



Town of Groton, Connecticut

Meeting Minutes

Town Council Committee of the Whole

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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, October 11, 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 Grim, Councilor Antipas, Councilor Morton, Councilor Nault, Councilor de la Cruz and Councilor Peruzzotti
Members Absent: Councilor Barber and Councilor Watson

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

3. Calendar and Communications

Councilor Nault noted that she volunteered at Groton's Fall Festival. She also received a complaint from a neighbor about the smell at the Gravel Street pump station.

Councilor de la Cruz reported that Community Speaks Out has received its 501(c)(3) designation.

Councilor Morton sat in on the School Administrators contract negotiations as the Town Council's liaison. They reached a tentative agreement that is going to the union, then the Board of Education, then the Town Council.

4. Approval of Minutes

2016-0242 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 27, 2016 are hereby accepted and approved.

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

The motion carried unanimously

5. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Mayor Flax noted upcoming discussion items include a report from the Town Manager on using tablets instead of paper for agenda packets and a report from the Town Manager on single stream recycling by the various trash haulers. The Mayor noted he has received an invitation to the commissioning of the U.S.S Illinois if Councilors would like to attend.

6. NEW BUSINESS

2016-0198 FYE 2017 Fire District PILOT

Discussed

- Groton Long Point

Mike Flynn, President of the Groton Long Point Association, provided and read a document with facts about the Groton Long Point Fire Department, including the fire department's budget. Fire Chief Mark DeBiasi noted that the department's calls are 80% medical. It is a volunteer

department comprised of 24 members; the Chief is paid a stipend. Chief DeBiasi estimated that Groton Long Point responds to 40 to 50 calls a year, and provides 100% mutual aid response with Noank.

2016-0244 Charter Revision - Update

Discussed

Scott Aument, Acting Chair of the Charter Revision Commission, was present and provided a handout for the Council showing the structure of where the Commission is going. Mr. Aument provided an overview of the Commission's efforts to date noting that they have held an organizational meeting, a public hearing, and eight meetings. Mr. Aument answered questions from Councilors.

There was discussion about when an attorney with municipal experience, either the Town Attorney or another attorney, would review the proposed Charter.

2016-0238 Amtrak Northeast Corridor Rail Investment Plan

Discussed and Recommended no action taken

Jon Reiner, Director of Planning and Development Services, and Paige Bronk, Manager of Economic and Community Development, were present. Mayor Flax wants to make sure that the Town Council and staff are on the same page with respect to this issue. Mayor Flax noted the staff's letter resulted in the perception that the Town was not in line with other municipalities. Mayor Flax expressed his desire to have a correction letter sent to the Federal Rail Administration (FRA). Mayor Flax believes that several municipalities have sent letters, but he hasn't seen them. Discussion followed.

Since the last meeting, Mr. Reiner has re-reviewed all information on the project. He stated his main focus now is to understand the Council's position. The letter in favor of Alternative 1 was written from a very broad investment perspective; the other alternatives bypass Groton. Mr. Reiner noted that comments were due at end of January, 2016 just as the newly elected Council was settling in. Discussion followed. Mr. Reiner noted that the purpose of the EIS is to identify issues, not to make decisions. Mayor Flax suggested a letter clarifying the Town's support for not closing the New London and Mystic train stations.

Mr. Reiner and Mr. Bronk relayed portions of conversations that they had with the project manager from the FRA, noting that this is a decades long effort.

Discussion followed on the value of sending an additional letter, and the consensus was to wait for staff to notify the Council of next steps in the process and any important dates.

2016-0243 School Project Management

Discussed

Rick Norris, Sustainability Program Project Manager, noted lessons learned from the Phase I School Initiative which included not starting early enough and not having enough staff. For the upcoming project, it would behoove the Town to hire a firm that is experienced in managing school projects and that would assist in hiring an architect and a construction manager. Mr. Norris described the Town's experience during the Phase I school project. Staff would like to start the Request for Qualifications process. The services will be reimbursable as part of the school project, and there is no cost to the Town to start the process. Councilors expressed their support for the proposal.

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

The motion carried unanimously

The Committee of the Whole recessed for five minutes.

2015-0184 Aquarion Water Tower - Northeast Academy Property**Recommended for a Resolution**

Town Manager Oefinger noted that Councilors received a package of information with the latest versions of proposed temporary construction and permanent access easements. It is hoped that the documents will be finalized for the Town Council meeting. The Town Manager provided a brief overview of the project. The Board of Education has signed off on the project and a site plan has been approved by the Planning Commission. The Town will receive a one-time \$12,200 payment for the easement. Town Attorney Eric Callahan was present to answer any questions.

A motion was made by Councilor Peruzzotti, seconded by Councilor Nault, to authorize the Town Manager to execute: (1) a Permanent Access and Utility Easement, and (2) a Temporary Construction and Access Easement to authorize Aquarion Water Company to construct and operate a new water tower and various related facilities and an accessway to the tower site from Ann Avenue, such easements to be in form and content substantially similar to the draft documents provided to the Committee of the Whole for its review at its October 11, 2016 meeting, and with such revisions as the Town Manager deems beneficial and the Town Attorney deems legally satisfactory.

Councilor Antipas questioned the input from, and impact on, 111 Ann Avenue. The Town Manager stated that neighborhood input would have occurred as part of the planning process. Mayor Flax asked about the "downside". Town Manager Oefinger noted this is a sorely needed enhancement in this area of Town and the existing tank needs to be replaced.

The motion carried unanimously

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

Mayor Flax received a prioritized list from Councilor Morton only. The lists of services provided by the department heads will be discussed at the October 25th Committee of the Whole meeting.

2016-0222 Town Manager Annual Evaluation**Discussed**

Mayor Flax noted he received six of nine evaluations from Councilors. Councilors felt they would still like to go into executive session for discussion purposes.

A motion was made by Mayor Flax, seconded by Councilor Nault, to enter executive session at 8:04 p.m. to discuss the Town Manager Annual Evaluation.

Town Manager Oefinger stated that he had no problem with the Town Council going into executive session without him to discuss his evaluation if it would help the process, but he noted that the Council is supposed to ask him first.

The motion carried unanimously

Discussed

The executive session ended at 8:50 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 8:50 p.m.