



Town of Groton, Connecticut

Meeting Minutes

Town Council Committee of the Whole

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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, March 12, 2013

6:00 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

REGULAR MEETING

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Somers called the meeting to order at 6:07 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 were Town Manager Mark Oefinger and Executive Assistant Nicki Bresnyan.

3. **Calendar and Communications**

None.

4. **Approval of Minutes**

None.

5. **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

None.

6. **NEW BUSINESS**

2010-0215 Community Access Television Application to DPUC

A motion was made by Councilor Morton, seconded by Councilor Watson, to enter executive session at 6:08 p.m. to discuss 2010-0215 Community Access Television Application to DPUC, and to invite Town Attorney Mike Carey, Municipal Video Specialist Shawn Greeley, and Town Manager Mark Oefinger to attend.

The motion carried unanimously

Discussed

The executive session concluded at 6:25 p.m.

2013-0066 Regulations for Parks and Recreation Facilities

Discussed

Mark Berry, Director of Parks and Recreation, noted that the proposed Regulations for Parks and Recreation Facilities have undergone an annual review by the Parks and Recreation Commission. Major changes have been made that warrant the Town Council's review, specifically the institution of a Family Friendly designation.

Councilor Flax asked about the alcohol-free requirement for the Esker Point beach concerts, specifically why the policy was changed and if changed, why it was not enforced last year. Town Manager Oefinger noted that the issue with alcohol has nothing to do with the change to the Regulations for Parks and Recreation Facilities, but with an ordinance that has been on the books for many years, but was never enforced. The ordinance prohibits alcohol at Town-sponsored events. The Town's protocol last year was to educate people. The police asked people to dispose of the alcohol, but they did not look into coolers or cups. No arrests were made. The intent going forward is enforcement and to not allow alcohol consumption unless the ordinance is changed.

Councilor Flax expressed support for rewording the ordinance.

Councilor Streeter noted that the regulations include an ability by the Town Manager to issue permits. He asked if that could be done for Esker Point concerts. Mr. Berry indicated that from a liability standpoint he would rather see a third party applying for a permit rather than the Town. Mayor Somers suggested that it is very complicated when there are exceptions to the rules, noting too that the Town Manager has a lot to do without regulating permits. In response to Councilor Schmidt, Mayor Somers explained that the beach concerts started as a family event, but over time it has grown larger and attracted a younger crowd and the dynamics have changed. The Town Manager stated that he is not interested in being the decider of who can bring alcohol in and who can't.

Councilor Antipas expressed support for allowing reasonable adult events and he feels there can be exceptions rather than having a total ban on alcohol. Councilor Watson expressed concern with the term family-friendly." Mr. Berry explained that the wording implies an atmosphere where people are comfortable bringing their kids. Jim Kamercia from the Parks and Recreation Commission noted that people are avoiding some events because of the drinking taking place.

In response to Councilor Johnson, Mr. Berry explained that deposit refunds will be given if the Town cancels the use of a facility due to inclement weather. As much notice as possible is provided by Parks and Recreation and there is always an attempt to make accommodations. Discussed followed on how events are prioritized. Jerry Lokken, Manager of Recreation Services, explained how concessions work.

Councilor Watson noted a difference in the definition of 'Seniors' between the Senior Center (age 55) and the Golf Course (age 62).

The consensus of the Council was to meet with Police Chief Mike Crowley and review the ordinance before acting on the Regulations for Parks and Recreation Facilities. The Council would also like information on the Town's liability if alcohol is permitted and the number of instances of problems at the Esker Point beach concerts.

2012-0220

Review of Ordinance No. 135 - Consumption of Alcohol at Town Sponsored Events

Discussed

(See discussion in 3/12/13 Committee of the Whole minutes under #2013-0066 Regulations for Parks and Recreation Facilities.)

2013-0068

Blight Ordinance

Discussed

The Town Council received a memo from Mike Murphy, Director of Planning and Development, transmitting the latest draft of a proposed blight ordinance. Discussion followed on overgrown vegetation versus privacy landscape plantings. Councilor Johnson feels that placing liens on properties is not effective. Councilor Flax expressed concern with enforcement how it would be managed. The Town Manager noted there are only a few examples around Town that cannot be addressed by zoning. A blight ordinance would be a useful tool in these cases. Councilor Peruzzotti agreed that the ordinance would give the Town grounds to approach a homeowner and it would help protect neighbors and the housing market.

