



Town of Groton, Connecticut

Meeting Minutes

Town Council Committee of the Whole

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Groton, CT 06340-4394
Town Clerk 860-441-6640
Town Manager
860-441-6630

Mayor Heather Bond Somers, Councilors Dean G. Antipas, Bruce S. Flax, Bill Johnson, Frank O'Beirne, Jr., Deborah L. Peruzzotti, Rita M. Schmidt, James L. Streeter, and Harry A. Watson

Tuesday, January 24, 2012

7:00 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

REGULAR MEETING

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Somers called the meeting to order at 7:07 p.m.

2. **ROLL CALL**

Members Present: Mayor Somers, Councilor Antipas, Councilor Flax, Councilor Johnson, Councilor Peruzzotti, Councilor Schmidt and Councilor Streeter
Members Absent: Councilor O'Beirne, Jr. and Councilor Watson

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

3. **Calendar and Communications**

Councilor Antipas received an e-mail from a resident who wants to cut funding for the Groton Long Point Police.

Mayor Somers noted that on January 30th at 5:30 p.m. there will be a joint meeting with the Board of Education to discuss the budget.

Mayor Somers reminded residents of their responsibility to clear snow from the sidewalks along their property lines.

4. **Approval of Minutes**

2012-0029 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 January 10, 2012 are hereby accepted and approved.

A motion was made by Councilor Streeter, seconded by Councilor Schmidt, to adopt.

The motion carried unanimously

5. **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

None.

6. **NEW BUSINESS**

2012-0028 Police Union Working Agreement

A motion was made by Councilor Antipas, seconded by Councilor Streeter, that the members of the Town Council, together with Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Director of Administrative Services Doug Ackerman, Manager of Labor Relations Joyce Sauchuk and Town Attorney Eileen Duggan go into executive session at 7:12 p.m. for the purpose of discussing strategy and/or negotiations with respect to current and pending collective bargaining with multiple bargaining units. This action is taken without prejudice to the Council's right to discuss these matters in a private meeting pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes §1 200(2).

The motion carried unanimously

Discussed

The executive session concluded at 7:52 p.m.

Recommended for a Resolution

A motion was made by Councilor Flax, seconded by Councilor Peruzzotti, to approve the tentative agreement and the expenditure of funds necessary to implement the tentative agreement between the Town and the Groton Police Union, Local #3428, Council #15, AFSCME, AFL-CIO for the term July 1, 2011 - June 30, 2014.

The motion carried unanimously

2012-0034

FYE 2013 Budget Requests - City of Groton

Discussed

City Mayor Marian Galbraith introduced City Councilors Bill Jervis, David Hale, and Larry Gerrish, members of the City Highway Committee.

Mayor Galbraith noted that she has been working with the Town to achieve an "apples to apples" budget comparison. She distributed the Highway Department's 2011 actual expenditures, and reviewed function and object descriptions along with the breakdown of costs between Roads and Streets, Fleet Maintenance, and Engineering.

Mayor Galbraith addressed the City's request for reallocation of FYE 2011 Capital Improvement funds (#2012-0036). In FYE 2011, \$250,000 was allocated to the City for a paving project in the Groton Estates neighborhood. The funds are not enough to complete the project so the City would like to use the funds to resurface different roads, specifically West Elderkin Avenue and Mitchell Street from Baker Avenue to Park Avenue. If there are remaining funds, the City will repave one or two adjoining roads. Mayor Galbraith stated that any funds over \$250,000 would be paid by the City and the projects will be completed by the end of FYE 2012.

Councilor Streeter asked what would happen to Groton Estates. Mayor Galbraith noted that the total cost of the project is close to \$1,000,000 including drainage and curbing so the City would make multiple CIP requests, combined with other roads to keep road projects on schedule. The City is also looking at a pavement credit system similar to fees in lieu of open space.

Councilor Flax asked if the Town and City could join forces to bond for road projects. The Town Manager noted that a multi-year bond referendum has been discussed that would address roads in the Town, City and Groton Long Point. There was no money available for paving in FYE 2012 so putting the funding back in for FYE 2013 will be difficult. The Council must still consider allocating pavement management funds in the FYE 2013 CIP since a referendum could not be held until November.

Councilor Flax stated he was frustrated last budget season because the City's actual expenditures did not match budgeted funds. Mayor Galbraith acknowledged that was true and noted that she has reviewed every expenditure in 2011 and has worked to realign actual and budgeted expenditures.

