



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, July 12, 2011

7:00 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

REGULAR MEETING

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Streeter called the meeting to order at 7:40 p.m.

2. **ROLL CALL**

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

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

3. **Calendar and Communications**

None.

4. **Approval of Minutes**

2011-0143 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 June 14, 2011, June 21, 2011, and July 5, 2011 are hereby accepted and approved.

A motion was made by Councilor Johnson, seconded by Councilor Monteiro, to adopt.

The motion carried unanimously

5. **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

None.

6. **NEW BUSINESS**

2011-0004 Pending Litigation (2011 Standing Referral)

Not Discussed

Discussion of this item was tabled to a future meeting.

2010-0170 Local Vendor Bid Preference

Discussed

The Town Manager noted this item was raised by the Council last August. Councilor Johnson and the Economic Development Commission discussed the idea and recommended a policy for local vendor bid preference. The Town Manager distributed a memo from the Director of Public Works identifying a number of issues and concerns about how this type of provision would be applied.

John Piacenza, Purchasing Agent, explained that he canvassed his counterparts throughout the state. There are 10 to 15 municipalities that have some type of a local vendor bid preference program in place. The policies allow local vendors whose bids fall within a certain percentage rate of the lowest bid to match the lower bid. The percentages range from 5% to 15%. The policy would apply to formal bids and Requests for Proposals. Mr. Piacenza then resurveyed and found that local vendor bid preference is not used very often. Based on the Economic Development

Commission's recommendation, staff drafted a revision to the Purchasing Manual; however, the Town Manager has previously suggested that an ordinance may be required. If an ordinance is required, it would be prepared by the Town Attorney.

Councilor O'Beirne expressed concerns and suggested tabling the item until the issues raised by Public Works can be reviewed by staff.

Since this is a policy decision, the Town Manager suggested that it would be helpful if the Council has a philosophical discussion to decide if they want to proceed. The Town of Groton has a very clean procurement process, and giving someone a "second bite at the apple" may not be a good idea philosophically. The Town Manager noted some of his concerns.

Councilor Johnson feels the policy should be worked out by staff. He believes local people would do higher quality work and he expressed support for a policy supporting local vendors within 5% of the lowest bid.

The Town Manager explained that the Town awards contracts to the lowest responsive bidder unless there are known problems or issues.

Councilor Sheets asked for more information about the Town's purchases of goods and services. She would like to understand the impact of this policy, but first she must know what the Town is buying. Some communities attempt to buy products made within 100 miles.

Mr. Piacenza noted that this policy would apply to only one or two out of 40 to 45 solicitations that are done each year. He noted he would provide a list of the goods and services being bid by the Town.

Mayor Streeter asked that this referral be placed on the next Committee of the Whole meeting agenda.

2011-0152

Central Hall Building Project - Update

Discussed

The Town Manager provided a brief overview of the issues that the Central Hall developers would like to address with the Council.

Ken Navarro, one of the project developers, provided a brief project update. He has received site plan approval with conditions that he is working to address. There are some remaining items that need to be discussed with the Council.

Mr. Navarro stated that this project presents a marketing challenge from both a financing and demand standpoint. Once the final plans are approved, Mr. Navarro will begin his marketing effort. Leasing the retail space on the first floor will trigger building construction. Residential units are planned for the top three floors and they will be developed as the market allows. Mr. Navarro stated there will be five to seven retail tenants and Rod Desmarais stated that the most recent plan shows 12 residential units.

The developer recently discovered that there is an overhang at the rear of the building on the Town's property. The overhead encroachment will require an easement of 31 square feet and will not impact public access or the pump station. Clint Brown, DiCesare Bentley Engineers, described the area in question, noting it will require a permanent, separate easement.

A motion was made by Councilor Watson, seconded by Councilor Sheets, to express support for granting an easement for the Central Hall Building project to address the roof overhang issue.

The motion carried unanimously

Discussed

Mr. Navarro continued with lease related issues. He explained there are two material issues. A propane tank critical to the project was originally proposed to be located on the Central Hall Building property, but there is a utility conflict as a result of the streetscape project. Mr. Brown described two potential alternative locations on the Town's property. An underground tank could be placed at the extreme northern end of the pump station property lot or in the vicinity of the entrance. The tank would be removed from any potential expansion area for the pump station at the request of the Town. If the lease expires, the developer would need to find another location for the tank. The tank will be secured in case of flooding and all code requirements will be met.