Councilors started to express specific concerns with the draft ordinance and Mayor Somers asked instead if Councilors wanted to move forward, recognizing that the language could be revised as part of the process. The Town Manager stated that he will ask the Town Attorney to review the draft language before starting the ordinance process and scheduling a public hearing.

A motion was made by Councilor Peruzzotti, seconded by Councilor Streeter, to proceed with the Blight Ordinance.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Votes: In Favor: 8 - Mayor Somers, Councilor Antipas, Councilor Flax, Councilor Morton, Councilor Peruzzotti, Councilor Schmidt, Councilor Streeter and Councilor Watson
Opposed: 1 - Councilor Johnson

2013-0072 Revised Agreement with Milone and MacBroom for a Long-Range School Facilities Plan

Discussed

Town Manager Oefinger noted that the Town Council previously authorized the agreement with Milone and MacBroom to work with the School Facilities Initiative Task Force to develop a plan for Groton schools. As time has gone on, tasks have been added to the agreement and changes made. There is an associated increase in cost due to outside expertise required to develop a survey and provide architectural input to develop cost estimates. Funding was set aside in the last CIP and additional funding has been requested in the upcoming CIP.

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

The motion carried unanimously

2013-0063 Department of Education Youth and Family Services Funding

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

The motion carried unanimously

2013-0064 Department of Education Youth Services Enhancement Grant

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

The motion carried unanimously

2013-0065 Supportive Housing Program Grant

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

The motion carried unanimously

2013-0077 Port Security Grant - Marine Group Equipment (Additional Funds)

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

The motion carried unanimously

(Recess at 7:30 p.m. for a Special Meeting of the Town Council to conduct a public hearing on an Ordinance Changing and Redefining the Voting Districts)

The Committee of the Whole meeting recessed at 7:28 p.m. for a special meeting of the Town Council. The meeting reconvened at 7:37 p.m.

2013-0073 Adoption of an Ordinance Changing and Redefining the Voting Districts

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

The motion carried unanimously

2013-0067 Small Cities Community Block Grant - 2013 Application

Discussed

Susan Cullen, Planner II, described Groton's housing rehabilitation program that has been in place since 1973. Currently the Town offers a deferred loan program to update housing infrastructure. It is an income-based, revolving loan program. This grant application is for \$400,000 and it requires that the Town Council hold a public hearing.

A motion was made by Councilor Antipas, seconded by Councilor Morton, to schedule a public hearing on the Small Cities Community Block Grant program on April 2, 2013.

In response to Mayor Somers, Ms. Cullen noted there is a lengthy waiting list and there have only been two loan defaults in the history of the program. All loans are backed up by mortgage documents. There are in-kind staff costs and contractual costs, but they are reimbursed through grant funding. The Town Manager explained that unlike in the past, the state looks for all of the revolving loan funds to be used before applying for another grant. The Town has an arrangement with a local non-profit to write the specifications, bid projects, etc. There is minimal staff cost and the program is being run very efficiently. All of the financial information for applicants is reviewed by the Community Development division.

The motion carried unanimously

2013-0071 Emergency Election Procedures

Dave Rose and Kristin Venditti, Registrars of Voters, explained that this plan is being put in place because of a Connecticut town that lost power during elections prompting the state to develop a model emergency election procedures plan. Towns have been allowed to develop their own plans, but they must be approved by March 18th or they will have to use the state's model. Mr. Rose stated that he has been aware of this requirement since last summer.

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

The motion carried unanimously

(Recess for Town Council action on #2013-0073)

The meeting recessed at 7:49 p.m. to return to the special meeting of the Town Council. The meeting resumed at 7:51 p.m.

2013-0074 Resolution Authorizing Use of a Description of the Ordinance Changing and Redefining the Voting Districts

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

The motion carried unanimously

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

None.

8. OTHER BUSINESS

None.

9. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Councilor Watson, seconded by Councilor Flax, to adjourn the meeting at 7:52 p.m.

The motion carried unanimously.