



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, June 13, 2017

6:00 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

REGULAR MEETING

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Bruce Flax called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

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

Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger and Administrative Secretary Lisa Hylton.

3. Calendar and Communications

None.

4. Approval of Minutes

2017-0148 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 23, 2017 are hereby accepted and approved.

A motion was made by Councilor Barber, seconded by Councilor Nault, to adopt.

The motion carried unanimously

5. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Councilor Barber requested an update on combining City and Town dispatching. It was discussed some time ago and at that time there were some questions on purchasing equipment. Councilor Moravsik also requested an update for the Dispatch Department to be placed under the Chief of Police. Mayor Flax informed the Council that he had a meeting on June 14th with the City of Groton Mayor Keith Hedrick and he would address these questions at that meeting.

Councilor Nault requested a referral to eliminate pensions. Mayor Flax stated that it is already slated to be on a future agenda. It was also noted that Councilor Grim and Mayor Flax will be late for the Committee of the Whole meeting on June 27th. Councilor Antipas also stated that he will out of Town from June 16th through July 1st. Discussion began on whether or not to have the Committee of the Whole meeting on June 27th. The Mayor asked that the meeting stand for the time being.

Mayor Flax read the Mystic Education Redevelopment Public Information Notice to the Council.

6. NEW BUSINESS

2017-0156 Joint Purchasing Programs

Discussed

Cindy Landry, Director of Finance, introduced Eileen Cardillo, Purchasing Agent, to the Council. Ms. Landry explained that this referral was on the agenda to ask that the purchasing agent be able

to use the Joint Purchasing Program in lieu of a bid process. She stated this would allow the purchasing agent to request bid listings from other regional organizations like the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM), Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments (SCCOG) and Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABOE) instead of the Town doing its own bid. This would allow the Town opportunities that could afford savings since the bids for the regional organizations are on a grander scale. It would also save time, energy and costs pertaining to the Town's own bidding process. Ms. Landry noted that there was a resolution in the past but it only included the State's bidding list. She requested that the Council review the previous resolution and expand the resolution to include the regional organizations as well.

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

Discussion began with questions on whether the Town will receive the lowest bid this way, if this resolution will prevent the Town from going out to bid in the future and why this was not executed in the past. Eileen Cardillo, Purchasing Agent, stated that she felt the Town would obtain the best prices as these organizations have bigger vendors and more volume. She explained all organizations go through the bidding process but the Town would reap savings from the other organizations being so large. Cindy Landry, Director of Finance, explained that it was not in place before because the Town just continued to only use the State's bidding list and did not think of other organizations until it was brought to her attention by Eileen Cardillo.

Town Manager Mark Oefinger clarified that these items will still go out to bid by the various organizations and the Town could utilize the list without doing all the "grunt" work. He also mentioned that the Town can take advantage of the economy of scales and have more resources. Councilor Morton stated that RFPs are very time consuming and this makes sense.

The motion carried unanimously

2017-0150

Property Tax Abatement Committee

Recommended for a Resolution

Cindy Landry, Finance Director, and Melissa McGuire, Tax Collector, presented to the Council the need to establish a Property Tax Abatement Committee. Ms. Landry provided the history of this 2002 adopted resolution allowing the abatement of taxes. Up to this time there has not been an application requesting the abatement of taxes for the reasons of poor and unable to pay until recently. There is now a need to establish a committee to review the petition and either approve or deny the request.

Town Manager Mark Oefinger explained that if it the Committee of the Whole became the agreed upon committee to review these petitions, there would be a need to have a special meeting so that it is not televised.

Discussion began on whether the taxes were completely abated, if the resident had to apply every year and what the requirements to were to petition for abatement. Councilor Antipas also inquired whether there would be a lien on the property if the owner requests tax abatement.

Melissa McGuire, Tax Collector, explained that the taxes in question would have to be abated every year and there are no liens placed on the property. She stated that there is a deferral program where a lien is placed on the property but not in this case. Cindy Landry, Finance Director, once again explained that the abatement resolution excludes liens.

A motion was made by Councilor Antipas, seconded by Councilor Morton, to adopt the Committee of the Whole as the body for the Property Tax Abatement Committee.

The motion carried unanimously

2017-0141

Par Four Lease Renewal

Discussed

executive session with staff for a lease negotiation update. It was also suggested that the Mayor could then invite the owners of Par 4, Tony Christina and Peter Ganacoplos along with their Attorney Ted Moukawsher into the session for further discussion.

A motion was made by Mayor Flax, seconded by Councilor Moravsik, to enter executive session at 6:48 p.m. to discuss the Par 4 lease and to invite Director of Parks and Recreation Mark Berry, Manager of the Golf Course and Parks Maintenance Eric Morrison, Purchasing Agent Eileen Cardillo, Director of Finance Cindy Landry, Director of Public Works Gary Schneider and Town Manager Mark Oefinger to attend.

The motion carried unanimously

Discussed

At 6:39 p.m. Councilor Peruzzotti arrived and entered the executive session.

Tony Christina, Peter Ganacoplos and Attorney Ted Moukawsher entered the executive session at 7:14 p.m. and left at 8:01 and the executive session resumed.

At 8:34 p.m. Tony Christina, Peter Ganacoplos and Attorney Ted Moukawsher were once again invited back into executive session and left at 8:39 p.m.

The executive session concluded at 9:09 p.m.

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

2017-0151 Noank Aquaculture Lease Renewal

Discussed

Eileen Cardillo, Purchasing Agent, explained that the Noank Aquaculture lease expired at the end of January. She explained that this is a five year lease renewal with an increased consumer price index and a shellfish seed fee of 10%. This will increase the lease from \$12,000 to \$13,200 with an annual increase from year to year, with the shellfish seed fee increasing from \$5,000 to \$5,500.