Mayor Galbraith indicated that she is happy to work toward the CIP goal for pavement management, but the City has not had paving funds for a number of years and they would like to clear some items from their queue.

Councilor Peruzzotti asked if there are additional road requests anticipated and Mayor Galbraith stated that there will be requests in FYE 2013. Councilor Peruzzotti asked if the City's CIP requests will have to go to the RTM. The Town Manager explained that the Charter requires RTM approval for CIP projects. The City Highway Budget is also approved by the RTM, but with the understanding that they can only vote to approve it. The City has drafted, and the Town Attorney is reviewing, a proposed Memorandum of Understanding to address the concern with CIP projects. The Town Manager noted that he will follow up with the RTM on the reallocation of

funds.

A motion was made by Councilor Streeter, seconded by Councilor Flax, that the City's request to reallocate FYE 2011 CIP funds be Recommended for a Resolution.

The motion carried unanimously.

With respect the budget requests, the Town Manager explained that the City includes the widest variety of items in its Highway Budget request. Now that the City has provided information on the breakdown of those items, the Town and Groton Long Point will fill in their numbers. The exercise provides a better understanding of what the Town is funding, which is the first step. Ultimately the Town Council must have a follow-up discussion and decide what is appropriate to fund.

Mayor Galbraith noted that there is a similar effort underway for the Police Budget. She feels that the animosity between the City and Town at budget time is not useful. Both entities must address the issues associated with the Charters. Mayor Galbraith expressed her willingness to find ways to work cooperatively.

Councilor Peruzzotti expressed appreciation for the Mayor's efforts. She asked if the City budget format will be changed. Mayor Galbraith indicated that there will be no change to the budget format, but the Council will know what is included in the line items.

2012-0035

FYE 2013 Budget Requests - Groton Long Point

Discussed

Bob Congdon and John Touhy from the Groton Long Point Association were present. Mr. Congdon echoed Mayor Galbraith's statements and indicated that Groton Long Point has also been working with the Town on the 'apples to apples' process.

Councilor Peruzzotti asked if it is anticipated that Groton Long Point's budget requests will be similar to last year, and Mr. Congdon stated yes, depending on what happens with Groton Long Point's supplemental request.

2012-0011

Groton Long Point Request for a Supplemental Appropriation

Discussed

Mayor Somers noted receipt of a request from Groton Long Point for a supplemental appropriation in the amount of \$82,797 for damages associated with Tropical Storm Irene. Town Manager Oefinger asked if it is appropriate to have this discussion since these items have also been submitted to FEMA and Groton Long Point is waiting to hear if they will be eligible for reimbursement. Mr. Congdon noted that FEMA has indicated they are the last resort for funding and reimbursement should be sought from insurance companies and the Town first. Groton Long Point's request is still under review by FEMA.

Mayor Somers noted that Groton Long Point provided a disk with pictures of the damage. Town Manager Oefinger distributed a sample of the pictures. Mayor Somers noted that the damage shown in the pictures appears to be on private property so she is struggling with Groton Long Point's supplemental request. The invoices provided are very generic and they do not indicate where the damage occurred or how it was related to roads.

Councilor Streeter also reviewed the invoices. He does not believe that the Town's Highway Department would have done some of the work noted. Mayor Somers stated that she was told the Town reached out to Groton Long Point to assist with clean up, but Groton Long Point said no.

Town Manager Oefinger stated that Groton Long Point must receive an answer from FEMA before the Town can address this request. FEMA will not pay for damage on private property. The Town

has not paid for damage on private property in the past either. If storm debris is dragged to the road, the Town will do the removal.

Mr. Touhy noted that the funds requested by Groton Long Point are for roads only and nothing on private property or the beaches. He stated he would be happy to provide more detail about what roads were affected.

Councilor Flax asked Mr. Congdon to comment on the Town's offer of help. Mr. Congdon stated he does not recall the offer. Town Manager Oefinger stated that the offer was made by Joe Sastry to Mr. Congdon to pick up debris at the roadside. Mr. Congdon explained that Groton Long Point hired crews before the Tropical Storm and they were out the afternoon of the hurricane cleaning up.

Councilor Flax feels this is an opportunity to learn and storm clean up needs should be discussed ahead of time. Town Manager Oefinger noted that Mr. Congdon and his staff fully participated in the Emergency Operations Center effort and discussions prior to and during the storm.

