



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, Joe de la Cruz, Greg Grim, Karen F. Morton, Bonnie Nault, Deb Peruzzotti, and Harry A. Watson

Wednesday, April 27, 2016

6:00 PM

Groton Senior Center

SPECIAL MEETING

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Flax called the meeting to order at 6:08 p.m.

2. **ROLL CALL**

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

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

3. **Calendar and Communications**

None.

4. **Approval of Minutes**

2016-0104 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 meetings of March 12, 2016, March 14, 2016, March 15, 2016, March 16, 2016 (special meeting #1), and March 22, 2016 are hereby accepted and approved.

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

The motion carried unanimously

5. **NEW BUSINESS**

2016-0099 Approving FYE 2017 Budgets

Discussed

Town Manager Oefinger explained that the Town Council is at the point where it approves the budgets and sets tentative tax rates for FYE 2017. These are interim actions required by the Charter. After the RTM acts on the budget, the Town Council can make no further changes to the budget, but will set the final mill rate. Cindy Landry, Director of Finance, reviewed a referral memo including suggested resolutions. The Town Manager's proposed budget was \$125,618,072 budget with a 1.73 mill increase. After Town Council deliberations, there were \$2.6 million in cuts resulting in a 0.86 mill or 4.1% increase in the mill rate. Ms. Landry reviewed the following referral attachments: Reconciliation from Manager's to Council's Budget; Reconciliation from Manager's to Council's Capital Projects Budget; Comparison by Function; and Comparison by Fund.

The overall budget represents a 2.2% decrease from FYE 2016, but the mill rate is still increasing 4.1% due to a decrease in revenues. Discussion followed on these facts. The Town Operations portion of the budget has decreased 3.1% from FYE 2016. Ms. Landry noted that at the time the budget was prepared approximately \$250,000 in Fund Balance was available to apply to the budget. That figure has increased to approximately \$875,000.

Ms. Landry concluded by explaining how the tentative tax rates were calculated. She explained that collection rates are based on a five-year average. Mumford Cove and the Sewer District are smaller tax bases so they typically have higher collection rates.

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

The motion carried unanimously

2016-0100 Computation of Tax Rate for General Fund (FYE 2017)

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

The motion carried unanimously

2016-0101 Computation of Tax Rate for Mumford Cove (FYE 2017)

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

The motion carried unanimously

2016-0102 Computation of Tax Rate for Groton Sewer District (FYE 2017)

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

The motion carried unanimously

2016-0105 FYE 2016 Fourth Quarter Transfers

Discussed

Cindy Landry, Director of Finance, explained that the Charter allows for transfers from Contingency or between functions in the last quarter of the fiscal year. Two areas are expected to be over budget: Legal Services (\$197,704) and Insurance and Claims (\$15,000). The primary reasons for the overages are ongoing litigation and unemployment costs related to department reorganizations.

Town Manager Oefinger mentioned that some of the settlement funds from the Pettini lawsuit may be reimbursed by the state. If so, the funds will be returned to the Capital Reserve Fund.

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

The motion carried unanimously

2016-0103 October 2016 Revaluation - Update

Discussed and Recommended no action taken

Information was previously distributed to the Town Council on the upcoming revaluation. Councilors had no questions. It was noted that some areas of Mystic received duplicate mailings, but those costs will be borne by the revaluation company and not the Town.

2015-0298 Establishment of a Charter Revision Commission

Recommended for a Resolution

Mayor Flax distributed information he composed about Councilors' selections for the Charter Revision Commission. Discussion followed on how many people to appoint to the CRC and the consensus was nine members. It was noted that after choosing the top nine vote getters, the Council would need to determine the appropriate balance of party affiliation and Town officials. At the request of Mayor Flax, Councilors explained the reasons why they made the choices they did and discussed potential membership beyond the top eight vote getters (i.e. Dee Hauber, Jane Dauphinais, Jennifer White, Scott Aument, Darcy Peruzzotti, Kathy Chase, Bob Frink, and Brandon Marley). Discussion then turned to increasing the size of the Commission to 11.

A motion was made by Mayor Flax, seconded by Councilor Peruzzotti, to recommend the eight top vote getters plus Roseanne Kotowski, Patrice Granatosky, and Daniel Mello.

