



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 James L. Streeter, 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, September 28, 2010

7:00 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

REGULAR MEETING

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Streeter called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

2. **ROLL CALL**

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

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

3. **Calendar and Communications**

None.

4. **Approval of Minutes**

None.

5. **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

None.

6. **NEW BUSINESS**

**2010-0195 Groton Long Point Police Budget - Request for Supplemental Appropriation
Recommended for a Resolution**

The Town Manager noted the reductions to the Groton Long Point police budget during FYE 2011 budget deliberations by the Town Council and RTM. Bob Congdon, president of the Groton Long Point Association, was present to address the Council.

Mr. Congdon noted that Groton Long Point pays its fair share of taxes and receives very few services. Groton Long Point's budget was submitted with a 0% increase. He feels that the RTM's reduction was a mistake.

Councilor Sheets asked if the Town Manager will submit a request for Groton Long Point's police budget in the FYE 2012 budget. The Town Manager stated that if a figure is submitted by Groton Long Point, he is obligated to include it in his budget.

Councilor O'Beirne feels this is an issue of fairness and Groton Long Point was treated differently than the City of Groton. He feels the Town Council should reconsider.

A motion was made by Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., seconded by Councilor Johnson, to make a \$128,000 supplemental appropriation for the Groton Long Point police budget.

Councilor Monteiro echoed the fairness issue. She noted a public perception that the Town is paying for extra services in Groton Long Point. The Town only pays what it would cost the Town to provide the service. Councilor Watson agreed and mentioned that Groton Long Point and the City agreed during budget deliberations to participate in a Police Assessment. Mr. Congdon explained that the Groton Long Point district mill rate was raised to cover the budget shortfall. Councilor Flax feels that a fair process has already taken place and it is not right to try to overturn the RTM's action.

Councilors Johnson and Sheets and Mayor Streeter expressed support for the motion. Mayor Streeter noted that the supplemental appropriation will have to go to the RTM for approval. Councilor Peruzzotti expressed concern with expending contingency funds so early in the fiscal year when the future is unknown. The decision could be made later in the fiscal year. Mr. Congdon noted the supplemental appropriation request is also "part of the process." Councilor Kolnaski stated she did not agree with the RTM's action, but they will have another chance to consider this.

Councilor Watson asked how the funds will be used since residents are already being taxed. Mr. Congdon indicated the funds will go back in the police budget.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Votes: In Favor: 7 - Mayor Streeter, Councilor Johnson, Councilor Kolnaski, Councilor Monteiro, Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., Councilor Sheets and Councilor Watson
Opposed: 1 - Councilor Flax
Abstain: 1 - Councilor Peruzzotti

2010-0197 Hybrid Vehicle Grant

Discussed

Gary Schneider, Director of Public Works, noted this agreement reserves the dollars for the Town of Groton, but does not commit the Town to purchasing the vehicles. The actual vehicle replacement/purchases must still be approved by the Town Council and RTM as part of the budget process. John Carrington, Assistant Director of Public Works, noted the fuel savings and decreased carbon output associated with hybrid vehicles. He recommends purchasing hybrids since the state pays the cost differential. The vehicles that would be replaced with hybrids are scheduled for replacement anyway as part of the fleet program.

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

The motion carried unanimously

2010-0198 Groton Education Foundation Grant - Senior Center

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

The motion carried unanimously

2006-0100 Thames Street Rehabilitation Study

Discussed

The Town Manager provided a brief update on for the Council. The final report is being prepared and the Thames Street Review Committee expects that it will be presented in mid-October. Mayor Streeter noted that the Committee is recommending the establishment of a committee to promote the project.

2010-0169 Utilization of Commercial Solid Waste Fund Balance

Discussed

This referral was made by Councilor Johnson and the Council has had some preliminary discussions on the issue. Councilor Johnson asked if his numbers were sound. Gary Schneider, Director of Public Works, noted the numbers are correct, except that the back tax issue is not yet resolved. Sal Pandolfo, Director of Finance, estimates that \$275,000 to \$300,000 in back sales taxes will be owed to the state and those funds may come out of the fund balance. Councilor Flax suggested a rebate if the fund balance remains high. Councilor O'Beirne asked what the fund balance should be and what contingencies are necessary. Mr. Schneider stated that auditors look for three months worth of operating budget in contingency. The concern is that people will overpack their dumpsters and exceed estimated weight. Funds generated also pay for cost allocation.

