



Town of Groton, Connecticut

Meeting Minutes

Town Council Committee of the Whole

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Town Clerk 860-441-6640
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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

Tuesday, February 14, 2017

6:00 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

REGULAR MEETING

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Flax called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

2. **ROLL CALL**

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

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

3. **Calendar and Communications**

None

4. **Approval of Minutes**

2017-0026 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 10, 2017, January 13, 2017, January 17, 2017, and January 24, 2017 are hereby accepted and approved.

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

The motion carried unanimously

5. **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

None.

6. **NEW BUSINESS**

2016-0260 FYE 2018 Budget Discussion

Discussed

Town Manager Oefinger noted the press conference yesterday regarding the Governor's biennial budget proposal. State legislators will not be present tonight, but will be invited to the Committee of the Whole meeting on February 28th. The Town Manager is currently preparing the Town's FYE 2018 budget, but he does not know yet what will be put in for revenues. The Town will likely not have a revenue resolution until well after March 15th when the Proposed Budget is presented, and possibly not even until June.

Councilor Watson arrived at 6:03 p.m.

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

Discussed

Mayor Flax asked what the options are if the revenues come in after the budget is approved by the

Town Council. Town Manager Oefinger stated that if the budget is approved under certain assumptions and they are far off the mark, the Town Council and RTM have the ability to put a hold on dollars. The Town can also send out a supplemental tax bill, which has been done in other communities.

Councilor Nault suggested talking to the Captain of the Submarine Base regarding special needs students in the Navy population which may be skewing the Governor's calculations for Education Cost Sharing.

2017-0040 Groton Recreational Fields Project - Presentation

Discussed

Mark Berry, Director of Parks and Recreation, introduced Chad Frost of Kent + Frost and Michael N'dolo of Camoin Associates who gave a PowerPoint presentation.

Mr. Frost provided an overview of the recreational field needs assessment that was conducted in 2014. Recommended facilities to meet demand in 2014 were four regulation rectangles, one U10 regulation rectangle, and five ballfields. The report originally recommended the facilities be located on the Merritt property, but the Groton 2020 school plan approved construction of a middle school on the site. Mr. Frost has evaluated the impact of the Groton 2020 school plan on fields and recalculated the number of facilities needed to meet demand. The new findings are one ballfield, two full size rectangles, and five ballfields. The consultant is recommending a Town wide approach to fields that would allow tournament play with consolidated maintenance and programming.

Mr. N'dolo looked specifically at the economic impacts of recreational fields. He described the project analysis, questions to be addressed by the study, and the methodology. Three case study communities were used: Falmouth, ME; Essex, VT; and Lancaster, MA. Camoin generated spending estimates and job impacts based on the potential number and size of tournaments.

Mr. Frost is recommending that the Town consider a Town-wide approach to athletic needs that would facilitate tournament play rather than building independent facilities around the Town, noting that destination recreation would work well in Mystic.

Mr. Frost summarized the points in the presentation and answered Councilors' questions. Mr. Berry noted that the FYE 2018 through FYE 2023 Capital Improvement Program includes a project related to fields.

2016-0204 Review of Town Services and Operations

Discussed

- Parks and Recreation

Mark Berry, Director of Parks and Recreation, Jerry Lokken, Manager of Recreation Services, and Mary Jo Riley, Senior Center Coordinator were present. Mr. Berry noted they would be presenting brief highlights of initiatives undertaken in the last several months in the areas of customer service, generating revenues, and reducing costs.

In Parks, a moisture control sensor has been installed at Poquonnock Plains in the hope of reducing water consumption. The department has reallocated responsibilities to eliminate a part-time position and is using volunteers as often as possible. Growth inhibitors are being applied on some fields and wildflowers planted to reduce mowing.

In Recreation Services, the department has maintained the level of programs and increased cost recovery. Staff continues to work with the Groton Business Association and business community on special events. New software has been implemented to allow easier program registration on

line. Volunteers are being utilized for projects. Overall, staff is working to keep programs affordable to serve the whole community, which will be a continuing challenge.

The Senior Center continues to provide transportation services, but it is difficult to find drivers. The Senior Center now hosts the Community Meals program. Staff has identified sponsors for fundraising and new programs, and free training for new programs. Groton works with senior centers in the region on programs. RecTrac has been implemented which allows on line registration and reduces staff time. Staff is investigating the creation of a legacy program and becoming a Silver Sneakers site. The Senior Center is also expanding volunteer recruitment to assist with programs.

