



# 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, September 27, 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 Morton, Councilor Nault, Councilor de la Cruz and Councilor Peruzzotti  
Members Absent: Councilor Antipas and Councilor Watson

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

#### 3. Calendar and Communications

*Councilor Grim noted a survey from the Southeastern Connecticut Cultural Coalition directed to Electric Boat employees.*

#### 4. Approval of Minutes

##### 2016-0234 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 September 13, 2016 are hereby accepted and approved.

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

**The motion carried unanimously**

#### 5. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

*None.*

#### 6. NEW BUSINESS

##### 2016-0198 FYE 2017 Fire District PILOT

##### Discussed

*- Noank Fire District*

*Fire Chief Dave Steel, Frank Socha, Michael Noel, and Katherine Rathbun were present.*

*Chief Steel noted that the department has 22 active members. The station is manned 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. with volunteers covering the rest of the time. The department responds to 360-380 calls annually with 70% medical calls. Mr. Socha responded to Town Councilors' questions on the budget. Major district expenses are replacing a fire department bay floor and resurfacing the tennis and basketball courts in the park. The Fire Marshal is a part-time paid position. Mr. Socha provided estimated fund balances for the fire district, water district and trash collection (and later confirmed actual figures). Discussion followed on equipment needs, response times, and ISO ratings.*

*Councilor Antipas arrived at 6:21 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

**2016-0004 Revised Position Descriptions (2016 Standing Referral)**

**Discussed**

*Director of Human Resources Bob Zagami and Director of Planning and Development Services Jon Reiner were present. Mr. Zagami explained the request to change job descriptions in the Office of Planning and Development Services to reflect changes to be consistent with the department's mission. The Assistant Building/Zoning Official position will create a backup for the Manager of Inspection Services. The Code Enforcement Officer/Planner I description will broaden the duties for a position that has been difficult to fill in the past. The position will have additional responsibilities at a lower cost. The Executive Assistant OPDS will have increased responsibility. The change will increase efficiency and track with the department's mission.*

*Mr. Reiner stated that there are no new full-time employees and the changes are revenue neutral. Mr. Reiner stated he is planning for retirements in the department. The Assistant Building Official/zoning Official description if being created, but the position would be filled in the future after retirements. The Code Enforcement Officer/Planner I will replace an unfilled position and the Executive Assistant OPDS replaces a 40-hour per week Office Assistant III. Mr. Reiner responded to questions from Town Councilors.*

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

**Mayor Flax noted his difficulty reconciling the stated "need" for a position with waiting for someone in the department to retire.**

**The motion carried unanimously**

**2016-0235 Preliminary Results of Operations - FYE 2016**

**Discussed and Recommended no action taken**

*Director of Finance Cindy Landry provided an overview of preliminary results of operations for FYE 2016, noting that the figures are unaudited. The figures compare the adopted/adjusted FYE 2016 budget to the actual revenues and expenditures at the end of the year.*

*General Fund expenditures were \$1,967,085 or 1.6% less than budgeted. Town Departments returned \$1,219,605 which included a \$600,000 set aside. "No fund balances were used. The Board of Education returned \$660,153 with \$600,000 coming from the health insurance fund balance.*

*General Fund revenues were \$1,528,454 or 1.3% less than budgeted. Ms. Landry reviewed the major variances in revenues by category. Fund Balance Applied was \$4,596,398 rather than the \$5,035,029 budgeted, leaving \$438,631 in the Unassigned Fund Balance and increased it from 7.75% to 8.38%.*

*Ms. Landry noted the attachments to her staff referral memo which are a comparison of General Fund expenditures by areas of service; a comparison of General Fund revenues by category; and an analysis of Unassigned Fund Balance for May 2016 to September 2016. Ms. Landry responded to questions from Town Councilors.*

**2016-0236 FYE 2017 Contingency Transfer for United Steelworkers Wages**

**Discussed**

*Director of Finance Cindy Landry noted that only one labor contract was settled when the FYE 2017 budget was developed. Recently the United Steelworkers agreement was settled and the wage increases should be incorporated into the FYE 2017 budget through a Contingency transfer.*

*The current balance of Contingency is \$413,000 and this transfer request is for \$48,190.*

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

**The motion carried unanimously**

*The Committee of the Whole took a five minute recess.*

**2016-0189**

### **Tax Increment Financing**

#### **Discussed**

*Director of Planning and Development Services Jon Reiner provided a brief overview of economic development activities in Town including a proposed mixed used development at Route 117/Route 184. Tax Increment Financing (TIF) is a financing tool used nationally. If desired by the Town Council, efforts would be focused on the Route 1/downtown Groton area, Poquonnock Bridge, Thames Street, and the Route 117/Route 184 intersection area.*

*Michael Andreana from Pullman and Compley, LLC reviewed his background and hi role in crafting the TIF legislation in Connecticut. He reviewed a PowerPoint presentation explaining what TIF is. A TIF district is established by the Town Council and there is no state involvement. The basic procedure for creating a TIF district is to develop a TIF master plan, conduct a public hearing, obtain an advisory opinion from the Planning Commission, and obtain Town Council approval. Mr. Andreana reviewed permitted costs that can be financed with TIF revenue; components of the TIF master plan' TIF district financing by municipalities; and TIF district financing by developers. Mr. Andreana responded to questions from Town Councilors.*