Options are to reduce on the waste side of the equation or to split the reduction between waste and recycling. There are no tipping fees on the recycling side so there are incentives to recycle to

reduce costs. Businesses must also analyze their dumpster needs.

The Council as the Groton Resource Recovery Authority (GRRRA) can change the rates as often as they like with a 60-day public notice. Contractors have a fixed price based on the number of pickups. The reduction would be in the bill to the customer.

Discussion followed on contingency. The Town Manager feels that three months' operating costs is not enough. The fund balance in this account has varied over the years and he would not want to raise costs in the future. The Town Manager would be more comfortable knowing what is owed to the State of Connecticut and having some experience with the new contract.

Letters were sent out to businesses when the sales tax issue was discovered asking about non-profit status, and also to notify for-profit businesses that sales tax would begin to be applied to their bills. It does not appear that there have been a lot of telephone calls to the Town.

Councilor Peruzzotti feels that businesses should be given the opportunity to evaluate the size of their dumpsters to save money before offering rebates. Discussion followed on spending a portion of the funds on the recycling side as well as the waste side as a means to encourage businesses to recycle.

Councilor Kolnaski would like to wait until the beginning of the calendar year to see what happens with the sales tax issue. The Town Manager explained that in theory, the Town is overcharging by approximately \$200,000 and so a rebate of \$200,000 should retain the existing fund balance, not spend it down. Councilor Johnson noted this will also save money for the Town of Groton and Board of Education. The Town Manager indicated that the sales tax issue will not be resolved for a few months. The attempt to obtain legislative relief will take longer. Councilor Monteiro stated she would be more comfortable waiting until the amount owed to the state is known. Discussion followed on the alternatives for passing on the savings to businesses. The Town manager explained that if the Council would like to pursue this, staff can begin working a program so when the ultimate liability to the state is known, the GRRRA will be ready to go. Any rate changes would be done through the GRRRA. A resolution would be required to start the formal process when the Council is ready.

Councilor Peruzzotti expressed support for sending out information to businesses about reducing the sizes of their dumpsters and increasing recycling efforts.

The consensus of the Council was to move forward, with a final determination once the Town's tax liability to the state is identified.

2010-0192

Interlocal Dispatching Agreement with North Stonington

Discussed

This item was discussed at the last Committee of the Whole meeting. The next step is to schedule a public hearing, but a specific date has not yet been identified and will be included in the ultimate resolution.

A motion was made by Councilor Watson, seconded by Councilor Sheets, to schedule a public hearing on the Interlocal Dispatching Agreement with North Stonington.

The motion carried unanimously

2009-0124

Ethics Ordinance

Discussed

The Town Manager asked that any additional comments on the draft ethics ordinance be forwarded to Dean Antipas, Chairman of the Ethics Task Force. The Town Manager feels there is value in referring the draft to the Town Attorney sooner rather than later, and before the document is referred to boards and commissions. The Council concurred.

2010-0172 FYE 2012 Budget**Discussed**

The Town Manager requested clarification about who should be invited to attend the October 16th budget discussion. The Mayor suggested the RTM Moderator and floor leaders. If the suggestions generated at the meeting involve the political subdivisions or the Board of Education, they can be invited to a subsequent meeting.

2010-0026 Terms and Conditions of Town Clerk Employment**Discussed**

Councilors received an opinion from the Town Attorney on this issue. The Mayor suggested tabling consideration of this item to a future meeting so that the Town Attorney can be present.

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

None.

8. OTHER BUSINESS

Mayor Streeter reminded Councilors Flax and Kolnaski that the two school reuse task forces have been established and should begin meeting.

Councilor Flax indicating that he is having difficulty contacting some Noank School Reuse Task Force members.

Councilor Kolnaski will ask staff to e-mail members of the Groton Heights School Reuse Task Force. She is considering meeting on Mondays in the City Municipal Building.

9. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Councilor Kolnaski, seconded by Councilor Monteiro, to adjourn at 8:25 p.m.

The motion carried unanimously.