



Town of Groton, Connecticut

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Meeting Minutes

Town Council Committee of the Whole

Mayor Heather Bond Somers, Councilors Dean G. Antipas, Bruce S. Flax, Bill Johnson, Frank O'Beirne, Jr., Deborah L. Peruzzotti, Rita M. Schmidt, James L. Streeter, and Harry A. Watson

Thursday, July 12, 2012

6:00 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

SPECIAL MEETING

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Somers called the meeting to order at 6:09 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Members Present: Mayor Somers, Councilor Flax, Councilor Johnson, Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., Councilor Schmidt and Councilor Watson

Members Absent: Councilor Antipas, Councilor Peruzzotti and Councilor Streeter

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

Board of Education: Kirsten Hoyt, Rita Volkmann, Kim Watson (6:30 p.m.)

Groton Public Schools: Carolyn Dickey, Sean McKenna, Wes Greenleaf

3. NEW BUSINESS

2012-0005

Joint Meeting with Board of Education (2012 Standing Referral)

Discussed

1) Update on Consolidation of Middle Schools

Mr. Greenleaf explained that the portables being installed at the two middle schools will be late. Potential contractors have indicated that they need more time to prepare their bids due to the complexity of the project. Mr. Greenleaf hopes to have the portables in place four weeks after school starts. Internal renovations at the school are on schedule but Groton Public Schools' facility staff is maxed. Mr. Greenleaf suggested that the Town will have to get more involved in upcoming CIP work. Mr. Greenleaf reviewed the projects being undertaken as part of the middle school consolidation. Classes that require the least permanent set ups will be on carts while waiting for the portables. There are still some issues to work out with respect to scheduling. Discussion followed on class sizes.

2) Vision Committee Reports - Overview

No one had any comments on the vision committee report.

3) Establishment of School Planning Task Force

Mayor Somers noted that the group had talked about coming up with a new name for the next stage of school endeavors and School Facilities Initiative was suggested and amenable to those present.

Mayor Somers has identified a list of 18 people willing to serve on a School Facilities Initiative Task Force, some of whom would be ex-officio members. The individuals represent a cross section of educational backgrounds and citizens from all over the Town. Chairman Hoyt noted that a consultant is working on a survey and redistricting piece. Carolyn Dickey noted that the Board of Education has enlisted Milone and McBroom.

Board member Watson arrived at 6:30 p.m.

Mike Zuba of Milone and McBroom has made an initial presentation to the Board. The next one will be held on August 13th and the Council is invited to attend. Milone and McBroom are conducting a thorough investigation of Groton including demographics and enrollments. This effort will provide a natural progression into the next phase of the schools initiative. The Board and the consultant have discussed conducting surveys through the Center for Research and Policy to initially take the pulse of community and have that drive the work of the group. Milone and McBroom have also been hired to do the Plan of Conservation and Development update.

Chairman Hoyt suggested the Board has maybe a four or five year window before something must be done with the schools.

Town Manager Oefinger stated that the School Facilities Initiative Task Force will need a facilitator that has a good understanding of the district and the community. Mr. Dickey noted that the Board has emphasized with Mr. Zuba the need for good communication and making information accessible to everyone, not just those that come to meetings.

Mr. Greenleaf strongly suggests that each school involved in the effort have a representative and a principal at the meetings. Chairman Hoyt asked Mr. McKenna to look for those volunteers.

Town Manager Oefinger suggested that if the desire is to bring a facilitator on board, the Town Council and Board of Education may want to have a discussion with that person before establishing the committee. Also, a contract would have to be developed.

Discussion followed on the role of the facilitator and the work that Mr. Zuba will do for the Board of Education.

The Town Manager noted that \$75,000 was allocated in the budget this year and there are some other funds that were allocated in previous years for the next phase of the school initiative.

Kevin Trejo asked about the reimbursement rate. Mr. Greenleaf noted there is an 80% grant to address racial imbalance in the current year.

Mayor Somers reiterated work items.

Town Manager Oefinger feels that the Board of Education and Town Council must be on the same page before the School Facilities Initiative Task Force is established and Mr. Zuba can help in those discussions.

Ms. Dickey stated she would ask Mr. Zuba to meet with the Town Council and Board of Education at a special joint meeting potentially scheduled for July 31st at 6:00 p.m. Another alternative would be prior to the August 13th presentation.

4. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Councilor Watson, seconded by Councilor Flax, to adjourn the meeting at 6:58 p.m.

The motion carried unanimously.