



# 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 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 6:03 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

*Town Manager Oefinger provided an overview of the March 31st special meeting of the Committee of the Whole, which will include a discussion of the City Highway Budget Committee's findings with the City of Groton and the beginning of budget review.*

#### 4. Approval of Minutes

##### 2015-0072 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 March 10, 2015 are hereby accepted and approved.

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

**The motion carried unanimously**

#### 5. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

*None.*

#### 6. NEW BUSINESS

##### 2015-0004 Revised Position Descriptions (2015 Standing Referral)

##### Discussed

*The Town Council was previously briefed on proposed staffing changes and the Council approved some of the changes to be instituted in FYE 2015. Three remaining positions (Economic and Community Development Manager, Sustainability Program Project Manager, and Grant Writer) will not be filled unless funded by the Town Council and RTM as part of the FYE 2016 budget process. The position descriptions are designed to answer questions and outline what the positions will be doing as budget discussions occur.*

**A motion was made by Councilor Watson, seconded by Councilor Moravsik, to Recommend for Resolution.**

**Councilor Flax noted that he is fine with the job descriptions but he is looking for a zero net increase in positions. Councilor Cerf suggested that the Sustainability Program Project Manager and Grant Writer should be combined because there is not enough work for two full-time positions. Other Councilors expressed support for the positions and what they can bring to the organization.**

Jon Reiner, Director of Planning and Development, noted that the three positions have been discussed with the Town Manager for quite some time. One reason that there has not been more movement in the energy efficiency and sustainability areas is the lack of staff to do the work. These initiatives will be a joint effort of Public Works and Planning and Development Services and there is only one new position being created.

Councilor Moravsik stated that next year he will be questioning the benefits of the new positions. Mr. Reiner explained that it will take some time, but the investment will pay off in long-term benefits.

Councilor Cerf attempted to ask more questions out of turn and without being recognized by the Mayor and she was asked to cease.

Councilor Watson reiterated that this discussion is about the job descriptions and not about whether or not to fill the positions.

The motion carried by the following vote:

**Votes:** In Favor: 7 - Mayor Schmidt, Councilor Antipas, Councilor de la Cruz, Councilor Flax, Councilor Frink, Councilor Moravsik and Councilor Watson  
Opposed: 1 - Councilor Cerf

**2015-0073 Fitch Middle School Reuse Plan - Update**

**Discussed**

*Gary Schneider provided a history of Fitch Middle School and its partial use since its closure in June 2012. The Town hired TLB Architecture to study reuse of the building and they have completed the physical conditions assessment. The consultant is now working on the space needs assessment, which will be followed by conceptual design.*

*The Town has demolished two portable classrooms at the site. Most of the Board of Education materials have been removed from the building. A request for a supplemental appropriation for fuel for the building is pending before the RTM and the FYE 2016 budget will include funds to keep the facility in a caretaker state.*

*Current concerns are the need to ventilate the building. All requests to use the building are on hold. Public Works will be doing more work in the building including removing carpeting and bulletin boards (to eliminate sources of mold).*

*The Council received an executive summary and cost estimates from the architect. The most pressing need is roof replacement on the A wing, which has been included in the FYE 2016 Capital Improvement Program. Public Works will prioritize the work to protect the building.*

*If the Town disposes of William Seely, Parks and Recreation will be able to use the D Wing temporarily, pending approval by the Fire Marshal and Building Official.*

*Mr. Schneider clarified that the space needs portion of the study will look at reuse of Fitch as office space.*

*Councilor Watson expressed concern with hazardous materials. Public Works will be identifying and managing what is left in the school. Councilor Flax asked if it would be beneficial to establish temporary uses in the building. Mr. Schneider stated that he hopes to have a reuse plan to the Town Council in eight weeks.*

*The Town Manager discussed the closure of Fitch Middle School and maintenance decisions that have been made regarding the schools over the years.*

*Mr. Schneider discussed the boilers and removal of the window air conditioners, which are recommendations from the architect to maintain the building in an unoccupied state. The*

identified work is normal maintenance that would have been required if the building remained a school.

