



# 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*

Tuesday, October 13, 2015

6:00 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

#### REGULAR MEETING

#### 1. CALL TO ORDER

*Mayor Schmidt called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.*

#### 2. ROLL CALL

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

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

#### 3. Calendar and Communications

*None.*

#### 4. Approval of Minutes

##### 2015-0238 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 meetings of September 8, 2015, September 9, 2015, September 22, 2015, and October 6, 2015 are hereby accepted and approved.

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

**The motion carried unanimously**

#### 5. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

*None.*

#### 6. NEW BUSINESS

##### 2015-0250 Economic and Community Development - Update

##### Discussed and Recommended no action taken

*Director of Planning and Development Jon Reiner and Economic/Community Development Manager Paige Bronk addressed the Council on the department's economic development priorities.*

*In a PowerPoint presentation, Mr. Bronk provided an overview of economic development and community development and areas where the two overlap. He cited a need to focus on priorities. Groton is fortunate to have large employers, but growth will be in the small to medium aggregate. Mr. Bronk reviewed ongoing efforts in the department and noted that the priorities are the Airport Development Zone, incentives, and public and private property redevelopment. Future objectives include grants, regulatory reform, reviewing the economic assistance fund, establishment of an information kiosk, and downtown improvements.*

*To focus on Groton's strengths and successes, Mr. Bronk highlighted a number of new private recreational venues; reuse of the former Pfizer site on Kings Highway by Electric Boat; LBI expansion; a mixed use at the former Tee's Plus on Route 184, and reuse of Pfizer Building #114*

*for small to medium businesses.*

*Mr. Reiner concluded by noting the benefits of being able to coordinate services within the department so that everyone is going in the same direction.*

*Mr. Reiner and Mr. Bronk answered questions from Councilors, addressing such issues as business retention efforts, the Airport Development Zone, the relationship between new schools and economic development, defining downtown, and identifying development opportunities.*

**2015-0240**

**Sale or Lease of Town Owned Excess Property**

**Discussed and Recommended no action taken**

*Jon Reiner, Director of Planning and Development, explained that this discussion has been prompted by currently and potentially vacant schools. Paige Bronk, Economic/Community Development Manager developed a protocol for dealing with vacant buildings. Mr. Bronk noted his background with redevelopment of excess properties and options such as public-private partnerships. He noted that the goal is to provide the best use for the neighborhood and community. Disposition of vacant properties is a redevelopment process rather than a real estate transaction. Mr. Bronk reviewed the steps in the process. Mr. Reiner suggested focusing on key properties and marketing one at a time so as not to flood the market.*

*Councilor Watson decried the misinformation that is spread when excess property is for sale and noted that communication is key. Mr. Bronk noted that the disposition of vacant properties must consider market realities. Making it easier for investors is in Groton's best interest.*

*Councilor Granatosky distributed her thoughts on Town owned excess property.*

*Discussed followed on Groton Heights and next steps in the process.*

*Councilor Watson noted that a positive outcome for vacant buildings would help the public perception about closing schools and building new ones.*

**2015-0251**

**Local Transportation Capital Improvement Program (LOTICIP)**

**Discussed**

*Jon Reiner, Director of Planning and Development, noted that staff is working with the Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments (SCCOG) to submit an application for Local Transportation Capital Improvement Program (LOTICIP) funds. The focus is the area around the former Caldor building, which is planned for reuse. The Town would pay for design and the grant would pay for public improvements.*

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

*The estimated cost of design is less than \$100,000 and it would require a design professional chosen through a bid process.*

**The motion carried unanimously**

**2009-0124**

**Ethics Ordinance**

**Discussed**

*Councilor Antipas provided a timeline and background on the effort to develop an ethics ordinance. The 2008 charter revision required the Council to adopt an ethics ordinance. A subcommittee was formed consisting of Councilors Antipas and Flax and former Councilors Sheets and Kolnaski. The Town currently has a code of conduct, but not a code of ethics. The code would not apply to the subdivisions, but it would apply to the Board of Education because they are considered municipal officials. The draft code outlines the establishment of an Ethics Commission, appointed by the Town Council, and its duties. The code addresses a variety of*

*ethics violations including things that Groton may never encounter and differentiates between inquiries and complaints to avoid the use of the ethics code for revenge or political purposes. Councilor Antipas reviewed the possible penalties that could be recommended by the Commission, noting that it would up to an employee's supervisor or the supervisory body whether or not to carry out the recommendations.*

*Town Manager Oefinger noted that the code is currently under review by the Director of Human Services to make sure that all methods of discipline are in sync.*

*Discussion followed on the code and the makeup of the commission. The Town Manager noted a previous initiative to form a regional Ethics Commission, but it was determined that there was no authority under state statutes. A regional commission combined with a Town adopted ordinance would satisfy the Charter requirement. Discussion followed on the pros and cons of a regional commission versus a Groton commission.*

