



Town of Groton, Connecticut

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Meeting Minutes

Town Council Committee of the Whole

Mayor James L. Streeter, Councilors Bruce S. Flax, Bill Johnson, Catherine Kolnaski, Deborah B. Monteiro, Frank O'Beirne, Jr., Deborah L. Peruzzotti, Paulann H. Sheets, and Harry A. Watson

Tuesday, May 25, 2010

7:00 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

REGULAR MEETING

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Streeter called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Members Present: Mayor Streeter, Councilor Flax, Councilor Johnson, Councilor Kolnaski, Councilor Monteiro, Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., Councilor Peruzzotti and Councilor Sheets
Members Absent: Councilor Watson

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

3. Calendar and Communications

None.

4. Approval of Minutes

2010-0122 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 April 27, 2010 and May 4, 2010 are hereby accepted and approved.

A motion was made by Councilor Kolnaski, seconded by Councilor Flax, to adopt.

The motion carried unanimously

5. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None

6. NEW BUSINESS

2010-0121 FYE 2010 Suspense List

Discussed

Director of Finance Sal Pandolfo and Tax Collector Nancy Dytko were present to address the Council. This request is to add taxes determined to be uncollectable by the Tax Collector to the Suspense List. The Tax Collector will no longer have to send bills, but the taxpayers are still liable.

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

The motion carried unanimously

2010-0106 October 2011 Revaluation

Discussed

Director of Finance Sal Pandolfo introduced Debra Christy, Area Manager for Tyler Technologies-CLT Appraisal Services, the firm that was awarded the contract for the October 1, 2011 Revaluation. Assessor John Philip was also present. An article about the revaluation appeared in the paper in early May, and a mailing including frequently asked questions and

answers will be sent to property owners. Representatives of CLT will be inspecting properties with the homeowners' permission. Discussion followed on the type of identification that will be used by inspectors. Ms. Christy noted that inspectors will be easily identifiable and the police will be notified. Ms. Christy provided more details on the inspectors and noted that homeowners are not required to allow entry; it is only a request.

2010-0113

Joint Meeting with Noank Executive Board**Discussed and Recommended no action taken**

Frank Socha, Paul Bates, and Ben Rathbun were present from the Noank Executive Board. Town Manager Oefinger noted that the Town was unsuccessful in its attempt to retain the parking lot at Noank School for an extended time period. The parking lot has since been removed and the area loamed and seeded. That discussion led to a suggestion that the Town Council and Noank Executive Board meet to talk about items of mutual interest such as the reuse of Noank School. Director of Public Works Gary Schneider provided a brief history of the Noank School and the current condition of the building. The cost to demolish the building is estimated to be approximately \$250,000 versus repairs and renovation costs that would likely exceed \$2 million.

Mr. Socha noted that the Town's application for the parking lot prompted concern on the part of the Zoning Commission that the Noank School Reuse Task Force has not been formed. The Executive Board has not talked about the school at great length although they are not in favor of a subdivision. Mr. Socha would like to see the building reused for Town offices or meeting space, or in the worst case, the property used as open space. Mr. Bates stated that the neighbors are displeased that the Task Force has not been formed and there has been no communication from the Town. He encouraged the Council to start that process.

The Town Manager asked the Council to consider whether or not to establish the Task Force given the condition of the building or the desire to use it as open space. Councilor Peruzzotti expressed concern with moving forward with reusing the building considering the relatively low cost to demolish it and the need for recreation fields in Town. Councilor Johnson agreed and noted there is probably no need for a Task Force to be formed.

Councilor Monteiro noted she is responsible for the Town Council's goal regarding vacant schools and other facilities. The Council must decide if any effort or money will be put into the school. Mr. Bates suggested that the Council should be open to many ideas and suggestions, and that is the value of putting the Task Force together. Councilor Sheets agreed. Mr. Rathbun noted that it will be cheaper to demolish the building, and the site could be used as a playground for the whole Town, not just Noank.

Councilor Kolnaski asked that Noank officials forward recommendations and suggestions for the site to the Council. Mr. Bates noted that the Task Force would be comprised of many individuals, not just Noank residents. Mr. Socha noted that there are other considerations that could be reviewed by the Committee.

Mayor Streeter would like to see something done with the building before winter, given the cost of heating the building. The Town Manager can see no Town uses that would receive the support needed to fund necessary building improvements.

A motion was made by Councilor Sheets, seconded by Councilor Peruzzotti, to authorize the Mayor to make appointments to the Noank School Reuse Task Force in three weeks.

Councilor O'Beirne asked about the zoning of the property. Mr. Bates indicated he would provide a copy of the Noank Zoning Regulations to him. Mr. Socha noted that zoning powers were given to the Noank Fire District by state statutes.

The motion carried unanimously.

The next topic of discussion was Riverview Avenue ("Snake Hill") improvements. The Town is working on plans to improve that section of roadway to deal with retaining walls, guide rails, and lighting. A grant was received from the state to repair the closed stairway, but local approval was not obtained. Once local approval was received, the state did not approve the grant application. The Town has made some improvements and the stairway should be reopened tomorrow. Mr. Schneider provided a history of the project that makes improvements on what is actually private property.

Mr. Bates thanked the Council for their efforts on the budget.

