



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, May 26, 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 Flax, Councilor Frink, Councilor Moravsik, 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

- *Letter from Nancy d'Estang Dated May 12, 2015*

Mayor Schmidt noted receipt of the letter from Ms. d'Estang regarding noise. Town Manager Oefinger noted that the Town does not have a noise ordinance. Discussion ensued. The Town Manager noted that there have been a number of referrals on this issue in the past. Mayor Schmidt made a referral to the Committee of the Whole.

4. Approval of Minutes

2015-0115 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 31 through April 21, 2015 (Budget Meeting), April 28, 2015, and May 5, 2015 are hereby accepted and approved.

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

The motion carried unanimously

5. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

6. NEW BUSINESS

2015-0140 Establishment of Tax Rate for General Fund (FYE 16)

Discussed

Town Manager Oefinger explained that the RTM has concluded its review of the FYE 2016 budget. The cumulative additions and deletions resulted in a budget approximately \$15,000 less than the Town Council approved. However, the revenue picture has changed significantly since the start of budget review resulting in a 7.7% increase in the mill rate rather than the 4.1% increase estimated at the end of the Town Council's deliberations. Director of Finance Cindy Landry reviewed the progression of the FYE 2016 budgets and mill rates through RTM action; reconciliation from the Town Manager's to the Council's to the RTM's budget showing additions and reductions; reconciliation from the Town Manager's to the Council's to the RTM's capital projects budget; budget summary by function; and revised major revenue estimates. The major impact is in the

area of pupil impact aid followed by property taxes. An audit of pupil impact aid was done and a number of factors affected the number. The Superintendent of Schools plans on pursuing an appeal and correcting mistakes that were made. There is also a hardship appeal that may be undertaken. At this point the Superintendent anticipates receiving an additional \$1.1 million, which will lower the mill rate.

With regard to taxes, Ms. Landry explained that she changed the formula for estimated taxes because she felt the previous estimate was overstated.

Councilor Flax noted this is the end of the budget and no changes can be made, which should be a lesson learned for the Town Council. Ms. Landry noted that the drastic changes this year are uncommon and could not have been foreseen.

Councilor Cerf does not feel that the increases in the Capital Reserve Fund and the Fleet Reserve Fund were necessary this year and she expressed disappointment with the budget outcome.

The Town Manager noted that the budget estimates are always based on assumptions and the Town always uses conservative estimates, which has been criticized in the past.

Councilor Frink noted that "ability to pay" was cited by one of the Board of Education attorneys as a reason to approve the administrators' contract. He asked how that is determined and if negotiations can be reopened. The Town Manager cautioned that any further discussion of contracts should be held in executive session. He noted that an arbitrator determines "ability to pay," which is different from the desire to pay.

Councilor Peruzzotti noted that the Council acted to put people and projects in place to enhance economic development and the revenue numbers make it clear the Council must continue its focus on economic development.

Councilor Antipas discussed tax collection budgeted versus actual. He noted the average annual increase in the budget since 2008 is .91%. Since 2009, the average annual increase in total general taxes paid is 1.94%. Councilor Antipas is not convinced that the Town Council would have made different decisions if the revenue picture were known earlier.

Councilor Cerf asked if more money could be applied from the General Fund and the Fleet Fund to soften the blow. The Town Manager noted that in 2001 the Council removed funds from the Fleet Fund, but it is not the right thing to do because it just puts the fund farther in the hole. The General Fund is already down to 7.75% and he cannot recommend going lower. The Town Manager then reviewed the status of other funds in the budget which include the Golf Course Fund, Sewer Operating Fund, Solid Waste Fund, Mumford Cove Fund, Revaluation Fund, Recreation and Senior Activities Fund, ConnectiCard Fund, Sewer District Fund, Capital Reserve Fund, Computer Replacement Fund, and Economic Development Fund. Discussion followed.

Town Manager Oefinger distributed an e-mail from Superintendent of Schools Mike Graner estimating that the Town will receive an additional \$1.1 million in federal impact aid. In addition, Dr. Graner will be approaching the Board of Education about committing to return \$300,000 to the Town at the end of FYE 2015.

Councilor de la Cruz arrived at 7:02 p.m.

Roll Call: Members Present: Mayor Schmidt, Councilor Antipas, Councilor Cerf, Councilor de la Cruz, Councilor Flax, Councilor Frink, Councilor Moravsik, Councilor Peruzzotti and Councilor Watson

Discussed

Discussion followed on the various funds and Councilors shared their individual thoughts on depleting them.

The consensus of the Council was to wait for the Board of Education to act on the commitment of returning funds and to look at the Solid Waste Fund. The Town Manager cautioned that no decision has been made on the Town getting out of the commercial solid waste business and there are still bills to be paid. In addition, there is ongoing litigation with the Department of Revenue Services that could be affected by taking money out of the fund. And finally, if the Town does get out of the commercial solid waste business, there will probably be uncollectable accounts.

