



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 Rita M. Schmidt, Councilors Dean Antipas, Genevieve Cerf, Joe de la Cruz, Bruce S. Flax, Bob Frink, Rich Moravsik, Deborah L. Peruzzotti and Harry A. Watson

Tuesday, July 28, 2015

6:00 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

REGULAR MEETING

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

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

2. **ROLL CALL**

Members Present: Mayor Schmidt, Councilor Antipas, Councilor de la Cruz, Councilor Flax, Councilor Frink, Councilor Moravsik and Councilor Watson
Members Absent: Councilor Peruzzotti

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

3. **Calendar and Communications**

None.

4. **Approval of Minutes**

2015-0187 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 July 14, 2015 are hereby accepted and approved.

A motion was made by Councilor Watson, seconded by Councilor Moravsik, to adopt.

The motion carried unanimously

5. **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

None.

6. **NEW BUSINESS**

2015-0011 Meeting with State Legislators (2015 Standing Referral)

Discussed

A motion was made by Councilor Antipas, seconded by Councilor Moravsik, to add 2015-0011 Meeting with State Legislators (2015 Standing Referral) to the agenda.

The motion carried unanimously.

John Scott and Aundre Bumgardner were present to address the Town Council. Representative Scott noted that with respect to the state budget, Groton received only \$78,000 less than last year, which was due to a lowering of state PILOT from buildings being demolished at the Mystic Oral School. Representative Bumgardner noted another issue addressed was an overhaul of statutes with respect to heroin and opioid use.

Councilor Moravsik asked the representatives to contact Chief Ken Richards II of Old Mystic about an insurance situation with medical services. Representative Scott did not see anything come before the Insurance Committee, and he noted that all bills are dead at the end of the session.

Councilor de la Cruz asked if grants may be available for Groton as a result of the Coast Guard Museum effort. Representative Bumgardner stated that a lot of the Thames River Heritage Park movement involves Groton and will provide many opportunities for revitalization of Thames Street. He described grant requests that have already been submitted.

Councilor Antipas mentioned Educational Cost Sharing (ECS) and state spending on education. He asked if research is available showing how Connecticut compares with other states with respect to state funding and use of property taxes and Representative Scott stated he will check. A report that claims Groton is overfunded by \$2 million for ECS will be provided by Representative Bumgardner to the Town Council.

Town Manager Oefinger noted Groton's unique situation with the Navy base and added that special education funding is especially a problem. If the state would pay 100% of special education costs, it would level the playing field for municipalities. Councilor Frink noted the various education bills and the potential costs associated with them, stating that increases in the education budget are unsustainable. Councilor Frink noted that the Town Council will be having a joint meeting with the Board of Education in August to discuss four issues and he asked the representatives to attend.

Councilor Watson asked if there was any legislation concerning body cameras for police officers. Representative Scot stated it was discussed during special session and the state will pay for cameras with grants to municipalities. He will get back to the Council on the timeframe.

Councilor Flax questioned bringing Shoreline East to Mystic. Representative Bumgardner submitted a bill to study potential stops from New London to Westerly, including Groton, as part of the comprehensive transportation plan. Representative Scott would also like to see transit service extended to the area from Boston.

Representative Scott explained that the proposal to institute a Cadillac Tax on municipal health insurance programs is designed to drive people to the state's program, which essentially would make the state an insurance company.

Councilor de la Cruz reiterated the concerns with non-Navy dependent children living in Navy housing for which the Town does not receive ECS or property taxes.

Mayor Schmidt mentioned the effort to bring the USS Groton sail to the Town and asked if there are any grants or funding available.

Representative Scott noted the success changing the atmosphere with respect to shell fishing. An Aquaculture Commission has been created that, once it is seated, will hopefully relieve some of the stress in the relationship between shell fishermen and the State Department of Agriculture/Aquaculture. There is also an effort to open a testing lab at UCONN Avery Point. Councilor Antipas talked about the process required to transfer lobster licenses and the resulting decrease in the number of licenses.

Representative Scott noted that the next session (a short session) starts in February so of there is something of interest to Groton, the legislators should meet with the Council early.

Councilor Watson noted the change in legislation regarding submission of school construction grant applications.

Mayor Schmidt thanked the representatives for attending the meeting.

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**2014-0202 City Highway Budget Committee - Update**

A motion was made by Mayor Schmidt, seconded by Councilor Moravsik, that the Town Council enter into executive session at 6:50 p.m. with Town Manager Mark Oefinger and Town Attorney Matt Auger pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes Section 1-200(6) to discuss strategies and/or negotiations about likely pending claims by the City against the Town concerning the pending City highway budget funding reques.

