



# 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, July 12, 2016

6:00 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

#### REGULAR MEETING

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

*Mayor Flax called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.*

2. **ROLL CALL**

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

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

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

3. **Calendar and Communications**

*None.*

4. **Approval of Minutes**

**2016-0185 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 June 28, 2016 are hereby accepted and approved.

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

**The motion carried unanimously**

5. **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

*None.*

6. **NEW BUSINESS**

**2016-0181 Market Analysis Presentation**

**Discussed**

*Director of Planning and Development Services Jon Reiner and Community and Economic Development Manager Paige Bronk were present and distributed the final Market Analysis report. In advance of a full presentation at the next Committee of the Whole meeting, Mr. Reiner called attention to key sections of the report including pp. 1-19 (Executive Summary) and pp. 20-39 (Implementation and Action Steps). He asked Councilors to consider the challenges and opportunities in Groton and the recommendations in the report.*

*Councilor de la Cruz arrived at 6:05 p.m.*

**Roll Call:** Members Present: Mayor Flax, Councilor Barber, Councilor Grim, Councilor Antipas, Councilor Morton, Councilor Nault and Councilor de la Cruz

Members Absent: Councilor Peruzzotti and Councilor Watson

**Discussed**

*Mr. Reiner noted that funding is already available for some of the initiatives, but this will be a multi-year effort.*

*Councilor Peruzzotti arrived at 6:06 p.m.*

**Roll Call:** Members Present: Mayor Flax, Councilor Barber, Councilor Grim, Councilor Antipas, Councilor Morton, Councilor Nault, Councilor de la Cruz and Councilor Peruzzotti  
Members Absent: Councilor Watson

**Discussed**

*Mr. Bronk noted that the challenges identified in the report include offsets to address them.*

**2016-0183 Mystic Education Center Brownfield Grant**

**Discussed**

*Director of Planning and Development Services Jon Reiner and Community and Economic Development Manager Paige Bronk were present. Mr. Bronk made note of his referral memo and stated that the reuse of public properties is a great economic development driver.*

*Councilor Watson arrived at 6:08 p.m.*

**Roll Call:** Members Present: Mayor Flax, Councilor Barber, Councilor Grim, Councilor Antipas, Councilor Morton, Councilor Nault, Councilor de la Cruz, Councilor Peruzzotti and Councilor Watson

**Discussed**

*The state and the Town are interested in redeveloping the Mystic Education Center property, and staff has had discussions with the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD). A feasibility analysis for the property that identified possible uses was done as part of the Town's marketing analysis. DECD asked to enter into a partnership with the Town to promote redevelopment of the property and identified potential grant funding in the amount of \$50,000 to market the property through the brownfields program for state-owned and formerly state-owned properties. The deadline was short so staff has already submitting the application and is requesting the Town Council's endorsement of the grant application.*

*Grant funds would be used to work with the state on property signage, real estate summary sheets, e-mail outreach to private development teams, advertisements, property showings, public engagement on development ideas, additional studies, and development and issuance of an RFP. The Town will also work on regulatory amendments and help the state select a preferred developer.*

*Mr. Reiner noted that all of the parcels are owned by the State of Connecticut, but different areas of the site are under the stewardship of either the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) or DECD. Staff is working with both entities.*

*Councilor Barber questioned the best use for the property and how much input the Town will have. Mr. Bronk noted it is difficult to analyze specific uses at this time without doing fiscal impact analyses. He did explain that residential development in the future will be geared toward childless millennials that Electric Boat's workforce expansion will bring into the community. Staff has not yet identified preferred alternatives for the Mystic Education Center site. The Council was reminded that the property is a state asset, and the redevelopment decision will ultimately be up to the state, but the partnership puts the Town in a stronger position.*

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

*The Town Manager noted that the Old Mystic Fire Department leases a portion of the property and they have attempted to purchase it in the past. Their use may be able to be included in an overall plan for the property in the future.*

**The motion carried unanimously**

**2016-0184 Sale or Lease of Town Owned Excess Property**

**Discussed**

Development Manager Paige Bronk were present to address the Council. Mr. Bronk explained that the Office of Planning and Development Services (OPDS) is initiating a project to address a number of vacant Town-owned parcels. The process is different than what Groton has done in the past. Municipal land assets should be viewed as redevelopment projects and marketed appropriately. Redevelopment may involve selling or leasing the property.

Mr. Bronk provided an overview of the process as identifying key parcels, providing signage, creating a marketing brochure, conducting public meetings, showing the property, and issuing an RFP. This is a six-month process with 45-60 day turnaround after the RFP is issued. Developers will be chosen using an evaluation process that will be shared with the Council. After interviews, the Town will select a preferred developer, negotiate a contract, and obtained Town Council endorsement of the real estate transaction.

