



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, March 10, 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 de la Cruz, Councilor Flax, Councilor Frink and Councilor Moravsik

Members Absent: Councilor Cerf, 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**

2015-0048 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 24, 2015 are hereby accepted and approved.

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

The motion carried unanimously

5. **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

None.

6. **NEW BUSINESS**

2015-0049 Contract Agreement Between the Groton Board of Education and the Association of Groton School Administrators

Discussed

Attorney Floyd Dugas, attorney for the Board of Education, explained the Town Council's role in the process, which is to reject or not reject the contract agreement. If there is no action by the Council, the contract stands. The contract is for the school administrators starting July 1, 2015. Mr. Dugas reviewed the goals going into negotiations: average salaries and reduction of the Cadillac Tax'on health benefits. He distributed a summary of the settlement and a comparison with settlements in other towns with and without increments, which Groton administrators do not have. Mr. Dugas reviewed wage increases and a new high deductible health plan.

Councilor Frink feels that the salaries in the contract are 'insane.' He cited salaries for elementary school administrators. He asked if salaries could be capped. Mr. Dugas explained the impact of collective bargaining and the binding arbitration law.

Superintendent of Schools Mike Graner responded to Councilors regarding new positions, department heads, the number of administrators and breakdown by school, and the Board of

Education's FYE 2016 proposed budget figures.

Mr. Dugas asked the Council to consider the cost of arbitration versus the cost of the wage increases not including benefits. He also highlighted some of the aspects of arbitration, which are based on statutory requirements.

No action is required unless the Council votes to reject the contract.

A motion was made by Councilor Moravsik, seconded by Councilor Frink, to accept the contract agreement between the Groton Board of Education and the Association of Groton School Administrators.

The motion failed 4 votes in favor, 2 opposed (Councilors Frink and Moravsik).

(Note: Subsequent to the meeting it was determined that while five affirmative votes are required for the Town Council to pass a resolution, a simple majority vote is required by the Committee of the Whole to pass a motion. As a result, the following discussion and motion were not technically required.)

Discussion followed on the appropriate motion to meet statutory guidelines.

A motion was made by Councilor Frink, seconded by Councilor Moravsik, to reject the contract agreement between the Groton Board of Education and the Association of Groton School Administrators.

The motion failed by the following vote:

Votes: In Favor: 2 - Councilor Frink and Councilor Moravsik
Opposed: 4 - Mayor Schmidt, Councilor Antipas, Councilor de la Cruz and Councilor Flax

2014-0257

FYE 2016 Budget Discussion

Discussed

Town Manager Oefinger explained that prior to budget review, he wanted to review a number of staff changes included in the FYE 2016 Proposed Budget. No formal action by the Town Council is required at this time. The Town Manager provided a brief overview of the changes.

Bob Zagami, Director of Human Resources and Risk Management, directed the Council's attention to a prepared personnel overview. The Office of Planning and Development Services (OPDS) is proposing the addition of an Economic and Community Development Manager, the addition of an Assistant Director of OPDS, and an increase in the hours of the Office Assistant III from 35 to 40. The Inspection Services Technician position, which is vacant, will not be filled. The Program/Project Manager would transfer to Public Works as the Sustainability Manager.

Jon Reiner, Director of OPDS, noted the community's focus on economic development. He explained the personnel changes needed to implement a plan to reorganize and create a division of Community and Economic Development and support department initiatives. Mr. Reiner reviewed activity levels in the department and the need to utilize consultants. He noted that unlike in private industry, the public process and building consensus to effectuate change take a lot of time.

Mr. Zagami reviewed changes in the Library, which involve redefining job descriptions and classifications and creating a Librarian I position. Betty Anne Reiter, Director of Library Services, noted that all of the jobs at the Library sounded the same, which was a problem, so she worked to better define the positions. The Town's existing librarians are at a high pay scale and this proposal introduces an entry level Librarian I position at a lower pay scale. Over time, the new position will result in fewer people retiring at the higher Librarian II level.

A motion was made by Councilor Moravsik, seconded by Councilor Antipas, to approve the job

descriptions for the Library.