2010-0105

Change in Previously Authorized Board of Education CIP Project

Recommended for a Resolution

Paul Kadri, Superintendent of Schools, explained that the video furnace project came about as a means to provide professional development and remote access for students. A video furnace is the conduit for providing video content and is a significant ongoing investment. Groton Public Schools subsequently researched other options and considered a system similar to YouTube that would work with the smart boards being used in the classrooms. The solution provides YouTube capability as well as the ability to push video. The hardware and software costs are about \$85,000. \$73,000 was allocated in the CIP. Continuing with the video furnace technology would cost hundreds of thousands of dollars. The video furnaces that have been purchased will be sold or used until their useful life is depleted. Maintenance contracts on the units have not been renewed.

Councilor O'Beirne expressed skepticism about spending money on the latest technology when there are significant cost decreases and capability increases over time. He prefers to wait until there is a proven track record before spending money. Mr. Kadri stated the technology is not new or sophisticated. The payment covers hosting services for the equipment and better connectivity speed, as well as development of the security architecture, administration, and management services. Although the concept of a private video housed location is new, the technology is not.

Councilor Flax asked why YouTube can't be used and Mr. Kadri stated because of security concerns. Groton Public Schools already have video production capabilities and it would take about a year and a half to create a decent video warehouse. The \$85,000 is a one time investment with an ongoing yearly service fee of a couple of thousand dollars per year.

Councilor O'Beirne asked why these funds are not included in the regular budget since this does not qualify as a CIP project. Mr. Kadri suggested this project is consistent with the "communications" project previously approved. If Groton Public Schools had to pay for the project, the money would come out of the computer replacement fund. Discussion followed on funding options.

A motion was made by Councilor Peruzzotti, seconded by Councilor Sheets, to cancel the current CIP project and make a supplemental appropriation in the amount of \$73,000, to be funded by the money in the Capital Reserve Account.

Discussion followed. Councilor Sheets discussed the legal definition of capital improvement.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Votes: In Favor: 7 - Mayor Streeter, Councilor Flax, Councilor Johnson, Councilor Kolnaski, Councilor Monteiro, Councilor Peruzzotti and Councilor Sheets
Opposed: 1 - Councilor O'Beirne, Jr.

2006-0282

School Improvement Project - Phase II

Discussed

for a meeting and Monday, June 7th or Monday, June 14th are the best. The Board of Education authorized Mr. Kadri to retain a consultant who is looking at costs more closely and Mr. Kadri would like to present the information to the School Design Committee before meeting with the Town Council if possible. Mr. Kadri's goal is a November referendum. The Town Manager agreed that meeting with the Phase II Committee would be desirable. A Phase II School Design Committee meeting was tentatively scheduled for June 10th with a presentation to the Town Council and Board of Education on June 14th depending on the availability of the consultant from JCJ.

2006-0100 Thames Street Rehabilitation Study

Discussed

Mayor Popp has requested \$200,000 to do a complete engineering study of Thames Street. Mayor Popp is available to meet at a special meeting of the Committee of the Whole on June 1st.

2010-0118 Thames America's Cup Committee

Recommended for a Resolution

Town Manager Oefinger explained that a committee has been meeting to explore the possibility of attracting the America's Cup to the area in 2013. This item is on the agenda to determine if the Town of Groton wants to formally join the effort. Frank McLaughlin, Mike Passero, and John Johnson were present to address the Council.

Mr. Johnson believes the Thames River is an ideal venue for big boat sailing and could host the events leading up to the America's Cup Challenge. Mr. Passero noted that a group has been working on this effort since early March. A consultant connected with the people who will select the venue has been selected. San Francisco, San Diego and Newport are under serious consideration. Mr. Passero provided more information about the effort. Mr. McLaughlin noted that ESPN has the America's Cup franchise and it is a Connecticut company. Mr. Johnson noted that New London has pledged \$5,000 and the committee hopes for the same contribution from Groton. No money will be expended until the group has raised the entire \$25,000 needed.

Councilors Flax and Sheets expressed support for the effort. Councilor O'Beirne noted that the Council has just been through a difficult budget time and this is not the year to make this type of donation. Discussion followed on potential economic benefits of the event(s).

A motion was made by Councilor Sheets, seconded by Councilor Monteiro, to recommend for resolution a pledge of \$5,000 to TACC subject to the Town Manager identifying available funds in the 2010 budget.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Votes: In Favor: 6 - Mayor Streeter, Councilor Flax, Councilor Johnson, Councilor Monteiro, Councilor Peruzzotti and Councilor Sheets
Opposed: 2 - Councilor Kolnaski and Councilor O'Beirne, Jr.

2009-0124 Ethics Ordinance

Discussed

Councilor Flax noted that the Task Force has met a number of times and reviewed an all-inclusive document. The Task Force needs about two meetings to complete the Code.

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

None.

8. OTHER BUSINESS

Councilor Kolnaski asked about the status of the Property Maintenance Code. The Town Manager indicated he would provide an update at the next meeting. Councilor Sheets asked that the Rental Code also be reviewed.

9. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Councilor Kolnaski, seconded by Councilor Monteiro, to adjourn the meeting at 9:32 p.m.

The motion carried unanimously.