



Town of Groton, Connecticut

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Meeting Minutes

Town Council Committee of the Whole

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, February 9, 2016

6:00 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

REGULAR MEETING

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Flax called the meeting to order at 6:07 p.m.

2. **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

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

3. **Calendar and Communications**

Councilor Barber attended a tour of the Library on Saturday. She noted that she heard from people interested in serving on the Charter Revision Commission. Councilor Barber also attended her first Economic Development Commission meeting and she thanked Paige Bronk, Economic/Community Development Manager, for reaching out to a new business in Town.

Councilor Morton attended and reported on a forum in Jewett City held by the Eastern Connecticut Emergency Services Council,

Councilor Nault attended the City's Economic Development Commission meeting and noted they are interested in combining with the Town.

4. **Approval of Minutes**

2016-0038 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 January 19, 2016, January 26, 2016, and February 2, 2016 are hereby accepted and approved.

A motion was made by Councilor Antipas, seconded by Councilor Barber, to adopt.

The motion carried unanimously

5. **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

None.

6. **NEW BUSINESS**

2016-0021 Proposed Adjustments to Police Retiree Pension Benefits

Discussed

Bob Zagami, Director of Human Resources, noted that information was requested from the Town's actuarial firm on local Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) increases (which average 2%) and the cost to the Town for non-union and union Police retirees. For non-union Police retirees, the annual increase in benefit would be \$7,550. The Unfunded Actuarial Accrued Liability is \$72,303, which would result in additional Town funding over 24 years of \$6,241 annually. For union Police retirees, the annual increase in benefit would be \$22,961. The Unfunded Actuarial

Accrued Liability is \$233,452, which would result in additional Town funding over 24 years of \$20,149 annually. Mr. Zagami noted that this is a policy decision of the Town Council and should be based on fairness and fiduciary responsibility.

Councilor Morton noted that she would be abstaining from the discussion and vote because her husband is a Police retiree.

Councilor Grim questioned the Town's fiduciary responsibility in this matter. Town Manager Oefinger noted this is a balancing act and budget constraints are also a fiduciary responsibility. The Retirement Board manages the fund, but it is the Council that makes decisions about COLAs with the understanding of what the increase in annual costs will be. The Town has received these requests pretty regularly, but they have been handled at the staff level. Each bargaining group has the right to request a COLA every year. The Town Manager noted that pensions are based on earnings and non-union personnel do not receive any overtime.

Mayor Flax stated the Town must look at the big picture and be prepared for other groups to request COLAs as well. From a financial standpoint, this year is not a good time and he would not support a COLA. Councilor de la Cruz asked to see the impact that would be associated with approving a COLA for all retirees.

Town Manager Oefinger noted that the benefit increases would take effect July 1, 2016, but the Town's increased contribution would not appear in the budget for a couple of years.

The Town Manager was asked to provide a chart of all unions, the dates of the most recent COLAs, and the impact of future COLAs.

2016-0046 Miscellaneous and Ad Hoc Committee Appointments

Discussed

Jim Loughlin spoke and recommended Bill Johnson for appointment to the Cable Television Advisory Council.

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

The motion carried unanimously

2016-0036 Small Cities Community Development Block Grant - 2016 Application

Discussed

Paige Bronk, Economic/Community Development Manager, requested approval to submit a Small Cities Community Development Block Grant application. For the last few years, the state's top priority has been housing. This application would be for \$800,000 to assist the Groton Housing Authority with the Pequot Village property. Mr. Bronk requested a public hearing on March 15th. The application deadline is April 11th. Mr. Bronk provided a brief overview of a substantial renovation project at Pequot Village that is almost complete, and the plans for the new funding. The grant will be written in conjunction with ECHO.

A motion was made by Councilor Barber, seconded by Councilor Nault, to schedule a public hearing on the Small Cities Community Development Block Grant 2016 Application for March 15, 2016.

The motion carried unanimously

2016-0033 Establishment of Shared Services Task Force with Board of Education

Recommended for a Resolution

Councilor Watson reported on the discussion of establishing a Shared Services Committee with staff participation at the Town Council/RTM/Board of Education Liaison Committee meeting. Board of Education members present were supportive.

Mayor Flax expressed his support for the committee. Councilor Grim suggested giving them a strong charter to merge services. Councilor Barber would like to merge departments. Councilor Antipas suggested requiring a report in a specific amount of time. The consensus was to have Mayor Flax contact the Chair of the Board of Education to discuss the committee, and to develop a resolution of support.

2016-0032 National League of Cities Membership

Discussed

Town Manager Oefinger noted the cost for two people to attend the conference is approximately \$5,000. There is some professional development funding in Legislative Support, but the remaining funds must be found in the Town Manager's budget. Also, Councilors must attend the conference with a legislative agenda supported by the Town Council. Discussion followed on asking the Board of Education to contribute to the cost, how many Councilors to send, and issues papers previously provided to federal legislators. The general consensus was to send two Councilors to the conference.

Possible issues include:

- Non-Navy children in Navy housing
- Special Education funding restoration
- Sub Century - Official naming of Groton as Submarine Capital of the World
- Electric Boat Contracts

A motion was made by Councilor de la Cruz, seconded by Councilor Barber, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Votes: In Favor: 7 - Mayor Flax, Councilor Barber, Councilor Grim, Councilor Antipas, Councilor Morton, Councilor de la Cruz and Councilor Watson
Abstain: 1 - Councilor Nault

2015-0298 Establishment of a Charter Revision Commission

Discussed

Town Manager Oefinger distributed information on additional people who have expressed an interest in serving on the Charter Revision Commission (CRC). The Town Council has 30 days to appoint people after establishing the CRC.

Discussion followed on conducting interviews before or after establishing the Commission. The Council must identify the size of the Commission (5 to 15 people) and areas that the Council would like the Commission to consider.

The consensus was to interview those interested in serving before establishing the Commission. Staff was asked to develop a list of those interested and an application based on the boards and commissions appointment application to forward to them. The Town Council will develop a meeting schedule for interviews.

2016-0041 Sub Century Events

Discussed

Mayor Flax noted some ideas for Sub Century events including reversing the direction of the July 4th parade so that it ends at Poquonnock Plains Park for a community-wide celebration. Other ideas are having the Subvets lead the parade as 'Grand Marshal' and having a parade of the CT Sub Trail subs. Mayor Galbraith will be giving a presentation on Sub Century at the Groton Business Association meeting on February 18th at 7:30 a.m. at Electric Boat. Councilor Nault mentioned the possibility of a submarine race and golf tournament.

2015-0285 Town Council Orientation

Discussed

Discussion followed on whether or not to conduct any further orientation.

2016-0023 Town Council Goal Setting

Discussed

A special meeting of the Committee of the Whole was scheduled for February 16th at 5:30 p.m. to discuss goal setting, followed by orientation as time permits.

2016-0005 Pending Litigation (2016 Standing Referral)

Discussed

Town Manager Oefinger explained that this agenda item is to continue the discussion concerning the Pettini lawsuit.

A motion was made by Councilor Watson, seconded by Councilor Nault, to enter executive session at 7:33 p.m. to discuss #2016-0005 Pending Litigation and to invite the Town Manager to attend.

The motion carried unanimously

Discussed

The executive session ended at 8:10 p.m.

A motion was made by Councilor Watson, seconded by Councilor Nault, to use Capital Reserve to pay \$600,070.05 to Pettini Construction Corp. in accordance with the arbitrator's judgment and corrected final award.

The motion carried unanimously

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

None.

8. OTHER BUSINESS

None.

9. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:25 p.m.