Councilor Schmidt asked about the City expenses and the Town Manager stated they would be submitted to FEMA also. The Town Manager noted that the Charters talk about making the Town an annual appropriation to the City and Groton Long Point so it could be argued that supplemental appropriations are not to be made. This request is almost 100% of Groton Long Point's budget request. The Town and City expenses were a much smaller percentage of their respective budgets.

Mr. Congdon noted that the invoices have been paid out of the Groton Long Point operating budget.

Town Manager Oefinger stated that a supplemental appropriation would come from Contingency which is budgeted for \$350,000. Mr. Congdon has noted that if the supplemental request is not approved, Groton Long Point will include it in their operating budget request. Councilor Peruzzotti stated she would like to wait for the FEMA determination and suggested that if there is an emergency in Groton Long Point, they should come back to the Town Council.

Mayor Somers stated she would like more detailed information for the invoices regarding specific roads and debris. Councilor Streeter would like to see a breakdown of all of the invoices. He also noted costs for disposal which could have been done for free at the Transfer Station. Mayor Somers suggested matching the invoices with the pictures.

The consensus of the Committee was to wait for a FEMA determination on Groton Long Point's submission and to obtain additional information from Groton Long Point.

2012-0036

City of Groton FYE 2011 CIP Reallocation

Discussed

See discussion under 2012-0034 FYE 2013 Budget Requests - City of Groton in the 1/24/12 Committee of the Whole minutes.

A motion was made by Councilor Streeter, seconded by Councilor Flax, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.

The motion carried unanimously

2012-0030

Appointment of Town Auditor

Discussed

Sal Pandolfo, Director of Finance, noted the Blum Shapiro's audit for FYE 2011 was the final audit under their contract with the Town. At this point, the Town can either issue a Request for Proposals or negotiate with Blum Shapiro for another three year engagement. Mr. Pandolfo

stated he would like to stay with Blum Shapiro because of their knowledge of the Town. Blum Shapiro audits 55 out of 169 municipalities.

Mayor Somers asked how the Town can be assured that the firm is offering a good price if there is no bid process. Mr. Pandolfo suggested that the size and complexity of Groton are factors. There are two other firms that audit municipalities of Groton's size. Whenever the Town has gone out to bid for audits in the past, the price has been higher because of the learning curve. This would not be an issue with Blum Shapiro. The last audit cost \$81,300. The downside of going out to bid would be a potentially higher price and having to instruct the firm on the Town of Groton. If The Town retains Blum Shapiro, the rate would not increase for 2012. There would be a 1% increase the second year and a 1% increase the third year.

Discussion followed on comparative cost, the effort associated with issuing an RFP, and the comfort level with Blum Shapiro. A majority of the Council expressed comfort with engaging Blum Shapiro again.

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

Mr. Pandolfo noted that a bid was conducted seven years ago when Blum Shapiro was engaged by the Town. Previous audit firms engage by the Town were Deloitte and Touche (1988-1992); Scully and Wolf (1993-1997); McGladrey and Pullan (1998-2004); and Blum Shapiro (2005-2012). Mayor Somers noted that she would not support the motion because she feels the Town should go out to bid.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Votes: In Favor: 5 - Councilor Antipas, Councilor Flax, Councilor Johnson, Councilor Peruzzotti and Councilor Streeter
Opposed: 2 - Mayor Somers and Councilor Schmidt

2012-0032

2012 Rates for Shennecossett Golf Course and Amendment to Regulations for Parks and Recreation Facilities

Discussed

Doug Ackerman, Interim Director of Parks and Recreation, and Todd Goodhue and Eric Morrison of Shennecossett Golf Course were present to discuss the proposed golf course rates for 2012. The rates were developed based on staff recommendations and discussions with the Golf Advisory Board. Mr. Ackerman reviewed proposed changes including a 3% increase in season passes; a \$1.00 increase in weekday rates for non-residents; extension of weekend rates to include Fridays; a \$1.00 in rates after 12 noon; a 20% reduction in twilight fees; and a \$1.00 increase in winter rates. The rates have been endorsed by the Parks and Recreation Commission.