Staff responded to questions/comments from Councilors on topics such as special needs programs and shared services with the City.

2017-0028 Use of Recreation and Senior Activities Food Concession Fund for Purchase of a Convection Oven

Discussed

Mark Berry, Director of Parks and Recreation, and Mary Jo Riley, Senior Center Coordinator, were present to request authorization to use the special revenue fund to replace a convection oven that is 41 years old and no longer repairable. The oven is essential to the operations of the Senior Center. Groton Community Meals has approved \$500 toward the purchase of the oven, reducing use of fund balance to \$4,440.

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

The motion carried unanimously

2017-0006 Labor Negotiations (2017 Standing Referral)

A motion was made by Mayor Flax, seconded by Councilor Watson, that the Town Council Committee of the Whole, along with Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Human Resources Director Robert Zagami, and Town Attorney Eileen Duggan go into executive session at 7:35 p.m. for the purposes of discussing strategy and/or negotiations with respect to pending collective bargaining negotiations with multiple bargaining units. This action is taken without prejudice to the Council's right to discuss these matters in a private meeting pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes Section 1-200(2).

The motion carried unanimously

Discussed

The executive session concluded at 8:18 p.m.

2017-0037 Contingency Transfer - Non-Departmentals/Insurance and Claims

Discussed

Director of Human Resources Bob Zagami requested approval of a transfer from Contingency for insurance and claims. Administration and Claim Payments and Unemployment expenses, which were not funded in the FYE 2017 budget, are expected to be approximately \$41,600 and will be offset by other savings. The requested transfer totals \$16,334.

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

The motion carried unanimously

2017-0004 Revised Position Descriptions (2017 Standing Referral)

Discussed

Town Manager Mark Oefinger noted that the Town does not currently have an Assistant Town Manager, though one is needed. With the Town Manager's pending retirement, bringing on an Assistant Town Manager was discussed, but given the current budget situation it does not appear that it will happen in the near future. The Town Manager strongly recommended that the Town

Council consider updating the Assistant to the Town Manager job description so that it can be filled by the current Executive Assistant to make sure that the next Town Manager will have the appropriate support. Mayor Flax noted that the job description modification includes a salary level increase.

A motion was made by Councilor Nault, seconded by Councilor Moravsik, to Recommend for Resolution the updated Assistant to the Town Manager job description.

The motion carried unanimously

Councilor Grim left the meeting.

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

Members Absent: Councilor Grim and Councilor Peruzzotti

2017-0015 Fair Housing Action Plan for 2017

Discussed

Paige Bronk, Economic and Community Development Manager, noted that staff attended a workshop after the Committee of the Whole approved the Fair Housing Action Plan, and the state changed the suggested language for the plan. Mr. Bronk reviewed the specific differences between the previous version and new version.

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

The motion carried by the following vote:

Votes: In Favor: 6 - Mayor Flax, Councilor Barber, Councilor Morton, Councilor Nault, Councilor Watson and Councilor Moravsik

Opposed: 1 - Councilor Antipas

2017-0041 Economic Assistance Fund Guidelines Revision

Discussed

Paige Bronk, Economic and Community Development Manager, explained that staff has been working on a revamp of the economic assistance fund guidelines for some time to make them more broadly applicable and flexible. Currently, the Town has approximately \$600,000 in the fund. Mr. Bronk reviewed key changes to the guidelines.

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

The motion carried unanimously

Councilor Grim returned to the meeting.

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

Members Absent: Councilor Peruzzotti

2017-0042 Zoning Regulations Rewrite - Update

Discussed

Jon Reiner, Director of Planning and Development, and Deb Jones, Assistant Director, were present. Mr. Reiner provided background on the project to rewrite the Town's Zoning Regulations, which was started in mid-2015. The Commission is working on the Water Resource Protection District (WRPD), which is the most scientific section of the regulations. They are also working on the permitted use tables and zoning district consolidation. The Zoning Commission is meeting once or twice a month to review sections of the regulations, most recently focusing on the WRPD. A public hearing on the WRPD changes is anticipated in May.

