



# 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, Joe de la Cruz, Bruce S. Flax, Bob Frink, Patrice Granatosky, Rich Moravsik, Deborah L. Peruzzotti and Harry A. Watson**

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Tuesday, August 25, 2015

6:00 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

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#### REGULAR MEETING

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1. **CALL TO ORDER**

*Mayor Schmidt called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.*

2. **ROLL CALL**

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

*Also present was Town Manager Mark Oefinger.*

3. **Calendar and Communications**

*None.*

4. **Approval of Minutes**

**2015-0214 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 August 11, 2015 are hereby accepted and approved.

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

**The motion carried unanimously**

5. **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

*None.*

6. **NEW BUSINESS**

**2015-0009 Joint Meeting with Board of Education (2015 Standing Referral)**

**Discussed**

*Councilor Frink reviewed four Board of Education budget drivers mentioned during the FYE 2016 budget discussion. He has been trying to set up a meeting so that the Council can partner with the Superintendent and the Board of Education to discuss these areas and move forward on resolution. In addition to a joint meeting, Councilor Frink is proposing that the Board of Education send tuition bills to civilian parents of children living in Navy housing and requesting that the Board of Education's FYE 2017 budget include examples of shared sacrifice in recognition of the loss of tax revenue. Discussion followed on the proposal to bill for tuition and the loss of revenue associated with civilian students in Navy housing. Town Manager Oefinger noted that the Navy is no longer involved in the privatized housing and it is the Federal Department of Education that provides impact aid to the Town, not the Department of Defense. The Town Manager agreed that an opinion should be sought from the Town Attorney about the legality of billing for tuition. He provided background on the Town Attorney's previous research into taxation of the property. The simplest solution would be for the Town to receive ECS for non-Navy students, which has been discussed with Congressman Courtney.*

Councilor Watson does not want to risk the Town's existing impact aid. He noted that special education costs are also an issue. Councilor Flax suggested that the Town join with other municipalities with similar situations to address the issue. The Town Manager noted that one problem seems to be severe undercounting of military students and the Superintendent has indicated that Groton Public Schools are changing their procedures.

Councilor Frink reiterated his desire to have a joint meeting with the Board of Education. Discussion followed on sending a letter from the Town Council to the Superintendent identifying issues and asking for a meeting. The Town Manager noted the numerous attempts he has made to schedule a meeting. The Council agreed by consensus to send a letter to the Superintendent.

Councilor de la Cruz indicated he would also like information on the number of units still available and the potential impact on the Town.

The Town Manager mentioned possible dates to meet with the Board of Education include September 9th (after the joint meeting with the RTM) or September 15th at the Finance Committee meeting.

**2015-0219 FYE 2017 Budget Discussion**

**Discussed**

See discussion under #2015-0009 Joint Meeting with Board of Education in 8/25/15 Committee of the Whole minutes.

**2015-0212 Road Maintenance and Rehabilitation Program - Additional Roads For Calendar Year 2015**

**Discussed**

Gary Schneider, Director of Public Works, described the history of ranking and rating the roads in Town. The scheduled roads are reviewed each year with the Town Council under the terms of the road bond. The next set of roads is located in the Watrous Subdivision. Only two were scheduled for 2015, but all need to be done. Mr. Schneider is requesting that the three remaining roads be added to the work program, which will take place in the fall. Two roads originally planned for 2016 will not be addressed at that time.

Mr. Schneider provided a brief update on the North Stonington Road bridge. The project will be brought to the Town Council after the current study is completed and the scope of the project is known. Councilor Watson asked for statistics on how many times the fire department has had to go around the road due to the bridge closure.

High Street repaving is being coordinated with the water company that is replacing many of the water lines in Mystic.

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

**The motion carried unanimously**

**2015-0210 Conversion of High Pressure Sodium (HPS) Street Lights to LED**

**Discussed**

Rick Norris, Sustainability Program Project Manager, described the proposal to convert lights to LED, which can save 50% to 70% on electrical costs. The Town currently owns lights in the Eversource service area and pays 50% to 70% less by owning the lights. The Town can also save a significant amount of money by purchasing street lights in the Groton Utilities service area. The Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM) has selected three companies to perform the function. The company would survey the lights (poles and fixtures and arms), conduct lux measurement, and do the conversion. Having a maintenance agreement for all lights would be advantageous and save money.

*In response to Councilor Granatosky, Mr. Norris explained that funding for the project could be achieved in multiple ways, but no determination has been made. Staff will come back to the Council with the draft performance agreement. Groton Utilities is considering converting their lights to LED, but the Town would still save money by owning the lights. The next fixtures would be cut off fixtures, not the typical dome fixtures. The cost to purchase the lights from Groton Utilities has not yet been determined.*

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

*Discussion followed on cost savings for the project, costs in the two service areas, how street light costs are currently budgeted, and lighting levels. Councilor Flax left the meeting.*

**The motion carried unanimously**

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

*Councilor Flax returned to the meeting.*

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

**2015-0200 Senior Resources Title III Older Americans Grant**

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

*Town Manager Oefinger briefly explained the program.*

**The motion carried unanimously**

**2015-0194 Groton Utilities - Taxation without Representation?**

**Tabled**

*Councilor Watson is exploring this issue with the Town Attorney, so he asked that it be tabled to the September 8th meeting.*

