



Town of Groton, Connecticut

Meeting Minutes

Town Council Committee of the Whole

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Town Clerk 860-441-6640
Town Manager
860-441-6630

Mayor Bruce Flax, Councilors Dean G. Antipas, Diane Barber, Joe de la Cruz, Greg Grim, Karen F. Morton, Bonnie Nault, Deb Peruzzotti, and Harry A. Watson

Tuesday, March 29, 2016

5:30 PM

Groton Senior Center - Classroom 2

SPECIAL MEETING

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Flax called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Members Present: Mayor Flax, Councilor Barber, Councilor Antipas, Councilor Morton, Councilor Nault, Councilor de la Cruz and Councilor Watson
Members Absent: Councilor Grim and Councilor Peruzzotti

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

City Council: Mayor Galbraith, Councilors Sheffield, Gerrish, Rusk, Hedrick, Ilvento, and Heede

3. NEW BUSINESS

2016-0090 City Highway Budget - FYE 2017

Discussed

Mayor Galbraith explained that the City Highway budget request for FYE 2017 is .72% less than FYE 2016. She reviewed summaries of personnel services and operating expenses, noting additional back up by line item for each of the sections. Works pages are presented in the Town's format using object codes which match the Town's codes. Mayor Galbraith reviewed materials and supplies broken down by type. Councilors also reviewed supporting documents for the road bond money. Ron Yuhas, the City's Director of Finance, noted a 3.58% reduction in the operating budget attributable to attrition and moving one-half a position out of the highway budget.

Mayor Galbraith noted the summary of Administration and Benefits. Unlike the Town, benefits are allocated by department in the City. Reductions are the result of fewer employees.

The budget shows a large increase in Insurance, which has been underfunded in previous years, as well as an increase in Software Maintenance.

Mayor Galbraith noted that any surplus goes into the City's General Fund and if there is a budget overage, it comes out of the City's Contingency account.

There are no real highlights in the Fleet Maintenance account, which has been pared down over the years. Tim Umrysz noted that one vehicle is scheduled for replacement (a dump truck at a cost of \$55,000). In the Roads and Streets budget, there has been a reduction in FTEs and materials. Safety gear and physicals are required by union contracts. Pavement includes materials for pothole repairs. Roadside Maintenance was described as Bare bones and no changes are proposed to Sidewalk Maintenance or Traffic Control. Snow and Ice Control has increased based on a three year average of overtime costs.

Discussion followed on sharing a street sweeper with the Town. It was noted that one street sweeper is not enough for both areas, the equipment is used seasonally so there would be scheduling conflicts, and the equipment is high maintenance.

Mayor Galbraith continued her review noting that there is a \$3,000 increase in Engineering associated with overtime and a \$2,000 reduction in Highway Buildings for repairs and maintenance.

Mayor Flax thanked Mayor Galbraith for putting the budget into the Town's format for comparison purposes. Councilors expressed an interest in having time to review the City's budget.

Discussion followed on merging Town and City departments and the need to learn to co-exist.

For the upcoming budget review, Mayor Flax asked the City to demonstrate how the increased cost of materials contributes to the difference in the Town and City highway budgets. He expressed a desire to identify a City multiplier to apply to an agreed upon measurement.

Councilor de la Cruz stated that she had hoped that the City Highway arbitration would be resolved prior to these budget discussions. It was noted that the arbitration is looking to compare the City with older communities with similar infrastructure rather than with the Town.

Town Manager Oefinger explained the City highway budget process noting that if the amount approved by the Town Council is contested, dollars are set aside until the dispute is settled. The issue continues to be the interpretation of the wording requiring the Town to fund those activities necessary for the "making and repairing" of roads and streets. Mayor Flax feels that the results of the current arbitration will be a starting point to bring the two sides together.

Councilor Watson noted that because the Town will not have a decision on the arbitration before adopting the FYE 2017 budget, the Town must use the same formula (i.e. road miles) to determine how to fund the City highway budget.

Mayor Galbraith stated that the Town's brief in the arbitration suggests that a comparison with the Town is not appropriate. Town Manager Oefinger disagreed noting that the brief proposed another way to look at the issue in an attempt to validate the Town's actions.

Councilor Grim arrived at 6:35 p.m.

Roll Call: Members Present: Mayor Flax, Councilor Barber, Councilor Grim, Councilor Antipas, Councilor Morton, Councilor Nault, Councilor de la Cruz and Councilor Watson
Members Absent: Councilor Peruzzotti

Discussed

Mayor Galbraith expressed concern with the impact on the City's budget and taxpayers and Councilor Ilvento expressed concern with the lack of a plan for service going forward. Town Manager Oefinger stated that the City is absolutely allowed to have its own Highway Department and the Town must pay a reasonable amount; however, either the costs are significantly higher in the City or the City is providing more services than the Town. The Town Manager expressed his desire to clarify the special legislation or develop a Memorandum of Understanding, and decide together how to provide services.

The Council anticipates making a decision on the City's highway budget at the budget review session on April 2nd.

2016-0008 Joint Meeting with City of Groton (2016 Standing Referral)

Discussed

Mayor Galbraith noted that the City is leasing the Colonel Ledyard School property from the Town for \$1.00 per year. The City had hoped to use the building for community space, but had to revise its plan when there was a drop in the Grand List. Mayor Galbraith asked if the Town has any use for the property or would like to take the property back. The City cannot sell or lease the

property; only the Town can. Councilor Nault requested a tour of the building. Mayor Galbraith noted that the City has abated the asbestos in the building and installed a new roof.

A referral was made on the disposition of Colonel Ledyard School.

4. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Councilor Nault, seconded by Councilor de la Cruz, to adjourn the meeting at 6:55 p.m.

The motion carried unanimously.