Mr. Reiner responded to Councilors' questions.

A specific concern of the Council is the proposed increase in the non-disturbance area adjacent to

wetlands and watercourses.

Councilor Watson expressed concern with how the most recent Zoning Commission meeting was run, with members of the public speaking throughout the meeting without noticing that opportunity on the agenda. Mr. Reiner explained that the Chairperson did announce at the beginning of the meeting that she would take public comment throughout the discussion of the WRPD. Modifications are being made to the draft regulations, and then staff will make application to the Zoning Commission. Testimony will be received at the May public hearing.

Discussion followed on the Zoning Commission's involvement in the rewrite of the regulations, the process leading to the proposed setback from wetlands and watercourses, and the potential impact on proposed projects.

The Council requested copies of the technical memorandum prepared by the Town's consultant regarding the WRPD.

Town Manager Oefinger noted that the Zoning Commission is absent from the discussion, and the real issue is the conduct of the Commission and who is influencing their decisions.

Mayor Flax stated that the Council would like to have the Zoning Commission appear before the Council to discuss the concerns.

2017-0043

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Advisory Committee

Discussed

Jon Reiner, Director of Planning and Development, noted that the Town Council authorized a contract with Camoin Associates to prepare a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) plan for the Town of Groton. Staff is recommending the creation of an advisory committee to work with staff. The Town Council will be the main body setting the TIF program and adopting the policies.

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

The motion carried unanimously

2016-0113

Tax Incentive Agreement for Branford Manor

A motion was made by Mayor Flax, seconded by Councilor Grim, to enter executive session at 9:19 p.m. for the purpose of discussing negotiations with respect to a potential tax agreement, and to invite the Town Manager, Director of Planning and Development Jon Reiner, Assistant Director of Planning and Development Deb Jones, Economic and Community Development Manager Paige Bronk, and Town Attorney Mike Carey to attend.

The motion carried unanimously

Discussed

The executive session concluded at 9:42 p.m.

A motion was made by Councilor Watson, seconded by Councilor Nault, to authorize staff and the Town Attorney to initiate the process to enact the Connecticut City and Town Development Act including scheduling a public hearing.

The motion carried unanimously

2016-0184

Sale or Lease of Town Owned Excess Property

A motion was made by Mayor Flax, seconded by Councilor Watson, to enter executive session at 9:50 p.m. to discuss the potential sale of Town-owned property and to invite the Town Manager, Director of Planning and Development Jon Reiner, Assistant Director of Planning and Development Deb Jones, and Economic and Community Development Manager Paige Bronk to attend.

The motion carried unanimously

Discussed

The Town Council requested that Kincora Development be invited to the next Committee of the Whole meeting.

2017-0044 Town Manager Search Committee

A motion was made by Councilor Watson, seconded by Councilor Moravsik, to enter executive session at 10:20 p.m. to discuss the Town Manager search effort.

The motion carried unanimously

Discussed

The executive session concluded at 10:42 p.m.

A motion was made by Councilor Watson, seconded by Councilor Morton, to add #2016-0222 Town Manager Annual Evaluation to the agenda.

The motion carried unanimously.

2016-0222 Town Manager Annual Evaluation

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

The Town Manager's annual evaluation was completed and his performance rated as "exceeds expectations." The consensus of the Council was to grant the Town Manager a 2% salary increase retroactive to July 1, 2016.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Votes: In Favor: 7 - Mayor Flax, Councilor Barber, Councilor Antipas, Councilor Morton, Councilor Grim, Councilor Watson and Councilor Moravsik
Opposed: 1 - Councilor Nault

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

2015-0136 Effects of Heroin on the Community

Recommended for Deletion

2016-0042 Opiate Warning/Notification

Recommended for Deletion

8. OTHER BUSINESS

A motion was made by Mayor Flax, seconded by Councilor Watson, to add #2017-0005 Pending Litigation (2017 Standing Referral) to the agenda.

The motion carried unanimously.

2017-0005 Pending Litigation (2017 Standing Referral)

Discussed

Discussion followed on pending legislation to increase the tax exemption for Odd Fellows. Staff has prepared a letter to be read during the public hearing in opposition to the proposed bill. The consensus of the Council was to have the Mayor sign the letter along with the Town Manager and present it to the legislature.

9. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 10:55 p.m.