A motion was made by Councilor Antipas, seconded by Councilor Nault, to amend the motion to replace Patrice Granatosky with Janet Downs.

A motion was made by Councilor Morton, seconded by Councilor Barber, to amend the motion to replace Janet Downs with Bill Smith.

The second amendment to the motion failed by the following vote:

In favor: 4 - Councilors Barber, Morton, Nault and Peruzzotti

Opposed: 4 - Mayor Flax, Councilors Antipas, Grim, and Watson

The first amendment to the motion failed by the following vote:

In favor: 4 - Councilors Antipas, Grim, Morton and Nault

Opposed: 4 - Mayor Flax, Councilors Barber, Peruzzotti and Watson.

The motion failed by the following vote:

Votes: In Favor: 4 - Mayor Flax, Councilor Grim, Councilor Peruzzotti and Councilor Watson

Opposed: 4 - Councilor Barber, Councilor Antipas, Councilor Morton and Councilor Nault

A motion was made by Councilor Barber, seconded by Councilor Nault, to recommend the eight top vote getters plus Roseanne Kotowski, Daniel Mello, and Rich Moravsik.

The motion failed by the following vote:

Votes: In Favor: 4 - Councilor Barber, Councilor Grim, Councilor Antipas and Councilor Nault

Opposed: 4 - Mayor Flax, Councilor Morton, Councilor Peruzzotti and Councilor Watson

Discussed

A motion was made by Councilor Nault, seconded by Councilor Barber, to recommend the eight top vote getters plus Roseanne Kotowski, Janet Downs, and Daniel Mello.

It was noted that the same motion had failed previously and Councilor Peruzzotti recommended waiting for Councilor de la Cruz to arrive. Discussion followed.

With the motion on the table, the Committee of the Whole recessed at 7:38 p.m. for the Town Council special meeting. The Committee reconvened at 7:46 p.m.

Councilor de la Cruz arrived at 7:45 p.m.

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

A motion was made by Councilor Nault, seconded by Councilor Barber, to recommend the eight top vote getters plus Roseanne Kotowski, Janet Downs, and Daniel Mello.

Councilor de la Cruz was apprised of the various motions that had failed and the motion on the floor.

A motion was made by Councilor de la Cruz, seconded by Councilor Grim, to amend the motion to substitute Patrice Granatosky for Janet Downs.

The amendment to the motion carried by the following vote:

In Favor: 5 - Mayor Flax, Councilors de la Cruz, Grim, Peruzzotti, and Watson

Opposed: 4 - Councilors Antipas, Barber, Morton, and Nault.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Votes: In Favor: 5 - Mayor Flax, Councilor de la Cruz, Councilor Grim, Councilor Peruzzotti and Councilor Watson

Opposed: 4 - Councilor Nault, Councilor Barber, Councilor Antipas and Councilor Morton

Discussed

Discussion followed on having backups in case the preferred candidates are no longer available.

and/or Rich Moravsik if preferred Charter Revision Commission candidates are unavailable.

A motion was made by Mayor Flax, seconded by Councilor Peruzzotti, to amend the motion to substitute Bill Smith for Rich Moravsik.

The amendment to the motion carried by the following vote:

In favor: 6 - Mayor Flax, Councilors de la Cruz, Grimm, Morton, Peruzzotti, and Watson Opposed: 3 - Councilors Antipas, Barber, and Nault.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Votes: In Favor: 6 - Mayor Flax, Councilor de la Cruz, Councilor Morton, Councilor Grim, Councilor Peruzzotti and Councilor Watson

Opposed: 3 - Councilor Nault, Councilor Barber and Councilor Antipas

Discussed

Mayor Flax prepared and distributed a list of potential Charter revisions identified by interviewees.

Town Manager Oefinger advised the Council that they must consider providing funding for the effort as well as staffing. The Town Manager agreed to notify recommended candidates and invite them to a special meeting of the Committee of the Whole on May 17th at 6:00 p.m. Councilors were asked to send their charter revision suggestions to the Town Manager's Office and be prepared to discuss them at the May 10th Committee of the Whole meeting.

Councilor Barber left at 8:07 p.m.