The motion carried unanimously

A motion was made by Councilor Moravsik, seconded by Councilor Frink, to approve the increase in hours for the Office Assistant III from 35 to 40 hours and to approve the job description for the Assistant Director of Planning and Development.

The motion carried unanimously

Discussed

Discussion followed on not filling positions by not funding them in the budget process versus actually eliminating a job description.

Mr. Zagami reviewed the changes in Public Works, which involve the creation of a Grant Writer position, elimination of an Office Assistant II, and elimination of a Material Control Specialist (who would move to a new Financial Assistant I or II position).

Gary Schneider, Director of Public Works, described the recommendation by Public Works and OPDS that the Town begin a sustainability initiative, which will require a Sustainability Program Project Manager (an employee transferred from OPDS) and a new Grant Writer position. Mr. Schneider reviewed potential projects and opportunities. The Financial Assistant I or II would support the accounting requirements for the grants.

Councilor Flax asked for an explanation of why the Office Assistant positions were increased in 2012-2013 and now one position is being eliminated. Mr. Schneider explained that he is looking to break down silos between departments. He noted that the position descriptions are still draft and need to be finalized. Councilors indicated they were supportive of the changes.

Mr. Zagami noted remaining personnel changes which include increasing two Financial Assistant II positions in Finance from 35 to 40 hours per week. The changes would be effective in FYE 2016 so Town Council action would occur as part of the budget review process.

The final change will increase the Office Assistant II in the Town Clerk's Office from part-time to full-time in FYE 2016.

2015-0050

Legislative Policy Initiative to Increase Revenues

Discussed

Jon Reiner, Director of the Office of Planning and Development Services, stressed how important the market analysis and regulatory review project are to move the Town forward. After solicitation and interviews of a number of firms, the Town selected the firm of VHB with a subconsultant of Camoin Associates. A draft Scope of Services has been developed. The process will involve the community and allow for feedback. Mr. Reiner is looking to establish a steering committee or focus group, which will include representatives of different interests and different areas of the community. All meetings will be open to the public and the process will take about six months.

A motion was made by Councilor Frink, seconded by Councilor Moravsik, to establish a steering committee/focus group as proposed by staff with the addition of a Mystic representative.

The motion carried unanimously

Discussed

Councilors received the Scope of Services which includes the market analysis, audit of land use regulations, and target assessment of key areas to increase the Grand List. Total cost for the three components is \$150,000. The Town Council previously authorized up to \$125,000. The Scope of Services also outlines fees for additional service work such as a downtown Mystic parking study, financial feasibility analysis, economic and fiscal impact analysis, and a targeted industry attraction analysis. Other tasks could be considered later in the process such as marketing

strategy implementation. Discussion followed on funding sources and an anticipated funding request in FYE 2016.

A motion was made by Councilor Frink, seconded by Councilor de la Cruz, to authorize expenditures for the initiative of up to \$200,000.

Mr. Reiner explained the difference between the streetscape project and a downtown Mystic parking study. Discussion followed on the focus of, and need for, the parking study.

The motion failed with 4 votes in favor and 2 opposed (Councilors Flax and Antipas).

(Note: Subsequent to the meeting it was determined that while five affirmative votes are required for the Town Council to pass a resolution, a simple majority vote is required by the Committee of the Whole to pass a motion. As a result, the following discussion and motions were not technically required.)

Town Manager Oefinger noted the need for the additional \$25,000 for the studies and reiterated the need for the downtown Mystic parking study. He noted that improvements will come from technology and better management rather than an increase in the number of spaces available. It is important to be able to commit the dollars to a valid contract as the fourth quarter approaches.

A motion was made by Councilor Flax, seconded by Councilor Antipas, to reconsider the vote to authorize expenditures for the initiative of up to \$200,000.

The motion carried unanimously.

Discussion followed on availability of the funds and timing of the tasks. The Town Manager noted that additional tasks will be reviewed with the Town Council, but staff is looking for commitment of and access to the funds.

A motion was made by Councilor Flax, seconded by Councilor Frink, to authorize expenditures for the initiative up to \$200,000 with the understanding that additional tasks will be reviewed by the Town Council.