Funding is allocated in FYE 2017 to initiate the process with some properties. Councilor Antipas suggested partnering with private property owners where beneficial. Mr. Reiner stated that the market is the market and the Town cannot be held up by private property owners with unreasonable expectations.

Councilor Grimm asked how the properties are prioritized. Mr. Bronk stated the priorities are determined based on the Town Council's desires, level of interest by developers, constraints, etc. Mr. Bronk offered to review the list with the Council to assure the Council's support. Mr. Bronk emphasized the need to provide for exposure for Groton.

Mayor Flax asked why the marketing of the property could not be contracted out rather than being done by staff. Mr. Reiner explained that the goal is not to just sell the property, but to identify the best use and assure redevelopment. Mr. Bronk added that there is a big difference between a real estate transaction that is broker driven and a real estate development project. Staff is also able to handle the regulatory end of the project better than a consultant and Mr. Bronk views his job as marketing and promotion. The biggest challenge to moving this process along has been getting funding to support the effort. The next step is to prioritize the properties internally.

Mayor Flax asked for a timeline. Mr. Reiner noted that staff is focusing on a few properties, but OPDS is waiting for information from the Finance Department, which has been busy with the budget. Also, OPDS has been juggling a number of priorities since this process was introduced to the previous Council.

Councilor de la Cruz asked if it would be helpful for this Council to identify properties that it wants to sell, and Mr. Reiner indicated that will certainly be done before any properties are marketed. Discussion followed on the role of the Council in the process. Mr. Bronk added that as these projects progress, some discussions will require executive sessions.

Town Manager Oefinger noted it is important to have Town Council backing prior to soliciting proposals. The list of marketable properties will likely be short. Discussion followed on the processes followed with former vacant school buildings and use of the new process with potentially vacant school buildings in the future.

**2016-0179****North Stonington Road Bridge****Discussed**

Town Manager Oefinger noted receipt of a letter from Conway Londregan, counsel for the Old Mystic Fire District, regarding the North Stonington Road bridge. Gary Schneider, Director of Public Works, provided background information on the issue. Groton has taken the lead on the project and has applied to the state for local bridge funding, which should be announced by the end of the month. If approved, the grant will reimburse 40% of the costs for the bridge which is currently estimated at \$1.2 million. There is approximately \$80,000 in escrow for preliminary

design. Staff has contacted Stonington and no funding has been approved at this time.

Councilor Morton asked if both Groton and Stonington have agreed that the bridge is necessary. Mr. Schneider noted that the Town Council has authorized exploration of a replacement bridge. The Old Mystic Fire Department claims that they need the bridge. There is no public water on the Groton side of the Mystic River in Old Mystic. Both the Town Council and Stonington need to decide if they want to fund the bridge once all of the information is gathered and cost estimates are finalized. The Town Manager suggested that the Town Council meet with the Stonington Board of Selectmen. Discussion followed on a response to the letter, the need for the bridge from a public safety standpoint, possible water line extension from Stonington, and the need for better traffic enforcement at the problematic intersection in Stonington.

2016-0178

**Groton Heights School/Bill Memorial Library Land Swap**

**Discussed**

Town Manager Mark Oefinger noted he is member of the Bill Memorial Library Board of Directors. For information purposes, he noted that the property lines in the Town's GIS for the Bill Memorial Library and Groton Heights School are incorrect. The plan included in the Council's agenda packet is accurate. It shows that a portion of library land was leased to the Board of Education for the school's use. The Library would like the Town to consider a potential swap of a strip of land leading from Monument Street to the school for the leased land. The Town Manager noted that there is also a strip of land through the library's property owned by the Town (a paper street). The land swap may allow for future expansion of the library, but there are no plans at this time. This item is informational only. The land swap needs to be evaluated by the Office of Planning and Development Services relative to future use. Discussion followed on the boundaries of the proposed swap.

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

None.

8. **OTHER BUSINESS**

Councilor Barber asked if a meeting has been scheduled with the two police chiefs regarding dispatch. Mayor Flax noted he met with the City Mayor about having a meeting, but it has not been figured out yet.

Councilor Nault spoke with RTM member McDermott about the school referendum and having monthly meetings with the RTM floor leaders.

Councilor de la Cruz provided an e-mail to the Town Manager regarding paving River Road as well as an issue with the sidewalk on Pearl Street in Noank. The Town Manager provided an update noting that the previously approved sidewalk fix was predicated on obtaining grading rights from the adjacent property owner, which have not been granted.

9. **ADJOURNMENT**

A motion was made by Councilor Watson, seconded by Councilor Nault, to adjourn the meeting at 8:12 p.m.

The motion carried unanimously.