



# 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, Greg Grim, Rich Moravsik, Karen F. Morton, Bonnie Nault, Deb Peruzzotti, and Harry A. Watson**

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Tuesday, January 24, 2017

6:00 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

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#### REGULAR MEETING

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**1. CALL TO ORDER**

*Mayor Flax called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.*

**2. ROLL CALL**

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

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

**3. Calendar and Communications**

*- Letter from Parks and Recreation Commission*

*Mayor Flax noted that this letter concerns the need for additional recreation fields in the Town. Town Manager Oefinger advised that this issue will be discussed as part of a Parks and Recreation presentation that is tentatively scheduled for the February 14th Committee of the Whole meeting.*

**4. Approval of Minutes - None**

**5. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

*None.*

**6. NEW BUSINESS**

**2017-0022 FYE 2016 CAFR**

**Discussed**

*Director of Finance Cindy Landry, Town Treasurer Deb Miner, Groton Public Schools Business Manager Don Meltabarger, and Leslie Zoll and Vanessa Rositto from Blum Shapiro were present.*

*Ms. Landry noted the audit documents that were provided to the Town Council.*

*Ms. Rositto reviewed the auditor's communication and noted that a new accounting standard (GASB 72) has been implemented that analyzes the Town's investments. Blum Shapiro evaluated key assumptions relative to investments and found them reasonable. There were no difficulties during the audit or disagreements with management. The auditor's opinion letter indicates that the Town's financial statements are in accordance with auditing standards.*

*Ms. Rositto reviewed various sections of the audit and answered questions from Councilors.*

*Ms. Zoll reviewed the federal and state audits. There were no compliance issues and Blum Shapiro issued an unmodified or clean opinion.*

*The management letter provides constructive suggestions on things observed during the audit. Blum Shapiro is recommending that the Town consider a fraud risk assessment and instituting a*

*fraud tip line and whistleblower policy. Ms. Landry noted that costs for the tip line will be included in the FYE 2018 budget.*

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

**The motion carried unanimously**

**2016-0308 Economic Development Commission Annual Report Presentation**

**Discussed and Recommended no action taken**

*David Preka, Chairman of the EDC along with EDC members Dave Cote and Susan Dowling were present to address the Town Council. Also present was Paige Bronk, Manager of Economic and Community Development. Mr. Preka reviewed the written annual report while those present provided additional comments.*

*Mr. Bronk and Mr. Preka responded to questions from Councilors. The Council thanked them for their attendance.*

**2017-0025 Small Cities Community Development Block Grant - 2017 Application**

**Discussed**

*Paige Bronk, Manager of Community and Economic Development, explained that the Town has the opportunity to apply to HUD for Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding. Last year, the Town received \$800,000 for improvements at Pequot Village. This year, the Town would like to apply for \$800,000 for a public housing modernization project at Mystic River Homes. The first step is for the Council to conduct a public hearing and the recommended date is March 7th. Mr. Bronk noted that Mystic River Homes will provide the match for the grant, so there is no cost to the Town.*

**A motion was made by Councilor Watson, seconded by Councilor Antipas, to schedule a public hearing on the 2017 Small Cities Community Development Block Grant application on March 7, 2017.**

**The motion carried unanimously**

**2017-0012 Joint Meeting with Stonington Board of Selectmen (2017 Standing Referral)**

**Discussed**

*- North Stonington Road Bridge*

*Stonington First Selectman Rob Simmons, Selectman Michael Spellman, and Old Mystic Fire Chief Ken Richards were present to address the Council. Mayor Flax noted that the Town Council was discussing CIP projects and the cost associated with this project. Mr. Simmons provided background on the Whitford Brook bridge repair project. Stonington committed to participating 50/50 if Groton took the lead. Mr. Simmons noted the importance of the bridge to public safety and the possible delay in fire department response if there is an issue at the Old Mystic General Store intersection.*

*Town Manager Oefinger noted that Groton's and Stonington's contributions at this point would be \$309,000 each. Mr. Simmons stated that he would be submitting a CIP project.*

*Councilor Morton asked about the potential for extending water to the Groton side, potentially at a lower cost than reconstructing the bridge. Chief Richards noted that the trucks would still have turning problems at the intersection. Discussion followed on addressing the illegal parking and other enforcement issues at the intersection.*

*Chief Richards expressed his concern with the potential for an accident at the intersection. Mr. Spellman echoed the importance of the safety considerations.*

*Town Manager Oefinger stated he is confident that the towns will receive the state grant for the*

project. If the Town passes on the opportunity, it may be difficult to get back on the list for future funding.

