Councilor Sheets and Councilor Bond volunteered to serve on the committee.

2004-0233

Updating the Build Out and Fiscal Impact Analyses

Discussed

Town Manager Oefinger distributed a copy of Workbooklet #10 from the POCD for the Council's review. He also suggested they look at Chapter 11 of the POCD for strategies on how to manage

growth.

Councilor Sheets noted that this study is not as detailed as what Councilor Wright was looking for and it does not consider impact on resources. Councilor Sheets suggested there is software available that can assist in measuring those impacts. She agreed that this should be a Planning Commission effort. The Town Manager suggested that the Committee of Chairpersons meet after the New Year to discuss some of these issues.

2006-0025 Joint Meeting with City Council (2006 Standing Referral)

Discussed

There is a joint meeting with the City Council scheduled for Monday, December 4th at 6:00 p.m. at the City Municipal Building. Discussion followed on possible agenda topics.

2006-0195 Citizen Committee on Property Tax Relief

Tabled

2006-0222 Elderly Tax Freeze Legislation

Discussed

A draft ordinance has been provided by Town Attorney Mike Carey. Mr. Carey is attempting to determine if the proposed lien has the same priority as a regular tax lien. Also, an interest rate needs to be identified. Councilor Bartinik suggested tabling this for as long as a year to allow staff to work with CCM to amend the legislation to clarify the lien's priority. It was noted that this item could be discussed with State Legislators at the special meeting on December 5th at 6:00 p.m.

Councilor Sheets asked if the Town has the authority to allow quarterly payments of real estate taxes rather than semi-annually.

2006-0287 Moratorium on Active Senior Housing Developments

Discussed and Recommended no action taken

The Town Manager stated that there is no role for the Council to play in establishing a moratorium. Only if the Council is the entity that decides zone changes does it have the authority to establish a moratorium. In Groton, it is the Zoning Commission that has that authority. The Council deferred to the Zoning Commission's authority.

2006-0294 Community Foundation of Southeastern Connecticut Grant - Arts Cafe

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

The motion carried unanimously

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

None.

8. OTHER BUSINESS

Councilor Scott disclosed that he is a commercial tenant in downtown Groton. He has reviewed the Economic Strategic Plan and he noted that his landlord, whose property is recommended for major changes, was not consulted and did not have input into the plan. Councilor Scott expressed concern that the focus for downtown Groton is different than what the people that are served in that area envision.

The Town Manager noted that the plan is a 10-20 year plan, and may never be implemented. It is a visual concept plan, and if there is more detailed discussion concerning the downtown, then property owners will be involved.

Councilor Bartinik noted that at a recent Republican Town Committee meeting the Town Council was criticized for not taking a leadership role in economic development in Town.

9. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Councilor Bartinik, seconded by Councilor Kolnaski, to adjourn the meeting at 9:31 p.m.