



# Town of Groton, Connecticut

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## Meeting Minutes

### Town Council Committee of the Whole

*Mayor Harry A. Watson, Councilors Dean Antipas, Kathryn M. Brown-Tracy, Bruce S. Flax, Catherine Kolnaski, Deborah B. Monteiro, Frank O'Beirne, Jr., Rita M. Schmidt, and Paulann H. Sheets*

Tuesday, September 22, 2009

7:00 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

#### REGULAR MEETING

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

*Mayor Watson called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.*

2. **ROLL CALL**

Members Present: Mayor Watson, Councilor Antipas, Councilor Brown-Tracy, Councilor Flax, Councilor Kolnaski, Councilor Monteiro, Councilor O'Beirne, Jr. and Councilor Sheets  
Members Absent: Councilor Schmidt

*Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Assistant to the Town Manager Lee Vincent and Executive Assistant Nicki Bresnyan.*

3. **Calendar and Communications**

*None.*

4. **Approval of Minutes**

*Councilor Sheets requested a revision of the minutes on page 2, first paragraph, third sentence, to read: "Councilor Sheets cited an increased sensitivity to internal controls in light of embezzlement issues in neighboring towns and asked for reassurance that controls are in place."*

**2009-0223 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 25, 2009 are hereby accepted and approved.

**A motion was made by Councilor Kolnaski, seconded by Councilor Monteiro, that this matter be Discussed.**

*to adopt as amended*

**The motion carried unanimously**

5. **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

*None.*

6. **NEW BUSINESS**

**2009-0029 Joint Meeting with Groton Long Point Board of Directors (2009 Standing Referral)**

**Discussed**

*Bob Congdon and seven members of the Groton Long Point Board of Directors were present to meet with the Council. Mr. Congdon noted that Board members serve one year terms and each member of the Board is responsible for a different area. Topics for discussion with the Council include the police and highway budgets and the Beach Pond Road bridge rehabilitation. Mr. Congdon suggested a joint meeting at the height of summer in Groton Long Point. He noted that he looks forward to opening up lines of communication between the two bodies.*

*Rich Moravsik noted that detailed design for the Beach Pond Road bridge is underway utilizing*

*\$25,000 of funding. The Association will be looking for additional funds next year, with bridge replacement anticipated to begin in 2010.*

*Councilor Sheets noted that parking bans on the roads in Groton Long Point have generated many calls over the years. A Town Attorney opinion concluded that the beaches are public and people can walk to them from Esker Point. Recently "no parking" signs have appeared on Groton Long Point Road leading into Groton Long Point, and the ban is suspended for Esker Point Beach concerts. Since the Association appears to own this portion of the road, Councilor Sheets encouraged the Association to fix the road.*

*With respect to the Town's partial funding of the Groton Long Point police department, Councilor Sheets believes that Town residents need to understand why they contribute to the Groton Long Point police department when the Town is not legally obligated to do so. Councilor Sheets feels there is good reason for the Town to contribute; however, the rest of the Town must have confidence that it is a good policy. Councilor Sheets previously requested a study of both Groton Long Point and the City of Groton police department operations. Mr. Congdon noted that Groton Long Point is unique, with the summer population increasing to up to 5000 people in the summer, and averaging 2000 to 3000.*

*Groton Long Point has not yet started its budget process, by Mr. Congdon does not anticipate any surprises.*

*Councilor Flax stated there is still a question as to why we partially fund Groton Long Point's police budget. Mr. Congdon explained that the Town has funded 50% of the police budget in Groton Long Point since 1945, except that it was recently reduced to 33%. The Town has conducted past studies of the cost to provide services in Groton Long Point and determined that it would cost the Town more. There are currently six full time officers year round.*

*Councilor Brown-Tracy questioned the reason for the summer spike in population. Mr. Congdon noted that there are 200 homes with year round residents; 400 are seasonal homes that attract large, extended families with many young children during the summer months.*

*Councilor Antipas asked about the cost for the bridge replacement and the Town Manager indicated it is approximately \$550,000.*

