



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 Heather Bond Somers, Councilors Dean G. Antipas, Bruce S. Flax, Bill Johnson, Karen F. Morton, Deborah L. Peruzzotti, Rita M. Schmidt, James L. Streeter, and Harry A. Watson

Tuesday, February 26, 2013

6:00 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

REGULAR MEETING

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

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

2. **ROLL CALL**

Members Present: Mayor Somers, Councilor Antipas, Councilor Flax, Councilor Johnson, Councilor Morton, Councilor Peruzzotti, Councilor Schmidt, Councilor Streeter and Councilor Watson

Also present was Town Manager Mark Oefinger.

3. **Calendar and Communications**

None.

4. **Approval of Minutes - None**

5. **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

None.

6. **NEW BUSINESS**

2013-0056 LoveGov Presentation

Discussed and Recommended no action taken

Greg Loweth, Director of Outreach for LoveGov, was present to address the Council about how Groton could use LoveGov as a platform for discourse. He introduced Joschka, the founder and CEO of the company, who provided an overview of the development of LoveGov website and the goals of the site which is designed to make it easier for people to get informed and involved in local politics. Mr. Loweth provided an overview of the site and its functionality. He would like to make the Town of Groton more active on LoveGov, and he is looking for the Town Council's input on pressing issues as well as help in spreading the word about LoveGov.

Mr. Loweth and Joschka answered a number of questions from Councilors asked a number of questions concerning format, registering and posting on the site, moderation of the site, future sale of aggregate data to support the site, criteria for censorship, statistical relevance of the information generated on the site, assuring non-partisanship, and the ability to identify registered voters.

Mayor Somers thanked Mr. Loweth and Joschka for their presentation.

2013-0006 Joint Meeting with Groton Long Point Board of Directors (2013 Standing Referral)

Discussed

John Touhy and Rich Moravsik were present to address the Council. Mr. Touhy reviewed Groton Long Point's regular operating budget for roads, which is \$183,500. There are minor increases to some line items, but the biggest increase is associated with the request for a new truck. Last year's appropriation was \$146,000; last year's request was \$153,000.

The next item discussed was costs associated with clean up and fixes for Storm Sandy. The

\$47,000 requested is 25% of the cleanup costs not covered by FEMA. Mr. Touhy has discussed with the Mayor how to handle the next storm and what services the Town can offer. Storm repair will be done in the spring. FEMA will not reimburse until the work is done and paid for. Estimated cost has been approved by FEMA. \$40,000 is 25% of repairs that will not be covered by FEMA. Mr. Touhy offered to sit down and explain the costs associated with storm clean up and FEMA reimbursement.

Councilor Flax asked how Groton Long Point's costs for Sandy compared to the Town's costs. Town expects to cover the unreimbursed FEMA costs for the Town in the operating budgets. The Town did not have the same damage as the City and Groton Long Point. He asked if Groton Long Point has a contingency plan. Mr. Touhy noted that Irene and Sandy have depleted contingency. Councilor Flax encouraged Groton Long Point to consider using Public Works' forces where possible for the repair work.

In response to Councilor Streeter, Town Manager Oefinger noted that the City did not include any repair or cleanup costs in their budget.

Councilor Johnson questioned the timing of the request considering when the storm and related work occurred or will occur. Mayor Somers noted there is an annual, once-a-year, appropriation to Groton Long Point.

Mr. Touhy then addressed the Police budget. The budget is decreased from last year. Mr. Touhy presented his rationale for the Town funding 50% of Groton Long Point's police budget request. Mr. Touhy mentioned the Town-wide police study. Mayor Somers explained that there is a draft study, but it is full of inaccuracies and mistakes. Since it is a working document, it has not yet been shared with the Council. Mr. Touhy noted that in the draft report, the consultants attempt to identify the costs of equalizing coverage and he cited figures. He suggested that funding Groton Long Point's police budget would save the Town money.

In response to Councilor Morton, Mr. Touhy noted that the salary and benefits figures cover four patrol officers and the heart and hypertension benefits cover two former employees.

Councilor Flax asked if Groton Long Point has conferred with the City of Groton regarding their budget approach and Mr. Touhy stated no. Councilor Flax noted that the Town's Police Chiefs have consistently stated that it would cost the Town less to patrol Groton Long Point, which would save Groton Long Point taxpayers money. There is a higher level of service provided in Groton Long Point than in the rest of the Town. Mr. Touhy again cited the findings of the draft police study and Mayor Somers reiterated that the draft study is full of inaccuracies and should not be cited.

Mr. Touhy clarified vehicle costs for Councilor Peruzzotti.

Mr. Streeter asked how the agreement to fund the police department has been documented. Mr. Touhy cited historical spreadsheets that started in 1945. Mr. Moravik noted that he has heard that the practice started with ticket revenue. Councilor Watson noted that in 1932 Groton Long Point requested half the salary of a constable.

Councilor Johnson suggested that the amount of taxes paid by Groton Long Point is not a fair measure of how much of the police budget should be paid by the Town when considering that Groton Long Point uses Town roads and police facilities as well.

