



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, Joe de la Cruz, Greg Grim, Karen F. Morton, Bonnie Nault, Deb Peruzzotti, and Harry A. Watson

Tuesday, June 14, 2016

6:00 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

REGULAR MEETING - REVISED

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Flax called the meeting to order at 6:07 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

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

Members Absent: Councilor Antipas, Councilor de la Cruz and Councilor Peruzzotti

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

3. Calendar and Communications

None.

4. Approval of Minutes

2016-0154 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 24, 2016 are hereby accepted and approved.

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

The motion carried unanimously

5. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

6. NEW BUSINESS

2016-0146 Fiscal Impact Analysis of Groton 2020 Plan

Discussed and Recommended no action taken

Cindy Landry reviewed Town Council the fiscal impact statement for the bond ordinance for the Groton 2020 Plan, as required by the Town Council's Debt Policy and Management/Fiscal Practices. Bill Lindsey, the Town's Financial Advisor, has been assisting with the analysis. The tables presented were Project Planning for financing of the project from FYE 2017 to 2022; Existing Debt Service Payments and Estimated Debt Service Payments on Proposed Projects; the Projected Debt Service Impact; and the Comparison of Current Debt Limit to Statutory Debt Limit and Town Council Policy. The projected numbers are based on the net \$84 million project cost, receiving the diversity grant and receiving a waiver of the renovate to new maximum cost per square foot. The analysis estimates varied bond rates of 2.94% and 3.69% with five bonds issued over the life of the project.

Councilor Grim questioned the outcome of the projected numbers if interest rates are higher than expected or if the reimbursements are not issued. Town Manager Oefinger responded that he does not expect the project to move forward unless there is commitment for reimbursement. The interest rates projected by Mr. Lindsey are conservative.

Ms. Landry noted that the Town Council's debt policy was adopted in 1993, and revised in 2009 and 2014. The policy appears in the budget document.

Ms. Landry went on to explain that the impact on the mill rate begins in 2019-2020 and peaks in 2023-2024. She answered various questions posed by Councilors.

The Town Manager explained that the fiscal impact statement is informational and requires no formal action.

2016-0152 FYE 2016 Suspense List

Discussed

Director of Finance Cindy Landry and Tax Collector Cindy Small presented the FYE 2016 suspense list, which is a list of taxes due to the Town (compiled annually) that the Town has deemed uncollectable. Ms. Landry stated that even though the debtor is no longer billed by the Town, it does not negate the responsibility to pay. The current list has been billed two times and the back list has been billed multiple times. Ms. Small mentioned the debt is mostly motor vehicle taxes, not property taxes as the Town would obtain the property if the owner had not paid their taxes. She noted that the listing also includes businesses that are overseas and/or businesses that have gone out of business. A large amount of the taxes due are associated with military personnel previously stationed at the Submarine Base who did not file exemptions.

Ms. Landry and Ms. Small explained the measures taken by the Town to collect outstanding taxes.

The JAG office at the Submarine Base is working with the Town to locate delinquent military personnel to either pay the taxes or file the waiver to have the taxes removed from the suspense list.

Mayor Flax expressed concern that the listing for 2016 was much higher than in other years. Ms. Small attributed the increase to a larger grand list. Ms. Landry noted this year's number includes \$140,000 taxes due for mobile homes and properties that the Town foreclosed on. Mayor Flax requested that Ms. Landry provide the Council with the suspension list for last year for the Council's review and an update on what the JAG office is able to obtain.

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

The motion carried unanimously

Councilor de la Cruz arrived at 6:42 p.m.

Members Present: Mayor Flax, Councilor Barber, Councilor Grim, Councilor Morton, Councilor Nault, Councilor de la Cruz and Councilor Watson

Members Absent: Councilor Antipas and Councilor Peruzzotti

2016-0006 Labor Negotiations (2016 Standing Referral)

A motion was made by Councilor Watson, seconded by Councilor Barber, that the members of the Town Council, together with Town Manager Mark Oefinger and Town Attorney Eileen Duggan go into executive session at 6:44 p.m. for the purpose of discussing strategy and/or negotiations with respect to collective bargaining with one or more bargaining units. This action is taken without prejudice to the Council's right to discuss these matters in a private meeting pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes §1 200(2)..

