



Town of Groton, Connecticut

45 Fort Hill Road
Groton, CT 06340-4394
Town Clerk 860-441-6640
Town Manager
860-441-6630

Meeting Minutes

Town Council Committee of the Whole

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, June 9, 2015

6:00 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

REGULAR MEETING - REVISED

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Schmidt called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Members Present: Mayor Schmidt, Councilor Antipas, Councilor de la Cruz, Councilor Frink, Councilor Moravsik and Councilor Peruzzotti

Members Absent: Councilor Cerf, Councilor Flax and Councilor Watson

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

3. Calendar and Communications

Councilor Frink questioned the Police Department's recent acquisition of two vehicles (at no cost to the Town) for rescue operations. Town Manager Oefinger explained the potential use of the vehicles and noted that they will have no impact on the Fleet Fund.

4. Approval of Minutes

2015-0160 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 May 19, 2015, May 26, 2015, May 27, 2015, and June 2, 2015 are hereby accepted and approved.

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

The motion carried unanimously

Councilor Watson arrived at 6:05 p.m.

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

Members Absent: Councilor Cerf and Councilor Flax

5. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

6. NEW BUSINESS

2015-0158 FYE 2015 Suspense List

Discussed

Cindy Landry, Director of Finance, reviewed her referral memo. Each year, state statutes require that the Town develop a list of accounts that are deemed uncollectable to move to the suspense list. The taxpayer is still liable for the taxes plus interest and penalties, but the Town no longer has to generate bills.

Councilor Frink asked if the information could be provided by district. Ms. Landry noted that fire districts approve their own suspense lists, and this amount is only for the Town taxes. Cindy Small, Tax Collector, stated the list could be sorted by fire districts and include the fire district

taxes as well.

The Town's collection agency has collected over \$1,000,000 in suspended taxes. The Tax Collector's office also makes an effort to contact military families about necessary paperwork to avoid back taxes.

Ms. Small noted that a large percentage of the suspense list is associated with the military. She added that the collection fee (15%) is not charged by the collection agency if the taxes are associated with military personnel and determined to be removable.

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

The motion carried unanimously

2015-0159 Adoption of Ordinance to Amend Sections 3 and 4 of Ordinance No. 239

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

The motion carried unanimously

2014-0256 Procurement of USS Groton Sail and Planes

Discussed

Town Manager Oefinger explained that the committee has been meeting for a couple of months. Recently, the committee received some free architectural design services from Brian Kent for two properties under consideration: the Upper Costa property on Thames Street and the former Groton Heights School property. The sketches do not respect property lines and they include property outside of City and Town ownership. This discussion is to determine the Council's receptivity to use of the Groton Heights site. The stated objective of the Council in the past was to dispose of the property. As part of this effort, there have been some discussions about another public use of the building such as a museum. The committee will be voting on a preferred site soon and has hired a fundraising expert to assist with the process.

Discussion followed and Councilors expressed their opinions about the two parcels, impact on future disposition of the Groton Heights property, and zoning issues. The consensus of Councilors was to support the location of the USS Groton sail on the Groton Heights site if chosen by the committee as the preferred site.

2015-0161 Town Fire Marshal and Town Fire Inspector Position(s)

Referred

Councilor Moravsik read the narrative of his referral request. Mayor Schmidt noted that each fire district has its own fire marshal and/or inspector. She asked if the Public Safety Committee has met with fire districts other than Poquonock Bridge. Councilor Moravsik stated that the other fire marshals are volunteers, not paid professionals. A Town fire marshal could act if a particular fire district chose not to replace its fire marshal. He suggested that since there are a number of Town buildings, the Town should provide the service.

Councilor Antipas stated that in terms of economic development it would be easier to have a single fire marshal for plan review. A single fire marshal would relieve fire districts of the task and make the work load lighter and cheaper for the fire districts.