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

2016-0021

Proposed Adjustments to Retiree Pension Benefits

Recommended for a Resolution

At the last meeting where this item was discussed, the Town Council asked Bob Zagami, Director of Human Resources/Risk Management, to identify when the last time COLAs were provided to the various labor groups. Mr. Zagami reviewed a chart showing the groups, the number of retirees, the percent increase used for calculations, the increase in annual benefit, the increase in unfunded actuarial accrued liability, the additional Town cost, and the date and percent increase of the last COLA.

Councilor Morton stated she was recusing herself because her husband is a police retiree.

Town Manager Oefinger explained again that any increase will not impact the FYE 2017 budget unless the increase is made effective retroactively. The actuarial assessment is made on June 30th so an effective date of July 1st will not affect the budget until FYE 2019.

Town Manager Oefinger explained how contributions are made to the pension plan. The Town only contributes when the fund falls short, but for many years it was overfunded and the Town made no contributions. Employees are offered the option of using a 457 plan that the Town contributes to or the Town's retirement program.

Discussion followed on the pension plan and what it would take to eliminate it for future hires. The Town Manager noted that a presentation could be made again by the Town's financial advisor so the Council understands the implications of making changes.

Other topics discussed were the health of the pension plan, the fact that police do not pay into social security, how the potential 2% increase was identified, and the Town's history of providing

COLAs. Councilor de la Cruz suggested that if a pension fund is properly funded, it can work very well.

A motion was made by Mayor Flax, seconded by Councilor Watson, to provide a 2% COLA increase to retirees in all groups.

A motion was made by Councilor Nault, seconded by Councilor Antipas, to amend the motion to provide a 1% COLA increase to retirees in all groups.

The amendment to the motion failed by the following vote:

In favor: 2 - Councilors Antipas and Nault

Opposed: 5 - Mayor Flax, Councilors de la Cruz, Grim, Peruzzotti, and Watson

Abstained: 1 - Councilor Morton

Discussion followed on the difference between changing the pension plan going forward versus providing COLAs for current retirees and the restriction on COLAs for recent retirees.

The motion carried unanimously

2016-0088 Neighborhood Assistance Act Program Application (2016)

Discussed

Town Manager Oefinger explained that if the Town is willing to participate in the Neighborhood Assistance Act Program this year, a public hearing on applications will have to be held. Odd Fellows has expressed an interest in participating, but no application has been received at this time. The Town Manager recommended a public hearing on May 17th.

A motion was made by Councilor Watson, seconded by Councilor Peruzzotti, to schedule a public hearing on Neighborhood Assistance Act Program applications on May 17, 2016 at 7:30 p.m.

The motion carried unanimously

2016-0079 Request for Donation for Thames River Heritage Park Water Taxi

Discussed

Town Manager Oefinger noted that the Town Council added funds for this contribution to the FYE 2017. Before acting on the request, the Council must wait for the RTM action on the budget.

2016-0040 Adoption of Rules for the Thirtieth Town Council

Discussed

Councilor Antipas stated that the Rules Committee needs to meet to review a draft of the rules, but a date has not yet been chosen. The Committee is considering doing away with standing committees except for Rules and Personnel and using an ad hoc committee system instead.

Councilor Watson suggested that the Rules Committee will meet before the end of May.

2014-0312 School Facilities Initiative Update

Discussed and Recommended no action taken

Councilors received a copy of the School Facilities Initiative Task Force's final report (without appendices). It is expected that the draft bond ordinance will be on the May 10th Committee of the Whole agenda for consideration.

2016-0068 Disposition of Town Owned Property Acquired through Tax Foreclosure

Discussed

Town Manager Oefinger noted that the Planning Commission reviewed the CGS 8-24 referral on the disposition of four parcels of Town owned property and concurred with staff's recommendations. If the Town Council approves, the Town will actively market the properties. Depending on the purchase prices, some sales may have to go to the RTM.

A motion was made by Councilor Watson, seconded by Councilor Peruzzotti, that this matter be

Recommended for a Resolution.

The motion carried unanimously

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

Recommended for Deletion:

2015-0257 Connecticut Partnership Plan 2.0

Not Discussed

2015-0285 Town Council Orientation

Not Discussed

7. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Councilor Peruzzotti, seconded by Councilor Watson, to adjourn the meeting at 9:10 p.m.

The motion carried unanimously.