**2015-0195 Request for Waiver of Building Permit Fees - Mystic Arts Center**

**Discussed**

*Councilor Frink recused himself from the discussion.*

*Town Manager Oefinger noted that although it has been done in the past, the Town's ordinance does not allow exemption from building permit fees. Councilor Moravsik noted the significant revenue generated by the Mystic Arts Center (MAC) and stated he sees no reason to consider waiving the fee. Councilor Watson noted that churches also pay fees. Discussion followed on the Council's ability to amend the ordinance to change fees and the impact on the Town is all non-profits were exempted from building permit fees.*

*Town Manager Oefinger noted that MAC does pay taxes on the parking lot, but the Town reimburses them as part of the public rest room agreement. MAC also pays taxes on the former Emporium building.*

*The consensus of the Council was to send a letter to MAC indicated that the building permit fee ordinance does not give the Town Council the authority to make case by case exceptions and doing so would set a dangerous precedent.*

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

**The motion carried by the following vote:**

**Votes:** In Favor: 7 - Mayor Schmidt, Councilor Antipas, Councilor de la Cruz, Councilor Flax, Councilor Moravsik, Councilor Watson and Granatosky  
Abstain: 1 - Councilor Frink

**2015-0213 Request for Waiver of Land Use Permit Fees - Christ United Methodist Church**

**Discussed**

*Town Manager Oefinger noted that this request for a waiver of land use fees falls under a different ordinance than building permit fees. He described the history of the request to reinstall a nonconforming sign. Unlike the building permit fee ordinance, there is a provision for exemptions for specific entities in the land use fees ordinance. The exemptions do not include non-profit organizations. The Town Manager noted that land use fees help defray Town costs for legal requirements including advertising in the newspaper. Discussion followed on church signs located and permitted within state rights of way where the Town's regulations do not apply. Councilor Antipas does not feel that the Town Council has the authority under the ordinance to grant a waiver and the rest of the Council concurred. Councilor Frink mentioned a recent Supreme Court ruling that may impact signs.*

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

**The motion carried unanimously**

**2015-0217 Subase Centennial Anniversary**

**Discussed**

*Town Manager Oefinger was invited to a briefing at the Sub Base where it was noted that the base will be celebrating its 100th anniversary during the next year. The Navy has identified two signature events, the first on October 18th commemorating the arrival of the first sub at the base and the second in June 2016 commemorating the submarine base designation. The Navy is not requesting anything from the Town, but those in attendance at the briefing feel there is an opportunity to have a yearlong celebration of the anniversary by marketing and rebranding many of the events going on in the community. There is a core group from the Town, City, Town of Ledyard, and City of New London who have met with a marketing firm. A proposal is expected this week. The Chambers of Commerce will also work on a calendar of events. Based on New London's efforts with the 225th anniversary of the Coast Guard, the cost of organizing this effort could be \$25,000 to \$30,000 plus donations. The Town Manager feels this is a tremendous opportunity that should be embraced by the Town and City.*

*Councilors suggested various ideas for the celebration. The Town Manager noted the need to identify a single point of contact in Town for the effort. The recipient of the financial profit for Coast Guard summer was the Coast Guard museum and the logical choice for this effort would be the USS Groton Sail.*

*The Town Manager stated he will bring the marketing firm's proposal to the Council for review once it is received.*

**2015-0216 Creation of Town Poet Laureate Position**

**Discussed**

*Councilor Frink received a request from a friend of his wife's to establish a Town poet laureate along with a template from Wallingford where the program is run out of the Library. A Town poet laureate would do readings at swearing in ceremonies, Arbor Day, inaugural meetings, the submarine centennial, etc.*

*Discussion followed on the honorary title, seeking input from the Library Board, and the potential impact on a Town department. The Town Manager stated that the Town Council could mirror the process used for the Town Historian since the Town Council is in a better position to identify what is desired from the position. Councilor Frink does not feel that the Town Council should be*

involved. Councilor Frink stated he would speak with the Director of Library Services Betty Anne Reiter to see if the Library has the time or inclination to undertake this task.

**2015-0218 Board of Education Teachers Contract Negotiations**

**Discussed**

Councilor Antipas indicated he was looking for direction from the Council before he goes into negotiations as the Council's liaison. Councilor Antipas briefly reviewed the process. Councilor Watson feels that Councilor Antipas' role is to bring important items from negotiations to the Council's attention. Mayor Schmidt suggested that health benefits mirror Town employees and Councilor Flax suggested that benefits be adjusted for incoming teachers to limit long term liabilities.

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

Councilor Granatosky questioned the status of older referrals. Councilor Antipas asked that #2009-0124 Ethics Ordinance be placed on the September 22nd agenda.

**8. OTHER BUSINESS**

Councilor Granatosky asked why community policing is not included in the adopted budget although it was approved by the RTM. The Town Manager noted that the program has not been cut, but he will look into any printing differences between the proposed and adopted budgets.

Councilor Flax asked for an update on Fitch Middle School on September 22nd.

**9. ADJOURNMENT**

A motion was made by Watson, seconded by Moravsik, to adjourn the meeting at 8:35 p.m.

The motion carried unanimously.