Mr. Navarro explained that the Town has the right to revoke the lease if the Town's sewer infrastructure needs to be expanded. Mr. Navarro would like assurance in the lease that the Town will make a reasonable effort to preserve the lessee's parking. Mayor Streeter suggested that the developer should look for contingency parking spaces. Mr. Navarro stated that supplying permanent parking is a market challenge. The lease is scheduled to run for 50 years and Mr. Navarro is asking that the lease continue beyond that time, subject to the Town's right to end the lease. Councilor Monteiro noted that 50 years is a long time and she would expect that terms would have to be renegotiated at that time. She does not feel the Town should be burdened with a lease that can not be renegotiated. Mr. Navarro suggested that a price adjustment mechanism could be included, but Councilor Monteiro stated that price is not the only concern.

Councilor Johnson stated that financing will be difficult to obtain if the parking does not last through the life of a loan. Councilors Watson and Flax expressed no concern with the proposed changes.

Town Manager Oefinger reminded the Council that one of the Town Attorney's concerns at the time the lease was proposed was the need for a public hearing which may again be an issue. Also, the Town must consider at what point a lease is no longer a lease and it is instead a sale with term payments. Discussion followed.

Mr. Navarro noted additional minor issues such as indemnification, installation of a gate, and signage. He stated he will present a revised lease to Town staff for review.

2011-0032

Sister Cities Committee - Update**Discussed**

Councilor Johnson noted that Nick Sahin is currently in Turkey and he is looking for a letter from the Town stating that he is on this Committee that he can take to a meeting with the official in his hometown. The Committee is considering a name change so they don't have to pay Sister Cities fees. Mayor Streeter asked for something in writing detailing the Committee's efforts to date and the request for the letter. Councilor Johnson stated that any interaction would be mostly educational at this point and later there could be mutual business interest. The relationships can be with any country; there is no set geography. The Mayor suggested exploring relationships with other Grotons."

2011-0135

Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation Grant**Discussed**

The Town Manager explained this is a grant opportunity for \$15,000 to support and develop recreational boating and fishing programs for children ages 6 to 15.

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

The motion carried unanimously

2011-0153

Appointment to Children First Groton**Recommended for a Resolution**

Mayor Streeter received an e-mail requesting an appointment to the Leadership Committee for

Children First Groton. Beth Crowley from the Library has been mentioned as a potential candidate. Ms. Crowley has been attending Children First events and has expressed an interest. Councilor Watson asked if the group is subject to FOI rules and it was unknown. The consensus of the Council was to allow the Mayor to make the appointment.

2009-0039

Recommendations of the Task Force on Climate Change and Sustainable Community**Discussed**

The Town Manager explained that this item is on the agenda to identify a date to meet with members of the former task force to review their recommendations. Councilors were asked to review the final report of the Task Force and submit their questions in writing for discussion purposes. Councilor O'Beirne noted that he raised a number of questions at previous meetings and he briefly reviewed a few of them. The desire of the Council was to hold a special meeting dedicated to this item on either August 9th or August 23rd, prior to the Committee of the Whole meeting.

2010-0124

Review of Town Council Goals**Discussed**

With respect to disposition of vacant schools, Mayor Streeter suggested establishing a deadline of 90 days from today to have proposals presented to the Council by the two school reuse task forces. Councilor Flax does not feel that is an attainable goal.

Councilor Watson noted that staff has made progress on the Property Maintenance Code and the proposed code should be done by the end of the summer.

Councilor Johnson reviewed economic development related goals.

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan Committee meets on a regular basis.

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

None.

8. OTHER BUSINESS

Town Manager Oefinger noted that there may be a special Committee of the Whole meeting next week to set the referendum date and form of the question on the WPCF bond ordinance. The Town is still waiting for something in writing from DEEP regarding the availability of funding. Recently, the Town was notified of a number of other requirements that may not be possible to meet in the short time period available.

The consensus of the Council was to cancel the July 26th Group and Committee of the Whole meetings due to lack of business.

In response to a complaint made by Don Wood at a Town Council meeting, the Library provided information regarding their general practice for posting literature for non-profits.

9. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Councilor Watson, seconded by Councilor Sheets, to adjourn the meeting at 9:28 p.m.

The motion carried unanimously.