Councilor Flax asked how business has been with the mild weather. Mr. Ackerman stated the golf course is on target with revenue projections. Mr. Morrison distributed monthly reports for November and December. Discussion followed on the New London Golf Club and attracting former members to Shennecossett. Councilor Streeter suggested an incentive. Mr. Goodhue stated that Shennecossett's rates are already very competitive and giving an incentive may have a negative impact on existing members.

Discussion followed on the increase in rates versus the potential loss of players. Mr. Ackerman stated that he feels the increase can be absorbed, especially considering there was no increase last year. Mr. Goodhue noted that staff is very sensitive to the competition's rates, which is why there has been an attempt to balance the rates rather than making an across the board increase. Discussion followed on coupon offers and apportionment of the fees between carts and rounds.

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

Town Manager Oefinger noted that the proposed changes to the Regulations for Parks and

Recreation Facilities are associated with the rate changes.

The motion carried unanimously

2011-0234

Historic District Commission Concerns

Discussed and Recommended no action taken

Mayor Somers noted that after the Council's discussion with the Historic District Commission (HDC), the communications received by the Council were forwarded to the HDC. Also, there are applications pending for the three vacant alternate positions.

The consensus of the Committee was to recommend this item for deletion.

2011-0231

Town Council Orientation

Discussed

It was noted that a goal setting session is scheduled for Tuesday, January 31st at 5:00 p.m.

Discussion of remaining orientation items was tabled to the next meeting.

2011-0195

Efficiency of Town and Board of Education Services

Discussed

Mayor Somers requested that the title of this referral be changed to Efficiency of Town and Board of Education Services."The Town Manager explained that a similar referral was made by the RTM and their first discussion of the topic was very broad. The RTM Moderator has suggested that the RTM and Town Council work cooperatively on this issue. Town Manager Oefinger suggested that if the RTM and Town Council want to seriously pursue these discussions, a representative from the Board of Education should be included and assistance from an outside consultant will be necessary. Bringing two very different organizations together is not always a win-win. If the only reason for this effort is to save money, the Town Manager does not believe that will happen.

Mayor Somers spoke to Councilor Watson who made the motion and Councilor Watson's desire was for the Council to look at the Mansfield model that was presented at the CCM convention he attended. He feels his referral is different from the RTM effort which is more budget-related. Councilor Watson indicated to the Mayor that he would be willing to serve on a committee with the RTM and Board of Education on the budget-related effort.

The Town Manager stated that Councilor Watson could make a presentation to the Council on the Mansfield model, but the Council should still respond to the RTM Moderator and have some representation at their discussions.

Councilor Johnson also expressed a willingness to serve.

2012-0005

Joint Meeting with Board of Education (2012 Standing Referral)

Discussed

There will be a joint meeting with the Board of Education on Monday, January 30th at 5:30 p.m. to discuss the FYE 2013 budget. Mayor Somers noted that the Board will be asking the Council participate in two Saturday meetings in February to discuss the Vision Committee report.

2012-0009

FYE 2013 Budget

Discussed

The Town Manager asked the Council to schedule the formal public hearing on the FYE 2013 Proposed Budget. The Council chose the date of Thursday, March 29th at 7:00 p.m. at the Senior Center.

Town Manager Oefinger asked Councilors if they are receptive to holding Saturday budget work sessions. Potential dates identified were March 31st and either April 14th or April 21st at 9:00

a.m.

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

- 2003-0198 Public Water & Sewer on Flanders Road/Industrial area**
Recommended for Deletion
- 2009-0039 Recommendations of the Task Force on Climate Change and Sustainable Community**
Recommended for Deletion
- 2007-0238 Groton Heights School Reuse Task Force - Update**
Recommended for Deletion
- 2010-0242 Meeting with Commanding Officer of the Sub Base**
Recommended for Deletion
- 2011-0162 City of Groton and Groton Long Point Highway Budgets**
Recommended for Deletion
- 2011-0165 Status of Mystic Education Center**
Recommended for Deletion
- 2011-0175 October 2011 Revaluation - Update**
Recommended for Deletion
- 2011-0214 Zoning Commission Meeting Procedure Inquiry**
Recommended for Deletion
- 2011-0240 Potential Sale of Town-Owned Land**
Recommended for Deletion

8. OTHER BUSINESS

The Town Manager mentioned that the Temporary Rules Committee has not yet met and the Council's schedule is about to get very busy with the budget.

9. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Councilor Schmidt, seconded by Councilor Flax, to adjourn the meeting at 10:12 p.m.

The motion carried unanimously.