



Town of Groton, Connecticut

Meeting Minutes

Town Council Committee of the Whole

45 Fort Hill Road
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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

Thursday, December 9, 2010

6:00 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

SPECIAL MEETING - JOINT MEETING WITH GROTON CITY COUNCIL

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Streeter called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

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

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

City of Groton: Popp, Hale, Luck, Galbraith

3. NEW BUSINESS

2010-0250

FYE 2012 City of Groton Highway Budget

Discussed

Mayor Streeter noted that the Council met recently with Groton Long Point to discuss their highway budget request and the purpose of this meeting is to go through the same exercise with the City of Groton. He asked if any budget request from the City was available for discussion purposes and Mayor Popp stated that the City's budget is not due to the Town until February 28th. The Town Manager suggested that the purpose of the Charter provision is to meet early in the budget process and agree ahead of time what the budget will be for the coming year. He described the arbitration process associated with the budget negotiation.

Mayor Popp stated that he did not anticipate coming up with a number any earlier than normal. He is looking for guidelines from the Council. The Town Manager explained that no guidelines have been issued. He went on to explain that FYE 2012 will be the toughest the Town has seen, primarily due to unknown state revenues. There is already a 14.3% gap in education funding from the state.

Mayor Streeter noted that Groton Long Point provided projected figures including CIP projects for a preliminary review with the Council. The Town Council would like to see in advance what the City will be requesting so that it can be reviewed line item by line item.

Town Manager Oefinger stated that he anticipates a negative increase budget. A percent increase or decrease budget is no longer the guideline. People are focused on no increase in taxes. The Town Manager is asking for department budgets that reflect needs and the next step will be to identify budgets at a 5% to 10% reduction from last year's request. There are very few increases in salaries in Town Operations; all labor contracts are expiring and the Town Manager is not expecting any increases.

Councilor Kolnaski noted a time when the Mayor, the Finance Director, and three Councilors would present the budget and then three Town Councilors would review it. The Town Manager suggested that the intent of the Charter is to begin a dialog earlier so that the number included in

the budget is "pre-approved" by the Council.

Councilor Flax noted that it is very difficult to compare budgets when they are in different formats. Mayor Popp feels that the City budget is in the same format as the Town's. The Town Manager noted that the Town has changed its budget format, and he suggested that going through last year's submittal at a workshop. Councilor Flax also asked for suggestions of how to share costs and consolidate services. Mayor Popp stated that only issue in the highway budget is road maintenance.

Councilor Peruzzotti noted that it is helpful to discuss numbers and prioritize projects ahead of time. Mayor Popp stated it is hard to develop numbers ahead of time when state revenues are unknown.

Mayor Streeter would also like to see additional detail on how the highway money is being spent, i.e. identify what sidewalks and roads are being replaced. Councilor Johnson noted that a decision should be made how to show those requests in the budget. The Town would also like to see the City's CIP requests for highway. Mayor Popp noted that in the year of the project, the funds are included in the Operating Budget rather than the CIP. Discussion followed on how to treat CIP projects for the City.

Mayor Streeter noted that the Town Council can discuss budget guidelines at the next meeting and there can be another meeting with the representatives from the City in the future.

Discussion followed on the fact that the RTM reviews and can potentially reduce the City's CIP requests. The Town Manager noted that at the time the City Charter was written, the RTM didn't exist and in the Town, RTM review of CIP projects is part of the budget process.

Galbraith suggested identifying what issues need to be discussed and what information Councilors need to familiarize themselves with and then identify a time line to do it. Luck asked for a copy of the information that outlines the procedure and it was noted that it is outlined in the legislation that established the City of Groton.

Councilor Flax asked what happens to leftover funds from City CIP projects and Mayor Popp responded that they go into designated funds. Councilor Flax asked fir the funds provided by the Town are ever returned to the Town and Mayor Popp stated no, the funds are used to reduce operating budgets.

The Town Manager suggested that Councilors look at the overall City budget to try to answer some questions.

The next meeting was tentatively scheduled for January 25, 2011 at 6:00 p.m.

4. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Councilor Flax, seconded by Councilor Watson, to adjourn the meeting at 6:58 p.m.

The motion carried unanimously.