



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 Rita M. Schmidt, Councilors Dean Antipas, Genevieve Cerf, Joe de la Cruz, Bruce S. Flax, Bob Frink, Rich Moravsik, Deborah L. Peruzzotti and Harry A. Watson

Tuesday, February 24, 2015

6:00 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

REGULAR MEETING

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

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

2. **ROLL CALL**

Members Present: Mayor Schmidt, Councilor Antipas, Councilor Cerf, Councilor de la Cruz, Councilor Flax, Councilor Frink, Councilor Moravsik and Councilor Watson
Members Absent: Councilor Peruzzotti

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

3. **Calendar and Communications**

Councilor Frink noted there will be fundraiser on Monday, March 2nd at the Bridge Market for a family that lost everything in a recent fire.

4. **Approval of Minutes**

2015-0042 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 meeting of February 10, 2015 are hereby accepted and approved.

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

The motion carried unanimously

5. **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

None.

6. **NEW BUSINESS**

2014-0236 FYE 2015 Fire District PILOT

Discussed

- *Poquonnock Bridge Fire District*

Alan Ackley, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Poquonnock Bridge Fire District, introduced members of the board, Chief Joe Winski, and Deputy Chief Tim Driscoll. He stated the Poquonnock Bridge Fire District is more expensive than other fire districts. They have cut back on personnel and made administrative changes, and are looking forward to a more cooperative association with firefighters and neighboring districts.

Mr. Ackley read a statement regarding the PILOT program and perceived problems with the PILOT program.

Ron Yuhas distributed information to the Council and asked for a referral to the Safety Committee. Mr. Yuhas reviewed the handout with fire district mill rates, excerpts from the Charter, state PILOT funds, charges to the fire district, an incident report for calendar year 2014, and various

iterations of exempt properties by fire district.

Mr. Yuhas is proposing that the Council charge the entire Town 2 mills for fire service protection and divide it among the fire districts based on exempt property within the district. Poquonnock Bridge is not looking for a bailout, only what the district is entitled to. He stated it is the Council's duty to help the district find a solution.

Mayor Schmidt and the Council requested a copy of the district's actual budget.

Councilors commented on the presentation and the need for a larger discussion about fire protection in the Town. Chief Winski described the mutual aid system and the challenges of instituting a volunteer system.

Mayor Schmidt stated the Public Safety Committee will be comprised of Councilors de la Cruz, Watson and Moravsik (Chairman). Three members from PBFD can be designating to meet with the Committee.

The Town Manager suggested that the Council needs to spend more time as the Committee of the Whole talking about the issue before three Councilors are sent off to try to solve a 50 year old problem. Providing more money to the district will only enable some very bad habits. He stated there is significant background information that the Council could benefit from. Discussion followed. Councilor Antipas advocated for looking at the whole public safety issue at some point in the future.

2015-0041

2015 Rates for Shennecossett Golf Course and Approving Revised Regulations for Parks and Recreation Facilities

Discussed

Mark Berry, Eric Morrisson, and Todd Goodhue were present to address the Council. Mr. Berry reviewed the process for setting the rates for the golf course. He summarized the rate changes, reasons for the changes, and proposed associated rules changes.

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

The motion carried unanimously

2015-0032

Possible Mooring Fee for Mystic River

Discussed

Paul Watts, Mystic Harbormaster, and Paul Bates, Chairman of the Harbor Management Commission, were present to address the Council. Mr. Watts explained that there are four harbormasters who report to the Department of Transportation. Mr. Watts oversees 200-225 moorings which are divided 60/40 Stonington/Groton. He has a waiting list of about 99 people, some of whom have been waiting for 10 years. People do not want to give up their moorings even if they do not have a boat or if they have moved. Mr. Watts is proposing that Groton institute an annual mooring usage fee. The bottom of the river is a public trust, but the mooring and tackle are privately owned. Stonington recently raised their fee from \$10 to \$50 to raise funds. It is not practical for Mr. Watts to examine every mooring and he is reluctant to pull moorings, which are someone else's property. There is no residency requirement for a mooring.

Mr. Bates reviewed the history of the Harbor Management Act and the collection of fees. No fees are charged by the Groton Harbor Management Commission.

Mr. Watts requests that funds be put back into the Mystic River rather than the General Fund.

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

Mr. Bates asked the Town Council to comply with the state statute which states that the Harbor Management Commission proposes the mooring fee to be set by the legislative body. The Harbor Management Commission has not made a recommendation. The Town ordinance defines where fees would go.

The motion and second were withdrawn.

Mr. Bates submitted a letter from the Groton Long Point Harbormaster indicating that he has no plans to charge for moorings.

The Harbor Management Commission has discussed the issue, but Mr. Watts was not available to meet with the Commission. The Commission feels that the Mystic Harbor Commission has spent money inappropriately. Also, the Harbormaster already has the right to issue or not issue a mooring permit. Mr. Watts' mooring area is unorganized. Other concerns include collecting a large pot of money over time and the belief that \$50 is not a good deterrent for a boat owner. The Harbor Management Commission will have another meeting with Mr. Watts to continue the discussion and report back to the Town Council. Discussion followed on the fee and whether or not it would fix the problem. Mayor Schmidt asked if the Harbor Management Commission could work with Mr. Watts to improve the system and Mr. Bates stated they will.

2014-0343

Sisisky Property, Flanders Road

Discussed

Town Manager Oefinger provided a brief background on this referral to the Planning Commission under CGS Section 8-24 regarding acceptance of two parcels on Flanders Road. The Planning Commission expressed support for accepting the parcels and staff feels that it would be good for the Town to own the parcels that that no other use is established next to the closed landfill.

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

The motion carried unanimously

2015-0023

Shepherd of the Sea Property, Gungywamp Road

Discussed

Town Manager Oefinger distributed a map of the Shepherd of the Sea property consisting of 13.5 acres that the federal government is offering to the Town. Staff would like an opportunity to walk the property and examine the buildings and report back to the Council. Councilor Frink shared his impressions of the property and suggested it would be a 'money pit.' The Town Manager will report back to the Council after the site walk.

2014-0202

City Highway Budget Committee - Update

A motion was made by Councilor Moravsik, seconded by Councilor Flax, to enter executive session at 8:10 p.m. to discuss #2014-0202 City Highway Budget Committee - Update, and to invite Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Town Attorney Matt Auger, and Director of Public Works Gary Schneider to attend.

The motion carried unanimously

Discussed

The executive session concluded at 9:03 p.m.

2014-0346

Connecticut Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Program Funding

Discussed

A brief discussion ensued on potential open space parcels.

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

None.

8. OTHER BUSINESS

None.

9. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:07 p.m.