*Councilor Sheets noted that the City receives a contribution for its police budget from the Town as well as Groton Long Point. The Town also has no legal obligation to the City. The Town Manager explained that if the Town does not provide the funding, then the Town must provide the police service since the Town of Groton has jurisdiction Town-wide. Councilor Sheets indicated she would like a more thorough analysis done.*

*Groton Long Point Chief of Police Jack Drumm noted that in the absence of a Groton Long Point police force, the Town would have full authority, but with the Groton Long Point Police in place, the Town does not have any jurisdiction. Groton Long Point utilizes an aggressive patrol technique and is responsible for protecting big, expensive, residential homes.*

*The consensus was to conduct joint meetings quarterly. The Town Manager suggested meeting sometime in January just prior to formal budget deliberations. The next meeting was scheduled for Wednesday, January 6th in Groton Long Point.*

**2009-0236**

**Resolution Approving Amount of Bonds to be Issued in FYE 2010**

**Discussed**

*The Town Manager explained that a resolution must be passed no later than October 6th, but this item is not yet ready for consideration. He suggested a special meeting before October 6th to*

allow time to refine the numbers. With this bond, the Town will be completing the school project and bonding for the Senior Center. The consensus of the Committee was to have a special meeting on October 6th.

2009-0220

**Parks and Recreation Master Plan Implementation Advisory Committee****Discussed**

John Silsby, Jerry Lokken, Phil Butta, and Greg Leonard were present to address the Council. The Parks and Recreation Master Plan was recently completed, along with a Master Plan for Sutton Park.

Mr. Lokken and Mr. Butta reviewed a PowerPoint presentation that included a brief history of the Master Plan effort; the results of a community survey; a description of the facilities assessment; a review of the existing level of service when compared to NRPA guidelines; and recommendations including establishing an Implementation Advisory Committee to assist in putting the plan into action. As part of this study effort, Parks and Recreation has also evaluated its pricing policies to increase cost recovery and maintenance levels.

The presentation on the Sutton Park Master Plan included an overview of the purpose and vision; an overview of the study approach. The plan identified opportunities associated with the skate park. Mr. Lokken reviewed conceptual designs including for the field area.

Councilor Brown-Tracy questioned bathroom locations and the emphasis on the skate park. Mr. Lokken reiterated that the design is conceptual, not final. The placement of the bathrooms is based on security and anti-vandalism concerns. The skate park is a regional draw and therefore instrumental in the design of the overall park.

Councilor Antipas asked how the Copp property is going to be used. Mr. Lokken noted that the Master Plan does not include specific suggestions, but recommends that all Town-owned properties be evaluated. Councilor Sheets expressed support for building on what we have at Sutton Park. Mr. Lokken noted that the Master Plan recommends a trail that would connect to the G&S Trolley Trail.

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

Councilor Monteiro noted that she has received a number of calls regarding the Master Plan. She clarified that establishment of the Implementation Committee does not require any financial outlay by the Town and all recommendations will be brought back to the Town Council. Councilor Flax suggested a concession stand to generate revenue. Mr. Lokken noted it is included in the plan. Councilor Flax also suggested that existing programs, such as the soccer program, need to be fixed before undertaking grand improvement plans

**The motion carried unanimously**

The Committee of the Whole recessed the meeting at 8:36 p.m. for the Groton Resource Recovery Authority meeting. The meeting reconvened at 9:17 p.m.

2008-0299

**Department of Environmental Protection Grant for Mumford Cove Dredging****Discussed**

Gary Schneider, Director of Public Works, explained that the Grant-in-Aid for the Mumford Cove Dredging Project must be awarded to the Town, not a private association. The Council must choose to accept or reject the grant. Staff recommends that the Town invoke the provision of the agreement with the state that allows the Town to make a sub-award of the contract to the Mumford Cove Association after approval of the Grant-in-Aid. Mr. Schneider reviewed the provisions of the sub-award, noting this is a reimbursable grant so that payments must be coordinated between the Town, state, and Mumford Cove Association.