The consensus of the Council was to consider this issue further at a special meeting of the Committee of the Whole on June 2nd at 7:00 p.m.

The Town Manager noted that this issue has no impact on setting the mill rates for the Sewer District and Mumford Cove.

2015-0141 Establishment of Tax Rate for Mumford Cove District Fund (FYE 16)

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

The motion carried unanimously

2015-0142 Establishment of Tax Rate for Groton Sewer District Fund (FYE 16)

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

The motion carried unanimously

2015-0137 Adoption of Ordinance for Refurbishment of Water Pollution Control Facility Effluent Pump Station and Rehabilitation of Fishtown Road Pump Station

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

The motion carried unanimously

2015-0138 Authorization to Use a Description of the Ordinance for Refurbishment of Water Pollution Control Facility Effluent Pump Station and Rehabilitation of Fishtown Road Pump Station in Notice of Adoption

Discussed

This action will allow the Town Clerk to publish a description of the ordinance in the notice of adoption rather than the entire text of the ordinance.

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

The motion carried unanimously

2015-0050 Legislative Policy Initiative to Increase Revenues

Discussed

Jon Reiner, Director of Planning and Development, noted that the base contract for this project is \$150,000. Five additional projects are under consideration at a cost of \$50,000. The projects involve marketing materials, financial feasibility analysis, economic and fiscal impact analysis, targeted industry attraction, and marketing strategy implementation. There will be a kickoff meeting with the consultant on the regulatory audit piece tomorrow night; the marketing component will occur later. There are five public meetings scheduled throughout the process.

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

The motion carried unanimously

2015-0118 Connecticut Dial-A-Ride Grant

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

- The motion carried unanimously
- 2015-0119 Federal Transit Administration Section 5310 Program Grant - Senior Center**
- A motion was made by Councilor Flax, seconded by Councilor Moravsik, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.
- The motion carried unanimously
- 2015-0139 Resolution Authorizing the Town Manager to Sign the Nutmeg Network Notice of Grant Award**
- A motion was made by Councilor Moravsik, seconded by Councilor Watson, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.
- The motion carried unanimously
- 2015-0023 Shepherd of the Sea Property, Gungywamp Road**
- Discussed and Recommended no action taken
- Town of Groton staff members were able to tour the building. There has been significant vandalism and deferred maintenance. The Town Manager cannot identify a Town use for the buildings and sees no reason to pursue acquisition. If given the property, the Town would have to commit to using the property for open space and recreation and demolition costs would be high. The Council concurred with the Town Manager's assessment.*
- 2015-0033 Budgeting and Funding for Subdivision-Specific Services**
- Discussed and Recommended no action taken
- The Town received a letter in January from the City Mayor and Groton Long Point Board President suggesting consideration be given to subdivisions paying for their own services. The Town Manager noted this would require the creation of additional taxing districts. The letter was referred to the Town Attorney to check on legal ramifications. The proposal can be done if all entities involved agree, but the Town would want to know the economic implications.*
- Discussion followed on the proposal, secession discussions by the City, the City highway budget dispute, and issues of compartmentalization versus regionalization.*
- The consensus of the Council was to respond indicating that the Town Council has received the letter and does not feel that any action is required at this time, but the Council reserves the right to bring the issue up later.*
- 2015-0151 Miscellaneous and Ad Hoc Committee Appointments**
- Discussed
- This is a request to appoint Heather Somers to a citizen-at-large vacancy on the School Facilities Initiative Task Force.*
- A motion was made by Councilor Peruzzotti, seconded by Councilor Cerf, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.
- The motion carried unanimously
- 2014-0164 Police Chief Recruitment**
- A motion was made by Mayor Schmidt, seconded by Councilor Antipas, that members of the Town Council, along with Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Human Resources Director Robert Zagami, and Town Attorney Eileen Duggan go into executive session at 7:55 p.m. pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes 1-200(6)(A) for the purpose of discussing the potential appointment of a candidate to a non-union position.
- The motion carried unanimously
- Discussed
- The executive session ended at 9:25 p.m.*
- 2014-0202 City Highway Budget Committee - Update**

A motion was made by Councilor Flax, seconded by Councilor Watson, that the Town Council enter into Executive Session at 9:27 p.m. with Town Manager Mark Oefinger 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.

The motion carried unanimously

Discussed

The executive session ended at 9:50 p.m.

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

2015-0032 Possible Mooring Fee for Mystic River

Recommended for Deletion

8. OTHER BUSINESS

None.

9. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Councilor Watson, seconded by Councilor Flax, to adjourn the meeting at 9:50 p.m.

The motion carried unanimously.