



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 Bruce Flax, Councilors Dean G. Antipas, Diane Barber, Joe de la Cruz, Greg Grim, Karen F. Morton, Bonnie Nault, Deb Peruzzotti, and Harry A. Watson

Tuesday, January 12, 2016

6:00 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

REGULAR MEETING

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

2. ROLL CALL

Members Present: Mayor Flax, Councilor Barber, Councilor Grim, Councilor Antipas, Councilor Morton, Councilor Nault, Councilor Peruzzotti and Councilor Watson
Members Absent: Councilor de la Cruz

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

3. Calendar and Communications

Councilor Nault noted a Connecticut stakeholders meeting for the Submarine Centennial on January 20th at 11:00 a.m. at Subvets. Councilor Grim heard from Steve Woodruff regarding a petition submitted to the Planning Commission in support of changing the NMDD requirements.

Councilor de la Cruz arrived at 6:07 p.m.

Members Present: Mayor Flax, Councilor Barber, Councilor Grim, Councilor Antipas, Councilor Morton, Councilor Nault, Councilor de la Cruz, Councilor Peruzzotti and Councilor Watson

4. Approval of Minutes

2016-0018 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 October 13, 2015, October 20, 2015, October 21, 2015, October 27, 2015, November 10, 2015, December 8, 2015, December 15, 2015, and January 5, 2016 are hereby accepted and approved.

A motion was made by Councilor Grim, seconded by Councilor Peruzzotti, Town Manager Oefinger clarified that Councilors do not have to be present at a meeting to vote on the minutes.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Votes: In Favor: 6 - Mayor Flax, Councilor Antipas, Councilor Morton, Councilor de la Cruz, Councilor Peruzzotti and Councilor Watson

Abstain: 3 - Councilor Barber, Councilor Grim and Councilor Nault

5. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Councilor Nault asked that the referral on the Town Clerk's compensation be placed on the next Committee of the Whole agenda.

6. NEW BUSINESS

2015-0302 Economic Development Commission Annual Report Presentation

Discussed and Recommended no action taken

Susan Dowling, the former Chair of the Economic Development Commission (EDC), presented the Annual Report for the Commission. She introduced other members of the EDC who were in the audience. Ms. Dowling noted the high level of expertise and diverse backgrounds of

Commissioners. During 2015, the EDC established a subcommittee that reviewed and updated the bylaws. The EDC continues to work closely with Town staff to support economic development. Ms. Dowling read the six goals adopted by the EDC after utilizing a Strategic Planning Committee. In 2015, Commissioners took advantage of a number of training opportunities and conferences and attended local business meetings. Liaisons from a number of groups attended EDC meetings and brought things to the attention of Commissioners. Ms. Dowling noted signs of revitalization in the business community. She explained that members of other commissions and Town departments have been invited to speak at EDC meetings to foster collaboration.

Ms. Dowling reviewed five recommended actions for the EDC: communicating and working with other commissions; creating a Strategic Planning Workshop; advocating for proposed amendments to land use regulations; providing a forum for existing and prospective businesses; and coordinating with staff to attract quality businesses.

Paige Bronk, Economic/Community Development Manager, updated the Council on the status of the marketing analysis. Draft reports are on the Town's web site.

It was noted that the Council receives complaints about the empty storefronts in Groton, and it was suggested that they be forwarded to the Town Manager to be handled by staff.

Mr. Bronk noted that the marketing analysis addresses not only Groton's weaknesses, but also its strengths and how to market them. Groton's strengths include such things as transportation, the coastline, and open space and recreation, and Mr. Bronk agreed with the need to establish Groton's identity.

Ms. Dowling discussed the goal of working together with the City of Groton Economic Development Commission.

Mayor Flax thanked Ms. Dowling for the presentation.

2016-0004

Revised Position Descriptions (2016 Standing Referral)

Discussed

Robert Zagami, Director of Human Resources, described the effort to update a number of job descriptions due to age, for cost control, and/or to update skill sets. Positions reviewed were Human Resources Assistant; Telecommunicators II, III and IV; Budget Analyst and Coordinator; Skilled Building Technician; Civil Engineer; Deputy Chief of Police; and Economic Development Specialist. Mr. Zagami was joined by Town Manager Oefinger, Director of Finance Cindy Landry, Director of Public Works Gary Schneider, Police Chief L. J. Fusaro, and Economic/Community Development Manager Paige Bronk to explain the rationale for, and modifications to, the various job descriptions and to answer Councilors' questions.