*Councilor Sheets recused herself as a resident of Mumford Cove and member of the Association.*

*The Town Manager noted that the agreement package has been forwarded to Keith Neilson of Docko, Mumford Cove Association's engineer, for review. The agreement with the state has been clarified to cover a "portion" of the dredging. Councilor Antipas stated he is uncomfortable with the lack of a performance bond requirement. The Town Attorney is currently reviewing the Town's responsibility/liability while preparing an agreement between the Town and Mumford Cove.*

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

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

**Votes:** In Favor: 7 - Mayor Watson, Councilor Antipas, Councilor Brown-Tracy, Councilor Flax, Councilor Kolnaski, Councilor Monteiro and Councilor O'Beirne, Jr.

Abstain: 1 - Councilor Sheets

**2009-0235 Hybrid Vehicle Grant**

**Discussed**

*The Town Manager explained that this is the next round of grant funding for hybrid vehicle purchases. The funds would have to be expended by the end of 2010, which means these funds would cover vehicles scheduled for replacement in the fleet program in 2011 to be considered as part of the 2011 budget. Councilor Sheets expressed a preference for the hybrid Honda Insight over the Toyota Prius.*

**A motion was made by Councilor Kolnaski, seconded by Councilor Brown-Tracy, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.**

**The motion carried unanimously**

**2009-0231 South Road Underpass Flooding**

**Discussed**

*Mayor Watson made this referral as a result of a telephone call from a concerned citizen. The Town Manager provided background information on this subject in the agenda report. Town Manager Oefinger detailed the findings of the past assessments of the underpasses on South Road and Poquonnock Road. The cost of raising a railroad track is astronomical. The only solution at this time is to attempt to reengage the state in discussions since South Road is a state road and it will require a state solution.*

**2009-0229 Acceptance of Whittaker Lane**

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

**The motion carried unanimously**

**2009-0230 Acceptance of Open Space in Windward Passage Subdivision**

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

**The motion carried unanimously**

**2009-0123 Non-Resident Taxpayer Voting Authorization**

**Discussed and Recommended no action taken**

*Councilor Sheets noted it was not the intent of the Charter Revision Commission to make a determination on non-resident taxpayer voting ability. She disagrees with the Town Attorney's opinion and she opposes a change in the current practice. The Town Manager noted that the Town Attorney could come to a meeting to discuss the issue further or the Council could consider revising the Charter. Councilor O'Beirne suggested that the Town publicize this change since people will be expecting to vote in the November referendum. Discussion followed on seeking a dialog with the Town Attorney. A majority of the Council (six members) chose to delete the*

*referral.*

**2009-0124 Ethics Ordinance**

**Discussed**

*Councilor Antipas is working on a draft ordinance for the subcommittee to review at a future meeting.*

**2009-0217 Contract Agreement between the Groton Board of Education and the Groton Education Association**

**Discussed**

*Councilor Antipas noted that the bargaining teams have completed their work, but no agreement is in place at this time. Councilor Antipas wants to update the Council and the topic -- labor negotiations -- is appropriate for executive session.*

**A motion was made by Councilor Sheets, seconded by Councilor Brown-Tracy, to enter executive session at 10:02 p.m. to discuss the contract agreement between the Groton Board of Education and the Groton Education Association.**

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

**Votes:** In Favor: 7 - Mayor Watson, Councilor Antipas, Councilor Brown-Tracy, Councilor Flax, Councilor Kolnaski, Councilor Monteiro and Councilor Sheets  
Opposed: 1 - Councilor O'Beirne, Jr.

*The executive session concluded at 10:17 p.m.*

**2009-0237 Introduction of an Ordinance Amending Ordinance Adopting the International Property Maintenance Code 2000 for the Fort Hill Homes Neighborhood Revitalization Zone**

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

**The motion carried unanimously**

**2009-0238 Resolution Setting a Public Hearing on an Ordinance Amending Ordinance Adopting the International Property Maintenance Code 2000 for the Fort Hill Homes Neighborhood Revitalization Zone**

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

**The motion carried unanimously**

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

*None.*

**8. OTHER BUSINESS**

*Councilor Sheets asked for a referral for a Town-wide Property Maintenance Code. Mayor Watson made the referral to the Committee of the Whole.*

**9. ADJOURNMENT**

*The meeting adjourned at 10:20 p.m.*