The motion carried unanimously

The Committee of the Whole recessed at 8:40 p.m. and reconvened at 8:46 p.m.

2015-0045

First Supplemental Design Agreement for Crystal Lake Road Reconstruction

Discussed

Town Manager Oefinger explained that the amount of funding necessary to complete engineering for the Crystal Lake Road Reconstruction project has increased. The Town's share will increase from \$60,000 to \$80,000. No additional appropriation is required at this time. This request is to authorize the Town Manager to sign the First Supplemental Agreement.

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

The motion carried unanimously

2015-0034

Small Cities Development Block Grant - 2015 Application

Discussed

Town Manager Oefinger provided a brief overview of the Small Cities Community Block Grant application process to date. This request is for authorization to submit the grant application in the amount of \$800,000 to continue the rehabilitation work at the Groton Housing Authority properties.

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

The motion carried unanimously

2015-0053 Pfizer Community Grant - Library Local History Room/Computer Lab

Discussed

Betty Anne Reiter, Director of Library Services, noted that the Town has received a state library grant in the amount of \$414,000 contingent on the provision of matching funds by the Town. Ms. Reiter is requesting authorization to submit an application to the Pfizer Community Grants Program in the amount of \$25,000 to purchase furniture for the Library's local history room and computer lab renovation project.

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

The motion carried unanimously

2015-0058 Library Circle of Friends Grant (Informational Only)

Discussed and Recommended no action taken

Betty Anne Reiter, Director of Library Services, noted that the Library Circle of Friends is submitting an application to the Edward and Mary Lord Foundation for a \$20,000 grant to support the Library's local history room and computer lab renovation project. This is part of an ongoing effort to raise funds for the Town's match for a state library grant. This item is informational only; no approval by the Town Council is necessary since the grant is being submitted by the Circle of Friends.

2015-0047 Historic Documents Preservation Grant (2016)

Discussed

Town Manager Oefinger described the request for authorization to submit an annual Historic Documents Grant application in the amount of \$4,000 to address the poor condition of some of the volumes in Land Records. No matching funds are required.

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

The motion carried unanimously

2015-0051 ClientFirst Computer Technology Acquisition Initiative

Discussed

Town Manager Oefinger reminded the Council that there will be a special meeting of the Committee of the Whole on Thursday, March 19th to meet with the Town's consultant, ClientFirst, to review the multi-million dollar computer technology program.

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**2014-0202 City Highway Budget Committee - Update**

Discussed

*Town Attorney Matt Auger noted receipt of an e-mail inquiry asking why the Committee of the Whole went into executive session on this item at the last meeting. Mr. Auger spoke with FOI Public Information Officer Tom Hennick who indicated that the Town can articulate the reason for the executive session retroactively.*

*Mr. Auger explained that the City of Groton demanded arbitration on the FYE 2014 City Highway Budget, which was heard by an arbitrator. The arbitration resulted from the City exercising its right under its Charter to employ a procedure if no agreement is reached on the city highway budget. More recently, three Town Councilors met with three City Councilors to see if an agreement could be reached on funding the City Highway Budget going forward. The group agreed informally, but then the Town received a letter from the City indicating that no agreement had been reached and the City would exercise its right to go back to arbitration if no agreement was formally reached. The discussion on February 24th and tonight's discussion involve legal*

*strategy related to legal arbitration.*

**A motion was made by Councilor Frink, seconded by Councilor Moravsik, to enter executive session at 9:10 p.m. to discuss #2014-0202 City Highway Budget Committee - Update, and to invite Town Manager Mark Oefinger and Town Attorney Matt Auger to attend.**

**The motion carried unanimously**

**Discussed**

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

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

*None.*

**8. OTHER BUSINESS**

*Town Manager Oefinger noted receipt of an e-mail from City Mayor Galbraith regarding a potential donation for the Thames River Heritage Park water taxi. The consensus of the Council was to support the donation if a funding source can be identified.*

**9. ADJOURNMENT**

*The meeting adjourned at 10:15 p.m.*