Significant discussion occurred on the cost differential between the Inspector II position and the proposed Civil Engineer replacement position, the amount of available work, and the impact on the budget for outside consultants. The Council also discussed the need for the Economic Development Specialist position, which the Town Manager described as a "critical position" if Groton wants to promote economic development.

Mr. Zagami distributed pay plans for comparison purposes. Councilor Grim requested a table showing overall savings associated with the proposed changes and the Mayor asked the Town Manager to provide it.

Discussion followed on shared maintenance services with the Board of Education (both existing and future opportunities). Town Manager Oefinger noted that people are needed to do the work whether the work is shared with the Board of Education or not. The Town needs resources to take

care of its buildings.

A motion was made by Councilor Peruzzotti, seconded by Councilor Watson, to approve the revised job descriptions as presented.

The motion carried unanimously

Discussed

During the discussion on job descriptions, three Councilors expressed support for filling the Grant Writer position. The Town Manager solicited comments from the other Councilors and provided a brief overview of the position for new Councilors. Comments were generally supportive.

2015-0300

Solar Panel Farm on Flanders Road Landfill

Discussed

Rick Norris, Sustainability Program Project Manager, provided a brief overview of efforts to establish a solar array at the closed landfill on Flanders Road. Dan Duffy from Geosyntec and Del Jones of Green Harbor Energy reviewed a PowerPoint presentation covering the benefits of a solar panel farm; the desirability of the Flanders Road landfill site for the use; Geosyntec's qualifications; the solar development process and steps; and options for the Town for developing solar energy. The next steps would be for Geosyntec to obtain an option to lease the landfill property from the Town, which will allow Geosyntec to conduct a feasibility study (at no cost to the Town) and negotiate a long term lease if the project is feasible. Mr. Jones addressed Councilors' questions about the project.

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

In response to Councilor Antipas, Mr. Jones cited the unique qualifications of Geosyntec and Green Harbor Energy as reasons for the Town to enter into an Option to Lease with them.

The motion carried unanimously

The Committee of the Whole recessed at 8:40 p.m. and reconvened at 8:45 p.m.

2015-0301

Clean Energy Communities Municipal Pledge

Discussed

Rick Norris, Sustainability Program Project Manager, described a program for municipalities whereby they pledge energy reduction and support for clean, renewable energy. This initiative has been recommended by the Energy, Efficiency and Conservation Commission. The pledge supports the Town's energy goals and the energy policy that is already in place. The existing policy will be reviewed and modified to align with the goals of the municipal pledge and other changes that are coming in energy conservation. Mr. Norris described aspects of the program and asked the Council to authorize the Town Manager to sign the pledge.

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

The motion carried unanimously

2016-0019

Agreement to Reinstate and Extend 1995 AHEPA Tax Abatement Agreement

Discussed

Town Manager Oefinger explained that AHEPA, which owns an affordable apartment building for the elderly on Drozdyk Drive, entered into an agreement with the Town in 1995 for a tax abatement for a term of five years, renewable for four five-year terms. AHEPA neglected to file for an extension and this is a request to reinstate the agreement under the original terms. Councilor Antipas provided background on the organization and indicated he would abstain from voting because he is a member of a different, related, organization.

If the agreement is not reinstated, AHEPA will have to pay their full share of taxes.

A motion was made by Councilor Peruzzotti, seconded by Councilor Morton, that this matter be

Recommended for a Resolution.**The motion carried by the following vote:**

Votes: In Favor: 8 - Mayor Flax, Councilor Barber, Councilor Grim, Councilor Morton, Councilor Nault, Councilor de la Cruz, Councilor Peruzzotti and Councilor Watson
Abstain: 1 - Councilor Antipas

2016-0020 Agreement with Ledyard to Detain Ledyard Arrestees at Groton Police Department**Discussed**

Town Manager Oefinger distributed a draft agreement between the Town of Groton and Town of Ledyard to detain Ledyard arrestees at the Groton Police Department. The agreement has been reviewed by the Chief of Police and the Town Attorney, as well as the Town's Risk Manager. Police Chief L. J. Fusaro explained that the Town of Ledyard has decided to operate its own police department rather than participate in the Resident State Trooper program. Ledyard will be building a new police department and they have asked Groton to house Ledyard prisoners while the building is under construction. The agreement is for a finite length of time, estimated to be February through September. The Mashantuckets have their own police department separate from Ledyard. Chief Fusaro stated that Groton has adequate facilities for typical incidents. There will be no benefit to the Town except the goodwill of helping out a neighboring community and no cost to the Town. All expenses will be reimbursed by Ledyard.