The motion carried unanimously

Discussed

*The executive session concluded at 7:44 p.m.*

**2014-0312 School Facilities Initiative Update**

Discussed

*Town Manager Oefinger noted that more analysis of the survey results will be presented at the Task Force's August 20th meeting. The Task Force has also discussed conducting a joint meeting with the Town Council and RTM on September 9th at the regular meeting of the RTM.*

**2015-0184 Aquarion Water Tower - Northeast Academy Property**

Discussed

*Town Manager Oefinger noted that Aquarion approached the Town a number of months ago about constructing a new water tower in the northeast area of Town, and they would like to place it on the Northeast Academy site. Water and fire protection were a significant concern during the construction of Northeast Academy. The existing tower off Nantucket Drive would be abandoned. Last night the Board of Education reviewed a revised plan, which the Town Manager presented to the Council. Aquarion will be seeking permission to construct the tower on the Town-owned property with access from Ann Avenue. It is unknown at this time if Aquarion is proposing to install communication equipment on the tower. The project will require a public hearing and a CGS Section 8-24 referral to the Planning Commission. Councilor Flax questioned liability and the Town Manager stated that the tower will be fenced like any other water tower in Town and monitored on a daily basis. The Town Council must decide the terms and conditions for the easement.*

**2015-0136 Effects of Heroin on the Community**

Discussed

*Mayor Schmidt thanked Councilor de la Cruz and his wife for arranging the presentation by Gloucester's Chief of Police. Councilor de la Cruz thanked the Council for its support and encouragement, and he asked that the referral be placed on an agenda once a month for discussion. Town Manager Oefinger noted that the new Police Chief attended the presentation and will probably discuss the issue with the Council at the August 25th Committee of the Whole meeting. At this time, the department is doing its due diligence on the issue. Councilor Frink shared some ideas about how the Town can use its resources to supplement the grass roots effort.*

**2012-0050 Potential Disposition of William Seely School Property**

Discussed

*Town Manager has draft leases and a purchase sales agreement that are not for distribution. Councilors can review the documents individually for discussion at the next meeting with the Town Attorney. The next steps will be to hold a public hearing and make a CGS Section 8-24 referral to the Planning Commission.*

**2015-0006 Labor Negotiations (2015 Standing Referral)**

A motion was made by Councilor Moravsik, seconded by Councilor Antipas, that the Town Council Committee of the Whole, along with Town Manager Mark Oefinger and Town Attorney Eileen Duggan go into executive session at 8:15 p.m. for the purpose of discussing strategy and/or negotiations with respect to current and pending collective bargaining units. This action is taken without prejudice to the Committee of the Whole's right to discuss these matters in a private meeting pursuant to Connecticut

General Statutes Section 1-200(2).

The motion carried unanimously

Discussed

*The executive session concluded at 8:27 p.m.*

**2014-0130 Non-Union Terms and Conditions**

Discussed

*Town Attorney Eileen Duggan reviewed sick leave payouts for non-union and all bargaining units, and vacation payouts for non-union. She explained that the formula for vacation payouts was put in place in the mid-1990s to put a cap on payouts for large accumulations of vacation. Councilor Flax noted that the amount being paid out is minimal, but it deserves attention. There is no line item in the budget for vacation payouts; excess funds are used rather than returning them to the General Fund. Town Manager Oefinger explained that the Salary Adjustments line item in the budget was eliminated in 2011. If there are no excess funds, no payout is made. Councilor Flax asked about the line between earning vacation, forcing vacation use, and payouts. The Town Manager explained that in order for an employee to be eligible for a payout, he or she must use at least 15 days of vacation in a year.*

*Councilor Frink noted that the primary driver is accumulation of vacation leave after 15 years of service. Attorney Duggan noted that the accumulation is the same for all bargaining units, with a tiered system for the Police union.*

**2015-0177 Town Manager Annual Evaluation (2015)**

A motion was made by Councilor Moravsik, seconded by Councilor Antipas, to enter executive session at 8:50 p.m. with Town Manager Mark Oefinger.

The motion carried unanimously

Recommended for a Resolution

*The executive session concluded at 9:15 p.m.*

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

*None.*

**8. OTHER BUSINESS**

*None.*

**9. ADJOURNMENT**

*The meeting adjourned at 9:17 p.m.*