



Town of Groton, Connecticut

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Meeting Minutes

Town Council Committee of the Whole

Mayor James L. Streeeter, Councilors Bruce S. Flax, Bill Johnson, Catherine Kolnaski, Deborah B. Monteiro, Frank O'Beirne, Jr., Deborah L. Peruzzotti, Paulann H. Sheets, and Harry A. Watson

Tuesday, March 22, 2011

7:00 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

REGULAR MEETING - REVISED

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m.

A motion was made by Councilor Monteiro, seconded by Councilor Sheets, to elect Councilor Watson Mayor pro tem.

The motion carried unanimously.

2. ROLL CALL

Members Present: Councilor Flax, Councilor Monteiro, Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., Councilor Sheets and Councilor Watson

Members Absent: Mayor Streeeter, Councilor Johnson, Councilor Kolnaski and Councilor Peruzzotti

Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger and Executive Assistant Nicki Bresnyan.

3. Calendar and Communications

None.

4. Approval of Minutes

2011-0080 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 meetings of February 15, 2011, February 16, 2011, February 22, 2011, March 8, 2011 (special and regular meetings), and March 15, 2011 are hereby accepted and approved.

A motion was made by Councilor Watson, seconded by Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., to adopt.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Votes: In Favor: 4 - Councilor Flax, Councilor Monteiro, Councilor O'Beirne, Jr. and Councilor Watson
Abstain: 1 - Councilor Sheets

5. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Councilor O'Beirne asked if the state legislators have provided any information on the status of the Minimum Budget Requirement (MBR) and the Town Manager stated no. Councilor O'Beirne cited the statutory reference [Sec. 10-262(i)(d)] and noted it was valid for 2010-2011 only. Councilor O'Beirne explained the MBR. The Town Manager noted that CCM is monitoring this issue. The MBR legislation has expired and there are numerous discussions taking place about extending it or ending it. Staff was asked to e-mail the legislators as a reminder.

Councilor Johnson arrived at 7:08 p.m.

Members Present: Councilor Flax, Councilor Johnson, Councilor Monteiro, Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., Councilor Sheets and Councilor Watson

Members Absent: Mayor Streeeter, Councilor Kolnaski and Councilor Peruzzotti

6. NEW BUSINESS

2011-0079 Tax Abatement Program for Surviving Spouse of a Police Officer**Discussed**

A letter was received from Linda Schneider asking the Town Council to consider providing tax abatements for widows of Groton Town Police. A similar request was received approximately 10 years ago and the Council chose to take no action. Councilor Sheets spoke in support of the proposal, noting that there appears to be very few people who are actually eligible for this type of abatement. Councilor Johnson suggested that if the benefit is offered to one, it should be offered to all. Councilor Flax agreed that these individuals deserve the Town's gratification, but he too is concerned about where it would or should end. Councilor Monteiro agreed with Councilors Johnson and Flax. There are many deserving people including EMTs and the military that should be included. She expressed concern with the "line of duty" wording and what would qualify. Councilor O'Beirne indicated this was the same discussion ten years ago. Councilor Sheets proposed continuing a discussion and tasking a Councilor to draft an ordinance for review. Councilor Monteiro suggested waiting until after the budget discussion to take up the issue again. The Town Manager suggested that it may be appropriate to invite Mrs. Schneider to address the Council when this item is raised in the future. Mayor pro tem Watson suggested the Council send a note to Mrs. Schneider letting her know that her letter was received and discussed.

2009-0284 Judson Avenue Drainage**Discussed**

There will be a public information meeting on the Judson Avenue drainage analysis on March 29th at 6:00 p.m. at the Town Hall Annex. Neighbors have been notified.

2010-0172 FYE 2012 Budget**Discussed**

The public hearing is scheduled for Monday, March 28th at 7:00 p.m. The Town Manager has started meeting with Town employees and will be doing a segment for GMTV. No changes are anticipated to the budget schedule that was recently distributed.

Councilor Flax noted that people are concerned about the 3.4% increase in the budget. He read a line from the budget that indicates the increases are attributable to the Board of Education and Subdivisions. He encouraged citizens to examine the budget to determine where the increases are coming from.

Councilor O'Beirne reminded people that neither the Council nor the RTM have acted on the budget yet. He encouraged people to attend the public hearing.

Councilor Johnson noted that all union contracts are up for negotiation this year. The Town Manager stated that no increases have been proposed in the FYE 2012 budget. A negotiated 1% increase in Town Operations is approximately \$150,000. Councilor Johnson suggested the Council meet to strategize before negotiations and the Council agreed by consensus.

Councilor O'Beirne asked for information on the effects of reducing Fund Balance to 7%.

2011-0078 Annual RTM Budget Meeting**Discussed**

Town Manager Oefinger noted that the proposed date for the annual RTM budget meeting is the last day that the Town Council has to consider the budget. The date was chosen by the Town Clerk. There is a short time frame set by charter for the RTM to hold the meeting, but there are other options including Friday, April 29th; Monday, May 2nd; and Tuesday, May 3rd. The Council asked the Town Manager to review options with the Town Clerk.

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

The motion carried unanimously

7. **Consideration of Committee Referral Items as per Town Council Referral List**
2010-0244 Southeast Area Transit (SEAT) Service Cut
Recommended for Deletion

8. **OTHER BUSINESS**

None

9. **ADJOURNMENT**

A motion was made by Councilor Sheets, seconded by Councilor Flax, to adjourn the meeting at 7:47 p.m.

The motion carried unanimously.