2013-0058**Introduction of Ordinance Changing and Redefining the Voting Districts****Discussed**

Town Clerk Betsy Moukawsher noted that the ordinance combines Districts 4 and 5 and modifies

the line between Districts 1 and 8. The Town Clerk's referral memo provides voting district maps and information on the distribution of voters in the proposed districts. The Council reviewed the maps. Councilor Peruzzotti questioned how the number districts can be further reduced. Registrar of Voters Dave Rose understood that discussion would take place after this change. The cost per election averages \$25,000 and Mr. Rose stated that each district costs approximately \$2,010. Councilor Peruzzotti wants to save money and she would like to see four or five districts which would require that appropriate polling places be identified. She asked for immediate attention to changing and reevaluating the number of voting districts.

Mr. Rose stated there are logistics problems with finding large enough polling places, especially for a presidential election. He stated the Town will not save money because two lines will be required to handle the crowds. Councilor Peruzzotti asked if the Registrars could do a study showing that is true and Mr. Rose stated he would see what he could do. The savings of \$2,010 associated with eliminating a district represents a poll worker.

Councilor Streeter asked about the establishment of the voting district line along Hynes Avenue and Mr. Rose noted that he believes it was established to equalize the populations in each district.

In response to Councilor Flax, Mr. Rose provided the distribution of voters for the districts as they stand now.

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

Town Manager Oefinger recommended a public hearing on the ordinance on March 19th. Town Clerk Moukawsher suggested that the Council hold a special meeting on March 12th, and the Council concurred. This change does not affect the City election. The Town Clerk explained her accelerated timeline. Councilors questioned why there is a need to have a special meeting and the Town Clerk explained that it will allow her to refer the item to the RTM on March 13th

The motion carried unanimously

2013-0059 Resolution Setting Public Hearing on Ordinance Changing and Redefining the Voting Districts
Discussed

See discussion in 2/26/13 Committee of the Whole minutes under #2013-0058 Introduction of Ordinance Changing and Redefining the Voting Districts.

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

The motion carried unanimously

2010-0215 Community Access Television Application to DPUC
Not Discussed

The Town Attorney was not available and the Town Manager asked that this item be tabled.

2013-0052 Non-Resident Taxpayer Voting Authorization
Discussed and Recommended no action taken

Following the Committee of the Whole meeting on February 12th, the Town Manager researched whether the Town Council can set up a limited-focus Charter Revision Commission. The Town Attorney has advised that the legislation was approved by the state legislature, but not the governor. In addition, there have been no changes that would allow the Council to serve as the Charter Revision Commission. Councilors could be on the Commission, but there must be other members as defined by statutes. Councilor Streeter suggested discussing resurrecting the legislation with the local legislators.

2013-0060 Resolution on Charles Barnum Asbestos Floor Tile Removal
Discussed

Town Manager Oefinger explained that funds were previously approved for design work for this project to remove asbestos floor tile at Charles Barnum. Construction funds are included in the FYE 2014 CIP budget. This request to authorize a grant application with the state is in anticipation of approval of the budget request. If not approved, the grant will not be accepted. The resolution also designates the Permanent School Building Committee as the building committee for the project and authorizes the preparation of drawings and specifications.

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

The motion carried unanimously

2013-0018 Flanders Road Utility Installation - Future Bond Referendum Potential

Discussed

The Town Manager noted that there is a developer who would like to meet with the Council regarding a sizable project in the Flanders Road area. That may be an appropriate time to further discuss the Flanders Road utility extension project. The Council concurred. Councilor Morton asked if there are any grants available to help offset the costs of the utility extension. The Town Manager noted that there may be, however this area has attracted a fair amount of funding in the past, but it was returned by the Town. More likely alternatives are benefit assessments, partnering with Groton Utilities, general obligation bonds for economic development, and partnering with private developers.

2013-0049 Department of Agriculture Aquaculture Division Interaction with Shellfish Commission and Noank Hatchery

Discussed and Recommended no action taken

Councilor Watson distributed notes from the meeting that was held on February 21st. He noted the attendees and feels it was a good meeting. Frustrations were expressed by the Noank Hatchery about the closure of the lower Mystic River during the winter. The Commissioner of the Department of Agriculture made a commitment to review the data from the sewer treatment facilities in the area within three weeks. The second issue concerns the Hatchery's wet storage facility and what is required to get the facility up and running.

2013-0048 FYE 2014 Budget

Discussed

Town Manager Oefinger noted the revised Town Council budget review schedule that will be distributed to outside agencies and others.

The Town Manager provided a history and overview of the PILOT funding provided by the Town to the fire districts.

Councilors were asked to provide information to the Town Manager's office on their availability during the budget season.

2012-0228 Noank Fire District Response on Noank School Reuse

A motion was made by Councilor Flax, seconded by Councilor Schmidt, to enter executive session at 7:53 p.m. to discuss 2012-0228 Noank Fire District Response on Noank School and to invite the Town Manager to attend.

The motion carried unanimously

Discussed

The executive session concluded at 8:23 p.m.

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

2013-0053 National League of Cities (NLC) Conference

Recommended for Deletion

2012-0175 **FYE 2014 Budget Process**
 Recommended for Deletion

8. OTHER BUSINESS

None.

9. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:32 p.m.