The motion carried unanimously

Discussed

The executive session ended at 7:35 p.m.

A motion was made by Councilor Watson, seconded by Councilor Grim, that the Town Council approve the request for funds necessary to implement the agreement between the Town of Groton and United

Steelworkers of America AFL-CIO, Local Union 9411 for the period July 1, 2015 - June 30, 2017..

The motion carried by the following vote:

Votes: In Favor: 5 - Mayor Flax, Councilor Grim, Councilor Morton, Councilor de la Cruz and Councilor Watson
Opposed: 2 - Councilor Barber and Councilor Nault

2016-0157 Parks Leader Job Description

Discussed

Mark Berry, Director of Parks and Recreation, outlined his request for approval of a Parks Leader job position. The position was included in the FYE 2017 budget and replaces a Groundskeeper position. This job description was modeled on the Public Works Floor Leader and modified to fit the duties and responsibilities that take place within the Parks division.

Town Manager Oefinger noted that the position also addresses a need created when a Foreman retired and the position was not filled. The wage for the Foreman position was \$68,000 and the wage for the new Parks Leader position will be in the mid - \$50,000 range.

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

The motion carried unanimously

2016-0162 FYE 2017 Town Operations Budget Reductions - Anticipated Impacts

Discussed

Department heads and division heads were present to review proposed FYE 2017 budget cuts with the Council. The Departments that will have a reduction in their personnel staff will hold the review of their proposed cuts in Executive Session. Positions that are not going to be filled propose scenarios that may impact current employees.

Town Manager Oefinger handed out a packet of budget information showing the progression of the budget reductions along with the memos from each Department affected documenting their proposed budget cuts. The total number of reductions is \$855,611. Mr. Oefinger stated that there is no memo showing the proposed cuts to Legislative Policy. A significant portion of this account is used for CCM dues, Permanent School Building Committee, RTM, Town Council and for flags. Also added to this account was money for initiatives and the Heritage Park item. A decision will need to be made as to what areas will be reduced a total of \$4,000.

Town Manager Oefinger presented the memo from Voter Registration addressing a \$7,300 cut. He noted there are a number of variables and costs depend on if there are primaries in August and the turn out in November.

Town Clerk Betsy Moukawsher noted that the amount to be reduced in her office is \$16,465. Reductions will come from staff overtime for meetings, referendum legal ads, printing explanatory text, postage, Citizen's Day and the computer replacement contribution.

Town Manager Oefinger presented the reductions in the Legal account, noting that the RTM cut this account by \$25,000. Legal expenses have been higher than what has been budgeted for the last couple of years due to City Highway arbitration and the Mystic Streetscape lawsuit. Legal was proposed at \$450,000 and \$425,000 was approved.

Mr. Oefinger then reviewed the Executive Management account. The \$108,000 cut eliminates the Assistant Town Manager position and reduces professional development.

Brian Hancock presented the Information Technology reduction of \$52,153. He stated the Computer Replacement Fund was cut in the amount of \$22,959 and the hiring of a vacant Office Technician position will be delayed until February, 2017. Discussion occurred between Mayor Flax and Mr. Hancock noting that if a person is hired to fill the position in February it would still

be considered a full time position in the FYE 2017 budget. Mayor Flax suggested it may be best not to fill the position.

Town Manager Oefinger presented Human Resource's memo showing the proposed reduction of \$15,000. The reductions will come from staff training, OSHA training, first aid supplies, safety materials, employee assistance program training, wellness, and elimination of funding for file cabinets and a badge machine. In addition, a reduction was made to tuition reimbursement. The Town Manager clarified that HD Segur would still be providing OSHA training per the Town's contract.

Cindy Landry requested the review of Finance reductions be deferred until Executive Session.

Joe Sastre presented the reductions for Emergency Communications in the amount of \$21,388. Mr. Sastre stated he cancelled an emergency cell phone plan for dispatch, cancelled a severe weather warning program and proposed not purchasing new uniforms for the dispatchers, although this is required in the dispatchers' contract. Mr. Sastre also reduced professional technical services in hopes that no new equipment will need to be purchased; however, if equipment fails, it will need to be replaced.