Councilor Peruzzotti left the meeting at 9:08 p.m.

Roll Call: Members Present: Mayor Flax, Councilor Barber, Councilor Grim, Councilor Antipas, Councilor Morton, Councilor Nault, Councilor de la Cruz and Councilor Watson
Members Absent: Councilor Peruzzotti

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

The motion carried unanimously

Councilor Peruzzotti returned to the meeting.

Members Present: Mayor Flax, Councilor Barber, Councilor Grim, Councilor Antipas, Councilor Morton, Councilor Nault, Councilor de la Cruz, Councilor Peruzzotti and Councilor Watson

2015-0136 Effects of Heroin on the Community**Discussed**

Councilor de la Cruz noted that SALOH is out of drug testing kits, which they were distributing at a lower cost than if they were purchased at CVS. Councilor de la Cruz suggested that kits could be made available at the Groton Police Department as they are in other towns. SALOH has recently applied for 501(c)3 and the group cannot accept donations until the non-profit status is in place. Councilor Grim suggested funding the kits through donations to the Police Department. The Town Manager stated an account could be set up to accept donations. He indicated he would get additional information from Councilor de la Cruz about how to purchase the kits and work to establish a protocol for distributing the kits from the Police Department.

Councilor de la Cruz noted that SALOH's next meeting is on January 20th from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the Library. He added that long term, he would like to have the kits distributed by the Town.

2014-0312 School Facilities Initiative Update**Discussed**

Town Manager Oefinger explained that there have been a number of discussions with local legislators to better position the Town to receive consideration for allowing all three proposed new schools to receive a higher reimbursement rate. The School Facilities Initiative Task Force has done its job and it needs to transmit its recommendation to the Town Council so that the Council can begin its deliberations and start the referendum process for November 2016. As the

legislative/policy-making body, The Town Council should also participate in the legislative discussions. The Task Force will continue to advocate for the project.

The Council has received a request from Task Force Chairman Heller to appoint Lenny Winkler to the Task Force. So as not to increase the size of the Task Force and increase the quorum number, the Town Manager recommends that the vacant School Administrator position be changed to a Citizen at Large position so that Ms. Winkler can be appointed.

A motion was made by Councilor Peruzzotti, seconded by Councilor Nault, to change the School Administrator position to a Citizen at Large position on the School Facilities Initiative Task Force and to appoint Lenny Winkler.

The motion carried unanimously

2016-0013 Miscellaneous and Ad Hoc Committee Appointments

Recommended for a Resolution

Councilors reviewed the list of miscellaneous and ad hoc committee appointments and volunteered for vacant positions and/or reaffirmed other appointees by consensus.

2016-0009 Joint Meeting with Board of Education (2016 Standing Referral)

Discussed

Town Manager Oefinger and Councilors discussed topics for discussion with the Board of Education at the upcoming joint meeting on January 19th as follows:

*FYE 2016 Adjustments
FYE 2017 Budget (1/2/16 Article)
School Facilities Update
School Resource Officer at Middle School
Shared Services
Outsourcing by Board of Education
Cost of Sending Students Out of District*

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

Recommended for Deletion:

2013-0203 Sales Tax on Commercial Solid Waste Collection - Update

Recommended for Deletion

2014-0137 City Highway Budget

Recommended for Deletion

2014-0202 City Highway Budget Committee - Update

Recommended for Deletion

2014-0313 Review of Town Services

Recommended for Deletion

2015-0040 FYE 2016 Budget - Finance Committee Discussion

Recommended for Deletion

2015-0052 Poquonnock Bridge Fire District Issues

Recommended for Deletion

2015-0132 State Funding for Education

Recommended for Deletion

2015-0133 Federal Funding for IDEA

Recommended for Deletion

2015-0134 Civilian School Children Residing in Navy Housing

- 2015-0135 **Recommended for Deletion**
State Mandates for Education
- 2015-0161 **Recommended for Deletion**
Town Fire Marshal and Town Fire Inspector Position(s)
- 2015-0199 **Recommended for Deletion**
Emergency Medical Services for R-1 and Ambulance Service

8. OTHER BUSINESS

With respect to the FYE 2017 budget, Councilor Morton suggested that the Town Council give some thought to prioritizing services provided to taxpayers (i.e., needs vs. wants, essential vs. non-essential).

9. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Councilor Watson, seconded by Councilor Barber, to adjourn the meeting at 10:07 p.m.

The motion carried unanimously.