



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

Tuesday, May 23, 2017

5:15 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

SPECIAL MEETING

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Flax called the meeting to order at 5:21 p.m.

2. **ROLL CALL**

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

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

3. **Calendar and Communications**

None.

4. **Approval of Minutes**

2017-0137 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 April 26, 2017 are hereby accepted and approved.

A motion was made by Councilor Morton, seconded by Councilor Moravsik, to adopt.

The motion carried unanimously

2017-0138 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 May 9, 2017 are hereby accepted and approved.

A motion was made by Councilor Morton, seconded by Councilor Moravsik, to adopt.

The motion carried unanimously

5. **NEW BUSINESS**

2017-0140 FOI Complaint Docket #FIC 2017-0232

Discussed and Recommended no action taken

Town Manager Oefinger noted that both Roseanne Kotowski and Town Clerk Betsy Moukawsher have withdrawn their complaints to the Freedom of Information Commission regarding the April 21st Committee of the Whole budget session.

2017-0133 Introduction of an Ordinance to Designate the Planning Commission the Planning and Zoning Commission and to Abolish the Zoning Commission

Discussed

Councilors briefly discussed the number of members of a combined Planning and Zoning Commission, and they confirmed their desire to have seven regular members (and three alternates)

as noted in the ordinance.

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

The motion carried unanimously

Councilor Peruzzotti arrived at 5:27 p.m.

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

2017-0134 Setting of a Public Hearing on an Ordinance to Designate the Planning Commission the Planning and Zoning Commission and to Abolish the Zoning Commission
Discussed

A public hearing on the ordinance is recommended for July 18th. After discussion, the Council decided to hold the public hearing at a special meeting of the Town Council on June 20th.

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

The motion carried unanimously

2017-0135 FYE 2017 Suspense List

Discussed

Cindy Landry, Director of Finance, and Melissa McGuire, Tax Collector, were present. Ms. Landry explained the requirement for the Town to report annually the list of taxes that should be suspended. The accounts will no longer be actively billed, but the taxes are still owed to the Town. The list totals \$935,947.81. There was a significant increase from FYE 2016 due to two parcels taken by the Town through foreclosure.

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

The motion carried unanimously

2017-0141 Par Four Lease Renewal

Discussed

Town Manager Oefinger explained that a 10 year lease with Par Four restaurant at the Shennecossett Golf Course has expired. Staff has been in discussions with the Par Four owners for six months on a new lease. The Town Manager recommended that the Council go into executive session to discuss the lease terms.

A motion was made by Mayor Flax, seconded by Councilor Nault, to go into executive session at 5:36 p.m. to discuss the Par Four lease and to invite Town Manager Mark Oefinger and Assistant to the Town Manager Nicki Bresnayan to attend.

The motion carried unanimously

Discussed

The executive session concluded at 6:13 p.m.

2017-0009 Joint Meeting with Board of Education (2017 Standing Referral)

Discussed

Board of Education members Kim Shepardson Watson, Rita Volkmann, Lee White, Andrea Ackerman, Rosemary Robertson and Gretchen Newsome were present along with Groton Public Schools staff Dr. Mike Graner, Sam Kilpatrick, Susan Austin

Dr. Graner stated he met with State Department of Administrative Services Commissioner Currey yesterday. Prior to the referendum on the Groton 2020 plan, Groton was in racial balance. Following the referendum, the school projects were placed on the state's priority list. Groton was recently notified that Claude Chester is out of racial balance. As a result, Dr. Graner asked to

amend the project request to change Cutler from a renovation project to a diversity school, which will increase the reimbursement rate for that school to 80%. It appears Commissioner Currey will support the amended project.

Mayor Flax left the meeting at 6:25 p.m. By consensus Councilor Watson was named Chairman pro-tem.

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

2017-0132 Status of Groton 2020 School Construction Project

Discussed

Rick Norris and Gary Schneider from Public Works, and John Butkus from Arcadis were present.

Mr. Butkus reviewed a PowerPoint presentation about Arcadis and the services the company will provide for the Groton 2020 plan as Owner's Representative. Next steps are the hiring of an architect and construction manager dependent upon receipt of grant funds.