Chief Fusaro presented the budget reductions for the Police Department. He noted the bulk of the reductions would be in personnel costs due to a number of vacancies that will not be filled and a reduction in the part time Animal Control Officer. Chief Fusaro will also remove the School Resource Officer from Fitch High School. Chief Fusaro has had a discussion with the Board of Education about sharing the service which was met with a positive response.

Reductions in assembly safety overtime means that the Department will now charge outside vendors for public safety. He noted reductions in traffic control and overtime, and noted the ability to conduct community policing and dedicated traffic enforcement will be virtually eliminated.

Discussion followed on the use of the Police Department at the 4th of July Sub Century celebration as well as community policing. Chief Fusaro informed the Council that he is working with other departments to try to reduce the number of traffic officers for the 4th of July celebration because it is a significant cost to the department.

The department continues to staff the community policing offices with patrol officers, but they are not dedicated community officers. Community policing in Mystic, Navy Housing and at Fitch Middle School will be on a random basis.

Gary Schneider, Director of Public Works asked that his reductions be reviewed in executive session.

Marge Fondulas reviewed the budget reductions for the Human Services Department. Ms. Fondulas stated that she took cuts from the operations budget to retain staff and reduced funds for supplies and for the clinical consultant that works with the staff counselors. Ms. Fondulas noted that half of the clinical consultant costs will now come from the Flora Perkins Trust Fund. This fund was previously used to fund a Child Abuse Prevention calendar drawing competition for third graders.

Betty Anne Reiter reviewed the budget reductions for the Library. A Librarian II that retired on June 3rd will be replaced with a Librarian I. Ms. Reiter cancelled a database and replaced it with a less expensive one. The Library will close on Sundays for a savings of \$17,813.00. Discussion followed. Town Manager Oefinger explained that the workforce on Sundays is strictly part time and closing the Library early on another day would not result in any savings because it would just move full time staff around.

Mark Berry presented the budget reductions for the Parks and Recreation Department. He took reductions from personnel and operations in the Recreation, Parks and Senior Center divisions. He noted he would be eliminating a seasonal Groundskeeper position, would be charging port-o-let expenses to programs that utilize them, eliminating the pre-fireworks celebration, reducing senior transportation by 8 hours a week, and reducing park supplies for a total of \$33,028.

In response to Councilor Nault, Mark Berry noted that the Town mows the grass at the Noank School Public Gardens. Mayor Flax asked that this item be discussed at the next Committee of the Whole meeting.

Mr. Berry explained the specific changes to the senior transportation schedule and the costs associated with the pre-fireworks celebration at Fort Griswold.

Town Manager Oefinger provided background information on the celebration and the Town's involvement. Discussion followed on seeking assistance from Groton Business Association, the State and the Navy.

Town Manager Mark Oefinger recommended that the Council go into executive session to discuss the departments that have personnel cuts.

A motion was made by Councilor Watson, seconded by Councilor de la Cruz, that the members of the Town Council, together with Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Town Attorney Eileen Duggan and Mark Berry, L.J. Fusaro, Brian Hancock, Cindy Landry, Betsy Moukawsher, Jon Reiner, Betty-Anne Reiter and Gary Schneider go into executive session at 8:40 p.m. for the purpose of discussing strategy and/or negotiations with respect to collective bargaining with one or more bargaining units. This action is taken without prejudice to the Council's right to discuss these matters in a private meeting pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes §1 200(2).

The motion carried unanimously

Discussed and Recommended no action taken

The executive session ended at 9:16 p.m.

Councilor Morton stated she received a phone call from residents that wanted to know the ramifications of the RTM cut eliminating \$600,000 in the budget for Fitch Middle School to be used by the Parks and Recreation program. Mark Berry informed the Council that the available funds will allow for some of the project to be done but it will not be complete enough to allow the Parks and Recreation program to move into the building. The Parks and Recreation program will continue using the William Seely building until the remaining funds are available to complete the project.

2016-0160

FYE 2016 Non-Union Pay Increases

Discussed

Town Manager Oefinger noted that the Committee of the Whole has voted to approve the Steelworkers' contract. Non-union workers are the only remaining labor group that has not had an increase in FYE 2016. Mr. Oefinger is recommending a 2% increase.