Councilor Nault questioned if the parties had seen and approved the new terms. Eileen Cardillo, Purchasing Agent, stated that they have not seen the new terms as of yet. Town Manager Mark Oefinger explained that the terms are in the current lease and that the parties should not be surprised by the change in fees.

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

The motion carried unanimously

2017-0155 Librarian I Job Descriptions

Discussed

Director of Human Resources Bob Zagami presented his request to the Committee of the Whole to modify the Librarian I Job Descriptions for Circulation and Public Services. The modification request is to change the education requirement from the current Master's Degree education level to a Bachelor's Degree education level with two years of work experience. This will allow the Town a savings by hiring at a Bachelor's Degree level instead of at the current Master's Degree level. Mr. Zagami stated that he had already filled one of the two open positions for the Library I position by laterally moving another employee.

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

The motion carried unanimously

2017-0006 Labor Negotiations (2017 Standing Referral)

A motion was made by Mayor Flax, seconded by Councilor Nault, to enter executive session at 9:14 p.m.

to discuss the GMEA contract and to invite Town Manager Mark Oefinger and Director of Human Services Bob Zagami to attend.

The motion carried unanimously

Discussed

The executive session concluded at 9:34 p.m.

A motion was made by Councilor Morton, seconded by Councilor Barber, to approve the GMEA contract and authorize the funds necessary to implement the contract.

The motion carried unanimously

2017-0075 Disposition of William Seely School Property

A motion was made by Mayor Flax, seconded by Councilor Peruzzotti, to enter executive session at 9:36 p.m. for the purpose of discussing the William Seely property and to invite Town Manager Mark Oefinger and Director of Planning and Development Services Jon Reiner, Assistant Director of Planning and Development Services Deb Jones, Economic and Community Development Manager Paige Bronk and Developer Mark Mancuso to attend.

The motion carried unanimously

Discussed

Mark Mancuso left the executive session at 9:48 p.m.

The executive session concluded at 10:15 p.m.

2017-0158 Economic Development Logo/Brand Identity Competition Award Endorsement

Discussed

Economic and Community Development Manager Paige Bronk provided the Committee with background information on the winning choice for the logo/brand identity contest. Mr. Bronk explained instead of pursuing a marketing company it seemed fitting to reach out to the public to create the slogan and logo while saving money and gaining community involvement. He went on to explain that the logo is in the beginning phases and will need to be refined by a graphic designer. He also stated that the slogan and logo will work well with the webpage they are developing. Mr. Bronk stated that he is looking to gain endorsement from the Council to move to the next level with the slogan and logo. He also asked if the Council would present the award to the artist at the next meeting which the Council agreed to.

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

The motion carried unanimously

2016-0198 FYE 2017 Fire District PILOT

Discussed

Town Manager Mark Oefinger explained the history of the distribution of the Fire District PILOT funds. He mentioned in the past it was asked that the Fire Districts come in and give an update to the Council and then they would receive their funds. At this time two fire districts, Center Groton and Old Mystic Fire Department have not come in and met with the Town Council. Town Manager Mark Oefinger asked the Committee if they want to distribute dollars, encumber those dollars, or wish to close out the account.

Discussion began amongst the Councilors whether or not the Fire Districts need to come in as a stipulation to receive their money. Councilor Peruzzotti mentioned that it is not the Fire Chiefs or whoever comes in to represent the Fire District that makes the decision on the funds and how they are spent. It is up to the Fire District Boards. Councilor Antipas stated that it was not a condition for the Fire Districts to have to come in to receive the funds. It was used to have the Fire Districts update the Council on what is happening in their districts.

There was discussion about the letter from Mystic Fire District not being able to meet with the Council. Town Manager Mark Oefinger explained that the money does not come from the State and can be eliminated if the Council wished to do so.

Mayor Flax stated that he felt it was not too much to ask to have the Fire Districts come in to touch base with the Council before receiving their check. He explained that if they are just given the funds, the Council will miss an opportunity to meet and touch base with them. He felt going forward that all of the Fire Districts should attend one meeting with the Council.

A motion was made by Councilor Moravsik, seconded by Councilor Barber, that the remaining 2017 Fire District Pilot Funds be distributed.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Votes: In Favor: 6 - Councilor Barber, Councilor Grim, Councilor Antipas, Councilor Morton, Councilor Nault and Councilor Moravsik

Opposed: 2 - Mayor Flax and Councilor Peruzzotti

2017-0159

Colonel Ledyard School Site

Discussed

Mayor Flax stated that the Council has received a letter from Mayor Keith Hendrik requesting that the Town take ownership of the Colonel Ledyard site back from the City.

Town Manager Mark Oefinger explained that the Town has no need for the building. He stated that in the future if the Town were to take back the property, he would be approaching the Council asking that the property be put on the market.

Councilor Barber made a motion to take the lease back and put the property on the market, seconded by Council Nault

Councilor Peruzzotti stated that the property has been a blight issue. She stated that the property should be cleaned up by the City and returned back to the Town in the condition it was in when it was given to them.

Discussion began amongst the Councilors regarding the condition of the property. Councilor Grim suggested that provisions to hold harmless of the blight issue should be taken into consideration before reinstating ownership.

Town Manager Mark Oefinger thought that the hold harmless agreement would be in the Towns best interest. He mentions it is a vacant building and not a manicured property. Mayor Flax stated that he would speak to the City Mayor at his meeting in the morning the hold harmless provision. Mayor Flax stated that the Council should wait to find out more and then make their decision. The motion and second were withdrawn.

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

None.

8. OTHER BUSINESS

None.

9. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Councilor Nault, seconded by Councilor Barber, to adjourn the meeting at 10:41 p.m.

The motion carried unanimously.