Councilor Peruzzotti asked if there have been any complaints that would suggest that a Town fire marshal and a Town fire inspector are required. If not, she would rather wait until the economic development analysis is completed.

Councilor de la Cruz suggested that a single fire marshal would create consistency across the board. He feels it should be a professional position, not a volunteer position, and the Town should

take the position off the shoulders of Poquonnock Bridge.

Councilor Watson suggested that there should be discussions with all of the fire districts about what they do and how this proposal would affect them.

Town Manager Oefinger provided additional background information. Until 2007, the Town Charter had a provision for a Town-wide fire marshal, but the Council never exercised the option and it was taken out during charter revision. The Town currently has a robust plan review process that works, however regulations are still subject to interpretation. The Town Manager sees a benefit to consistency, but he cautioned that this effort must not be perceived as a bailout of Poquonnock Bridge. There should be at least two districts that want to participate. Councilor Antipas stated that he would want to see all districts participate for this to happen.

The consensus was to allow the Public Safety Committee to proceed with exploring the possibility of a Town fire marshal/inspector.

2015-0162 Neighborhood Assistance Act Program Application (2015)

Discussed

Town Manager Oefinger explained that this is the same process that the Town Council went through last year for the Neighborhood Assistance Act Program. The Town currently has an application from Odd Fellows, and may have two more by the end of the week. A public hearing is proposed for June 16th. There is no direct cost to the Town associated with the program. The Town Manager provided an overview of the program and noted that energy efficiency projects provide 100% reimbursement for participating businesses.

A motion was made by Councilor Frink, seconded by Councilor Peruzzotti, to schedule a public hearing on Neighborhood Assistance Act Program applications on June 16, 2015 at 7:30 p.m.

The motion carried unanimously

2015-0171 Request for Burial in Potter's Field (Spicer Home Cemetery)

Discussed

Town Manager Oefinger described the request from Christine Collins to bury the urn containing her brother's ashes between her parents who were buried in the mid-1990s in Potter's Field (Spicer Home Cemetery). The Town Council previously granted permission to Joseph and Bernice Carton to be buried in Spicer Home Cemetery, which is on Town-owned land. Councilor Frink noted that school is still in session on June 15th when Ms. Collins is coming to the area, and he suggested that the school be notified.

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

The motion carried unanimously

The Committee of the Whole recessed at 7:13 p.m. to conduct a special meeting of the Town Council. The meeting reconvened at 7:22 p.m.

2014-0202 City Highway Budget Committee - Update

A motion was made by Councilor Peruzzotti, seconded by Councilor Frink, that the Town Council enter into executive session at 7:22 p.m. with Town Manager Mark Oefinger and Town Attorney Matt Auger 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 requested arbitration with respect to this item as it did two years ago. Attorney Auger has provided the Town Council with an attorney client protected memorandum and attorney work product on this subject and the contents of such memorandum will be discussed with the Town Council.

The motion carried unanimously

Discussed

The executive session ended at 8:10 p.m.

2014-0164 Police Chief Recruitment

A motion was made by Mayor Schmidt, seconded by Councilor Moravsik, 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 8:15 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 8:37 p.m.

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

Recommended for Deletion:

2009-0124 Ethics Ordinance

Discussed

Councilor Antipas asked for 30 days to produce a revised draft of the ordinance and he suggested that the Board of Education be allowed an opportunity to review it since it will apply to them.

2013-0299 Establishment of a Charter Revision Commission

Not Discussed

2014-0098 Status of Mumford Cove Roads

Recommended for Deletion

2014-0257 FYE 2016 Budget Discussion

Recommended for Deletion

2014-0286 Implementation of Police Study Recommendations

Recommended for Deletion

2015-0032 Possible Mooring Fee for Mystic River

Recommended for Deletion

2015-0051 ClientFirst Computer Technology Acquisition Initiative

Not Discussed

2015-0077 FYE 2016 Proposed Budget Deliberations

Recommended for Deletion

8. OTHER BUSINESS

None.

9. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.