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

Mr. Oefinger noted that performance increases for non-union personnel ended five to six years ago. There are about 44 non-union employees who pay 10% on health insurance.

Discussion took place regarding the retroactive pay for non-union employees, health insurance co-pays and the non-union terms and conditions. Town Manager Oefinger stated his recommendation to offer the 2% increase retroactive for non-union workers at this time as all

other contracts have been passed retroactive. The non-union terms and conditions agreement has not been updated since 2007. Mayor Flax voiced the need for the Town Council to review other contracts and benefits to see the 'bigger picture' and to make an informed decision with the non-union terms and conditions agreement moving forward.

Councilor Grimm requested a discussion concerning the FYE 2017 pay increase once the Council is able to review and compare the other contracts.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Votes: In Favor: 6 - Mayor Flax, Councilor Grim, Councilor Morton, Councilor Nault, Councilor de la Cruz and Councilor Watson
Opposed: 1 - Councilor Barber

2016-0159 Application for Economic Assistance Funds - Jason Gabriele

Discussed

Director of Planning and Development Jon Reiner described the request by the owner of Gabriele's Kickboxing for \$24,300 from the Economic Assistance Fund to assist with the addition of 13 apartments. This project will increase the number of living units that have walkability to downtown Groton businesses. The Economic Development Commission supports the project. There is a need for various kinds of housing in the area as 80% of the workforce is commuters. This funding will pay for the water line and electrical work.

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

The motion carried unanimously

2016-0121 2016 Plan of Conservation and Development

Discussed

Director of Planning and Development Jon Reiner stated that the Planning Commission is having a public hearing on June 29th at 6:30 p.m. where it is expected the Commission will close the hearing and adopt the Plan of Conservation and Development subject to changes. Staff has met with other Boards and Commissions for their feedback, and presented the POCD to the Town Council for an endorsement, rejection or no action. Mr. Reiner asked if there was any feedback from the Town Council.

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

The motion carried unanimously

2016-0153 Connecticut Dial-A-Ride Grant

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

The motion carried unanimously

2016-0155 Mystic Art Association (Mystic Museum of Art) Neighborhood Assistance Act Program Application (2016)

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

The motion carried unanimously

2016-0156 City of Groton Neighborhood Assistance Act Program Application (2016)

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

The motion carried unanimously

2016-0079 Request for Donation for Thames River Heritage Park Water Taxi

Discussed

New London and the City of Groton have approved funding.

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

The motion carried unanimously

2016-0161 Road Maintenance and Rehabilitation Program - Additional Roads for Calendar Year 2016 - Groton Long Point

Discussed

Town Manager Oefinger present a letter received from Groton Long Point Association. They are requesting up to \$50,000 in road bond funding in the current calendar year for engineering costs for roads to be constructed in 2017. This is a cash flow issue and will not impact the budget. The Town was unable to provide the engineering services due to the water line work and sidewalk construction that requires permits from the State of Connecticut Department of Transportation.

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

The motion carried unanimously

2016-0163 Miscellaneous and Ad Hoc Committee Appointments

Discussed

Town Manager Oefinger stated that Nancy Keenan, who has served as the Town's appointee to the Eastern Tourism District since 2003, is moving out of state. Rita Schmidt is a member at large and would like to fill the position. She has had experience in tourism for 25 years.

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

The motion carried unanimously

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

Recommended for Deletion:

2014-0208 Policy Initiatives to Increase Revenue

Recommended for Deletion

2015-0051 ClientFirst Computer Technology Acquisition Initiative

Recommended for Deletion

2015-0257 Connecticut Partnership Plan 2.0

Recommended for Deletion

2015-0285 Town Council Orientation

Recommended for Deletion

2016-0088 Neighborhood Assistance Act Program Application (2016)

Recommended for Deletion

2016-0093 FYE 2017 Proposed Budget Deliberations

Recommended for Deletion

8. OTHER BUSINESS

None.

9. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Councilor Watson, seconded by Councilor de la Cruz, to adjourn the meeting at 9:56 p.m.

The motion carried unanimously.