Public Works is not recommending the \$770,000 work identified by the architect, but only the A-wing roof replacement that is included in the FYE 2016 CIP. The architect will be creating concept plans for the building and any additional work will be discussed with the Council at that time.

Councilor Frink suggested that there be a cost benefit analysis of co-location of Town departments and the Board of Education (Groton Public Schools).

2015-0071

**Municipal Energy Policy****Discussed**

Rick Norris, Program Project Manager, explained that staff has been working with the Energy, Efficiency and Conservation Committee to develop a municipal energy efficiency policy. The committee has been lacking the support of the Council to take advantage of programs that are available. The last grant received was in 2011, and it takes a significant amount of staff time to administer grants. The committee is asking the Town Council for its support and approval of the policy. Councilor Frink read the proposed policy. Discussion followed on the proliferation of municipal sustainability policies across the county; adding measurable metrics to the policy; the need to develop a consolidated database on energy usage; challenges to the Town's program; accomplishments since receiving the Department of Energy grant in 2010; and 'efficiency' versus 'cost savings.'

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

**The motion carried unanimously**

2014-0256

**Procurement of USS Groton Sail and Planes****Discussed**

Town Manager Oefinger provided a brief update on the effort to procure the USS Groton Sail and a request to join the City of Groton in providing funding to hire a fundraiser to assess the success of a campaign. A site selection committee whittled down 29 sites and recently toured the lead sites: the front lawn of the Groton Public Library, the Groton Heights front lawn area, the upper Costa property on Thames Street, the Flasher Memorial area, and the intersection of Military Highway and Crystal Lake Road (site of the proposed boulevard). The Council received a copy of a proposal to bring a fundraiser on board with a total cost of \$20,000. The City has committed \$5,000. The request is for the Town to commit \$5,000 with the understanding that an additional \$5,000 will be required in the future. If approved by the Town Council, the Town Manager will identify the source of the initial \$5,000 in the FYE 2015 budget.

Councilor Moravsik stated that he has independently contacted Cincinnati and Niagara Falls and he is awaiting information on the installed sail/park in Niagara Falls and a pending sail installation in Cincinnati.

All Councilors were in favor of providing the funding.

2015-0075

**Acceptance of Open Space in the Watrous Subdivision****Discussed**

Town Manager Oefinger described the open space located on the east side of Fort Hill Brook off Fort Hill Road. This off-site open space parcel has been offered to the Town in association with the Watrous Subdivision. Councilors requested additional information about the location of the Watrous Subdivision.

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

The motion carried unanimously

**2015-0032 Possible Mooring Fee for Mystic River**

**Tabled**

*Town Manager Oefinger noted receipt of follow-up correspondence from Paul Watts and Paul Bates on the Mystic River mooring fee issue. The Town Manager recommended tabling this issue until the fall or winter after the new harbormasters have more experience and the impacts of the mooring fee increase in Stonington are known.*

*The consensus of the Council was to table this item.*

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

A motion was made by Councilor Flax, seconded by Councilor de la Cruz, that the Town Council enter into Executive Session at 8:00 p.m. with Town Manager Mark Oefinger and Town Attorney Matt Auger pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes Section 1-200(6) to discuss strategies and/or negotiations about likely pending claims by the City against the Town concerning the pending City highway budget funding request. The City of Groton has indicated a willingness to proceed to arbitration as it did two years ago. Attorney Auger has previously provided the Town Council with an attorney client protected memorandum and attorney work product on this subject and will be discussing the contents of such memorandum with the Town Council.

The motion carried unanimously

**Discussed**

*The executive session ended at 9:10 p.m.*

**2012-0050 Potential Disposition of William Seely School Property**

**Not Discussed**

**2015-0005 Pending Litigation (2015 Standing Referral)**

**Not Discussed**

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

**2014-0238 Downtown Mystic Merchants Association Banner Program Funding Request**

**Recommended for Deletion**

**2014-0328 LEARN Lease of Fitch Middle School - Update**

**Recommended for Deletion**

**2014-0346 Connecticut Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Program Funding**

**Recommended for Deletion**

**8. OTHER BUSINESS**

*None.*

**9. ADJOURNMENT**

*The meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m.*