Mayor Flax discussed looking at alternatives that would still address safety concerns and that may save both towns money. Discussion followed and the majority of Councilors were supportive of moving forward with the project.

Councilor Antipas left the meeting at 7:55 p.m.

**Roll Call:** Members Present: Mayor Flax, Councilor Barber, Councilor Morton, Councilor Nault, Councilor Watson and Councilor Moravsik  
Members Absent: Councilor Grim, Councilor Antipas and Councilor Peruzzotti

**2017-0021 FYE 2017 Contingency Transfer for Support of the Charter Revision Commission**

**Discussed**

The Town Council previously approved a \$7,000 transfer from Contingency to the Town Clerk function for the Charter Revision effort, but in preparing the FYE 2018 budget, Finance has determined that the funds should have been transferred to the Legislative function instead.

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

**The motion carried unanimously**

**2017-0024 Connecticut Humanities Grant**

**Discussed**

Town Manager Oefinger explained the request by the Library to submit a grant application in the amount of \$4,908 to purchase archival storage materials for the James L. Streeter local history collection.

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

**The motion carried unanimously**

**2016-0260 FYE 2018 Budget Discussion**

**Discussed**

- Capital Improvement Program Projects

Town Manager Oefinger distributed a refined list of recommended CIP projects. The original \$6 million request by departments had already been cut to \$3.7 million before the Council reviewed it. The Town Manager reviewed the revised list and his thoughts on each project.

Mayor Flax cited the Tanglewood Park and Spicer House projects as low priorities.

The Committee of the Whole recessed at 8:27 p.m. and reconvened at 8:36 p.m.

- Budget Review Calendar

Mayor Flax stated he is not available on April 1st. Councilor Barber is not available on Saturday mornings.

Councilor confirmed the calendar including the two Saturdays and one meeting with the Board of Education.

**2016-0244 Charter Revision - Update**

**Discussed**

Mayor Flax asked to have this item on the agenda. He noted receipt of a call from Dee Hauber, Chair of the Charter Revision Commission (CRC), asking if the Town's search for a new Town

*Manager has any effect on the CRC effort. The consensus of the Committee was that the search has no effect.*

**2017-0023 Bluff Point Tree Cutting**

**Discussed**

*Town Manager Oefinger distributed EIS information on the Bluff Point tree cutting proposal to the Town Council by e-mail. He asked if the Council wants to take a position on the issue, and noted that the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection expects to make significant recommendations.*

*Discussion followed on topping select trees versus clear cutting. Mayor Flax requested a letter be sent noting that Bluff Point is very valuable and a recreational jewel of the Town. The Council hopes the state will proceed with caution and conduct minimal clearing.*

*Councilor Antipas returned to the meeting at 8:44 p.m.*

**Roll Call:** Members Present: Mayor Flax, Councilor Barber, Councilor Antipas, Councilor Morton, Councilor Nault, Councilor Watson and Councilor Moravsik  
Members Absent: Councilor Grim and Councilor Peruzzotti

**2017-0027 Contingency Transfer for Town Manager Recruitment Services**

**Discussed**

*The Town Council previously authorized the hiring of a consultant for the town manager recruitment effort, which requires a supplemental appropriation. Town Manager Oefinger recommended a transfer from Contingency into the Legislative or Human Resources function. It was decided that the transfer would not exceed \$24,000 and that it would be directed to the Human Resources function.*

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

**The motion carried unanimously**

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

**Recommended for Deletion:**

**2016-0239 DEEP/GOSA Tilcon Property Purchase**

**Recommended for Deletion**

**8. OTHER BUSINESS**

*Mayor Flax noted that it was discussed as a SCCOG meeting that the state is considering bond forgiveness of loans to Groton Utilities in excess of \$20 million. Mayor Flax would like to reach out to state legislators to recommend that Groton Utilities reconsider opening up the reservoir lands to complete the tri-town trail. Discussion followed and the consensus was to send a letter to state legislators and SCCOG making the recommendation.*

**9. ADJOURNMENT**

*A motion was made by Councilor Watson, seconded by Councilor Nault, to adjourn the meeting at 9:00 p.m.*

*The motion carried unanimously.*