Mr. Norris noted lessons learned during the Phase I school project and the need for additional staff and resources. Members are also needed for the Permanent School Building Committee.

Mr. Butkus responded to Councilors' questions. His firm does value management versus value engineering, with incremental estimates at every stage of design and more state reviews. The use of Made in America materials is a Council policy, not a requirement of the grant. Mr. Butkus reviewed the state's prioritization process for funding school projects and noted that state deferrals do not jeopardize the reimbursement rate.

2017-0139 FYE 2017 Budget - State Reductions

Discussed

Town Manager Oefinger explained the Governor's recent proposal for a \$440,000 reduction for Groton in FYE 2017. There are only two months remaining in the fiscal year to make up the funds. The RTM has finished budget deliberations and the Town is updating revenue estimates. Historically Town Operations return money to the General Fund, but that amount is unknown at this time. The Town Manager suggested that the Council and Board of Education discuss how to address the cut collectively.

Dr. Graner stated that he thinks impact aid revenues may help. Groton Public Schools expects to return \$10,000 to \$15,000 to the General Fund.

It was noted that the mill rate will be discussed at a special meeting of the Committee of the Whole on June 6th at 6:30 p.m., followed by the regular meeting of the Town Council at 7:30 p.m.

Councilor Antipas summarized the discussion, noting that that Board of Education cannot absorb the \$440,000 cut so there is no reason to come up with a contingency plan. He asked where the money would come from if the cut is made and Ms. Volkmann stated the taxpayers.

The Committee of the Whole recessed at 7:09 p.m. and reconvened at 7:18 p.m.

2017-0005 Pending Litigation (2017 Standing Referral)

A motion was made by Councilor Peruzzotti, seconded by Councilor Nault, to enter executive session at 7:18 p.m. to discuss pending tax appeals concerning Groton Long Point and Pfizer with the justification that it is pending litigation and the Council is being provided with attorney-client privileged information, and to invite Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Finance Director Cindy Landry, Assessor Mary Gardner, and Town Attorney Matt Auger.

Town Manager Oefinger noted that Councilor Moravsik as a resident of Groton Long Point (and a

plaintiff) would have to decide whether or not to participate in the privileged discussion. Councilor Moravsik said he would participate. Discussion followed on the impact of having a plaintiff present during attorney-client privileged discussions. Mr. Auger stated that it is assumed that Councilor Moravsik would act exclusively as a Town Councilor and honor the confidentiality. An alternative view is that it is impossible for Councilor Moravsik to separate himself from the Groton Long Point class action. Councilor Antipas expressed concern with waiving attorney-client privilege by virtue of including Councilor Moravsik in the session. Mr. Auger explained that the matter has been tried, and the Town is waiting for a decision. All strategy is a matter of court records so that even if someone attempts to invade the confidentiality of attorney-client privilege, they would not discover anything that is not part of the record. Regardless of the outcome of the lawsuit, it is likely that either side will appeal, but Mr. Auger will not be discussing appellate strategy in this session.

The motion carried unanimously

Discussed

The executive session ended at 8:15 p.m.

2017-0075 Disposition of William Seely School Property

A motion was made by Councilor Watson, seconded by Councilor Moravsik, to enter executive session at 8:15 p.m. to discuss 2017-0075 Disposition of William Seely School, and to invite Director of Planning and Development Jon Reiner and Town Manager Mark Oefinger to attend.

The motion carried unanimously

Discussed

Mayor Flax returned to the meeting at 8:30 p.m. and joined the executive session.

The executive session ended at 8:34 p.m.

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

2017-0142 Potential Appointment of Current Town Manager to SEAT and Retirement Boards

Discussed

Town Manager Oefinger has offered to stay on as a member of the SEAT Board and the Retirement Board to provide continuity during the transition to the new Town Manager. The Council was supportive.

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

The motion carried unanimously

2017-0044 Town Manager Search Committee

Recommended for Deletion

6. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:38 p.m.