*Mario DiLoreto of Readco, LLC, the developer interested in the Route 117/Route 184 parcel, provided background on his firm and the partnership. He noted his firm helped develop the mixed use zoning in the Town. Mr. DiLoreto feels that TIF is a secure investment that fills in financing gaps. He provided examples of developments and use of TIF. Mr. DiLoreto showed a conceptual plan for the Route 117/Route 184 property which would be a mixed use development of apartments, townhouses, retail and office.*

*Councilors expressed their support for the concept. The next step will be to develop a TIF master plan and Mr. Reiner noted that staff will concentrate on this area of Town first.*

**2016-0113**

### **Tax Incentive Agreement for Branford Manor**

#### **Discussed**

*Town Manager Oefinger noted that Town and City staff have had a series of discussions with Related about a tax incentive agreement associated with the redevelopment of Branford Manor. The proposal is to fix taxes rather than the assessment, which is being reviewed by the Town Attorney. Attorney Mike Carey asked that the Council go into executive session to discuss attorney-client privileged communications and negotiations with respect to the terms of the agreement.*

**A motion was made by Mayor Flax, seconded by Councilor Barber, to enter executive session at 8:45 p.m. to discuss the tax incentive agreement for Branford Manor and to invite Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Director of Planning and Development Services Jon Reiner, and Town Attorney Mike Carey to attend.**

**The motion carried unanimously**

*The executive session ended at 9:27 p.m.*

**2016-0239**

### **DEEP/GOSA Tilcon Property Purchase**

#### **Discussed**

*This referral was requested by Mayor Flax. A notice was received from the Tri-Town Trail Committee regarding a fundraiser being held by Groton Open Space Association (GOSA) to contribute funds for the state's purchase of the Tilcon property on Route 184. Town Manager*

Oefinger provided a brief history of GOSA's previous request for Town Council endorsement of the purchase, which was not given. The state is no longer seeking the Town's endorsement for the property acquisition. Director of Planning and Development Services Jon Reiner noted that he has been told there is a signed purchase and sales agreement in place. The Town is interested in the management plan for the property and the acquisition process, even though the property is not a prime development parcel. Unfortunately, the state is not engaging the Town in the process. The Council asked that representatives of DEEP be invited to a future meeting to address the Council.

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

**Discussed**

Town Manager Oefinger provided a brief history of the request to build a water tower on the Northeast Academy property. The Town and Aquarion are in the process of finalizing a temporary construction easement and a permanent access easement. The Town Attorney has suggested changes, and a response from Aquarion is anticipated for the next Committee of the Whole meeting.

**2016-0231 Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut Grant**

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

**The motion carried unanimously**

**2016-0204 Review of Town Services and Operations**

**Discussed**

Councilor Antipas expressed his desire to look into Town services either in the Committee of the Whole or an ad hoc committee. Councilor Morton suggested that the Town Council needs to prioritize the services it provides as 1) essential; 2) quality of life; and 3) can be eliminated with the least amount of harm. Discussion followed. Councilor Peruzzotti suggested ranking departments then services, noting that everyone has different priorities. Mayor Flax asked that department heads generate lists of services they provide. Town Manager Oefinger distributed a list of service areas developed as part of the performance measures project. It was agreed that Town Councilors would develop their lists of areas they want to look at for the October 11<sup>th</sup> Committee of the Whole meeting and Town departments would provide their lists of services for the October 25<sup>th</sup> meeting.

**2016-0238 Amtrak Northeast Corridor Rail Investment Plan**

**Discussed**

In January 2016, the Office of Planning and Development Services (OPDS) provided a letter to the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) regarding the Northeast Corridor Rail Investment Plan. Director of Planning and Development Services Jon Reiner and Manager of Economic/Community Development Paige Bronk were present to address the Council. Mr. Reiner noted that staff has followed the FRA's process from the beginning. They have completed an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), but not a final plan, to look at the Northeast Corridor from Washington D.C. to Maine. The plan is not parcel or area specific. Four design alternatives are being discussed; two designs move the line to the north, but staff wants to keep the rail corridor in this area.

Mr. Bronk explained that the FRA is conducting a study to address major deficiencies in rail road infrastructure. Once a general route is chosen, the FRA will conduct a tier 2 EIS. One of the alternatives includes a 50-mile bypass that is of the greatest concern to this area. The plan is conceptual, not specific. If the alternative is selected, the line would be in the vicinity of I-95 or Route 184, give or take a half mile. The existing line along the coastline needs to be addressed because of environmental impacts. Mr. Bronk read a description of alternative 1 (additional investment in the existing corridor), which was supported by OPDS. The Council asked that this item be placed on a future Committee of the Whole agenda for discussion.

**2016-0222      Town Manager Annual Evaluation**

**Discussed**

*Councilor Peruzzotti asked that Councilors complete their evaluation forms and submit them to Mayor Flax before the October 11th Committee of the Whole meeting.*

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

*None.*

**8.      OTHER BUSINESS**

*None.*

**9.      ADJOURNMENT**

*A motion was made by Councilor Peruzzotti, seconded by Councilor de la Cruz, to adjourn the meeting at 10:28 p.m.*

*The motion carried unanimously.*