



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 Bruce Flax, Councilors Dean G. Antipas, Diane Barber, Greg Grim, Rich Moravsik, Karen F. Morton, Bonnie Nault, Deb Peruzzotti, and Harry A. Watson

Thursday, March 23, 2017

6:00 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

SPECIAL MEETING

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Flax called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

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

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

3. NEW BUSINESS

2017-0054 City Highway Budget - FYE 2018

Discussed

Mayor Flax noted that a panel of three Councilors is needed to meet with three City Councilors. Councilors Moravsik, Antipas, and Morton volunteered and Mayor Flax stated he would be an alternate. Town Manager Oefinger asked for potential meeting dates that he can share with the City.

2017-0007 Property Acquisition/Sale (2017 Standing Referral)

Discussed

This item is regarding the former state police barracks site on Thames Street, which the state is offering for sale. The consensus of the Council was to not purchase the property.

2016-0260 FYE 2018 Budget Discussion

Discussed

At the last Committee of the Whole meeting, Councilors discussed where to start as a base for the budget discussion. Four alternatives have been laid out by the Town Manager in the FYE 2018 Proposed Budget.

Councilor Antipas wondered if choosing a scenario sends a message to the state about what the Town is expecting to receive. Mayor Flax expressed concern with budgeting for a \$5 million cut and 'bvertaxing' residents if the revenues come in higher. He has also heard that some people would prefer using last year's numbers and issuing a supplemental tax bill.

Discussion followed on considering the Town and Board of Education budgets separately and applying any ECS cuts to the Board of Education budget.

Town Manager Oefinger stated he would urge the Council not to consider supplemental tax bills even though it is an option. He suggested the Council think in terms of the desired mill rate increase, noting that a zero increase is unreasonable.

Councilor Peruzzotti noted that the Town Council's job has not changed. The Council must go through the departments and decide what services the Town needs.

Other items discussed were providing a supplemental appropriation to the Board of Education if revenues are higher than expected; zeroing out CIP projects, and identifying a list of projects that can be considered if revenue becomes available.

Mayor Flax recognized State Senator Heather Somers and State Representative Joe de la Cruz. Senator Somers noted the Town should not expect to receive the same amount of ECS as last year. She explained the ECS formula comes from the Education Committee, but Appropriations sets the amount to be spent on education. There is no support for the governor's budget on either side of the aisle and people recognize how different Groton is from the rest of the municipalities.

A motion was made by Councilor Morton, seconded by Councilor Barber, to use the Town Manager's Scenario 1 for budget deliberations.

Councilor Grim noted that under Scenario 1, which involves no reduction in ECS, the Board of Education budget is taken out of the discussion. Discussion followed on the purpose of the scenarios and developing a list of items to pass on to the RTM, which can reduce but cannot add to the Town Council's budget. Discussion followed on the rationale for using Scenario 1 or Scenario 2.

The motion failed by the following vote:

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

A motion was made by Councilor Peruzzotti, seconded by Councilor Watson, to use the Town Manager's Scenario 2 for budget deliberations.

Councilor Grim suggested that Scenario 2 allows a discussion about taking the ECS cuts from the Board of Education budget. Mayor Flax stated he cannot support a blanket cut to the Board of Education.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Votes: In Favor: 7 - Mayor Flax, Councilor Grim, Councilor Antipas, Councilor Morton, Councilor Peruzzotti, Councilor Watson and Councilor Moravsik
 Opposed: 2 - Councilor Barber and Councilor Nault

2017-0005 Pending Litigation (2017 Standing Referral)

Discussed

Town Manager Oefinger noted the purpose of the discussion with Odd Fellows is unknown since their representatives asked for the meeting. The Town's purpose is to provide the Council with an update on pending legislation related to Odd Fellows.

State Senator Heather Somers stated that it is Odd Fellows' intent to offer a contractual proposal. Mayor Flax stated that the Council was not prepared to negotiate at this point.

Town Attorney Eric Callahan stated that the Council can go into executive session to discuss strategies and negotiations on pending litigation. After hearing the proposal from Odd Fellows, they can be excused so that the Council can discuss the proposal.

A motion was made by Mayor Flax, seconded by Councilor Moravsik, to enter executive session at 7:15 p.m. with Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Town Attorney Eric Callahan, Assessor Mary Gardner, Assistant Assessor Jennifer Sullivan, State Senator Heather Somers, State Representative Joe de la Cruz, and representatives of Odd Fellows for the purpose of hearing potential proposals related to pending litigation.

The motion carried unanimously

Councilor Barber left the executive session and meeting at 7:45 p.m. The Odd Fellows representatives left the executive session at 8:04 p.m. The executive session ended at 9:12 p.m.

4. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m.