*The draft code has been reviewed and approved by the Town Attorney.*

*Councilor Antipas stated he will forward the draft code to the Board of Education with an explanation of why he believes it applies to them. Councilor Peruzzotti questioned the consequences of ignoring the provision in the charter and the Town Manager noted that nothing has happened since 2008. He added that the Council should be on board with the ethics ordinance collectively before it is forwarded to the Board of Education. The consensus was for the Council to consider and review the code and forward any comments to Councilor Antipas.*

**A motion was made by Granatosky, seconded by Councilor Peruzzotti, to table.**

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

**Votes:** In Favor: 8 - Mayor Schmidt, Councilor de la Cruz, Councilor Flax, Councilor Frink, Councilor Moravsik, Councilor Peruzzotti, Councilor Watson and Granatosky  
Opposed: 1 - Councilor Antipas

**2013-0299 Establishment of a Charter Revision Commission**

**Discussed**

*Town Manager Oefinger explained that former Councilor Somers was a supporter of this effort, but many things have changed and there does not seem to be the same level of interest in pursuing Charter revision. Councilor Antipas mentioned a previous discussion about a legislative change that would allow a town to undertake a charter review process for very specific reasons, and the Town Manager noted that the legislation was never approved. The Council can make suggestions, but once a Charter Revision Commission is established, its scope has no boundaries.*

*Councilors discussed their concerns or lack of concern with aspects of the Charter.*

*RTM Representative Jean Claude Ambroise explained the history of the RTM discussions which started with a referral request from a representative to establish an ordinance to have a budget cap that would trigger a budget referendum. Representative Ambroise explained his own concerns with the budget process and establishing expenses before revenues are known. The RTM committee also discussed the form of government and number of elected officials.*

*Discussion followed on the charter revision process and Councilors expressed their opinions about Groton's form of government and the lack of a budget referendum.*

*With the election coming in November, it was suggested that this issue should be addressed by the next Council.*

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

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

**Votes:** In Favor: 6 - Mayor Schmidt, Councilor de la Cruz, Councilor Moravsik, Councilor Peruzzotti, Councilor Watson and Granatosky

Opposed: 3 - Councilor Antipas, Councilor Flax and Councilor Frink

*The Committee recessed for five minutes.*

**2015-0188 Distribution of PILOT Funds for State Owned Property****Discussed**

*(See discussion in 10/13/15 Committee of the Whole minutes under #2015-0201 PILOT Funds for State and Town Owned Property - Methodology and Future Distributions.)*

**2015-0201 PILOT Funds for State and Town Owned Property - Methodology and Future Distributions****Discussed**

*A motion was made by Councilor Moravsik, seconded by Councilor de la Cruz, to adopt and execute a policy that defines the allocation of Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) from the State of Connecticut given each year to the Town of Groton under Account #4553 Pilot - State and Tax Exempts to allocate to the Fire Districts the following payment: 50% of the State PILOT funds allocated each year to the Town's General Fund and 50% of the State PILOT funds allocated each year to the Fire Districts and Subdivisions, Account #1092. From Account #1092, allocating from the 50% of the Fire District and Subdivisions share, correcting the original value of \$7,000 for the total inflation from 1980 to 2017, which was from \$7,000 it goes up to \$21,000, and then allocating payment to each of the operating districts, which was \$1,000 and not it would be \$3,000, to those fire districts having fire departments for mutual aid protection, which includes the City, Poquonnock Bridge, Mystic, Noank, Old Mystic, Center Groton and Groton Long Point. And a further allocation from the above Fire District and Subdivision final payment, minus the \$21,000, allocation the following based on the percent of the state tax exempt property: the City, 15.58%; Poquonnock Bridge, 72.76%; Mystic, 0.19%; Noank, 0.51%; Old Mystic, 10.94%; Center Groton 0.02%, and Groton Long Point, 0.0%. And this practice or methodology that was established in 1981 be used to determine the future allocation for each year, Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) from the State of Connecticut to the Town of Groton.*

*Councilors noted that they did not have a copy of the lengthy motion to follow along with. Councilor Moravsik stated the motion is represented by the information in the Council's agenda packet. Councilor Frink asked the purpose of the motion and Councilor Moravsik read a lengthy explanation for his motion. With respect to the formula originally used, Mayor Schmidt noted that there is no record it was meant to be applied in perpetuity. Discussion followed on the fact that additional revenues provided to the fire districts would require all taxpayers to make up the difference.*

**A motion was made by Granatosky, seconded by Councilor Peruzzotti, to table.**

**Councilor Frink asked the Town Manager for the justification for the Town retaining the bulk of the PILOT funds. The Town Manager explained that the Town does not receive a fair share from PILOT funding. While the Council can set whatever policy it wants, the Town Manager does not agree with the premise that the formula used in the first year was supposed to be carried forward. The Town Manager reviewed the time line of the PILOT issue, noting that it has been reconsidered by the Town Council and committees in the past and no changes to the practice were made.**

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

**Votes:** In Favor: 7 - Mayor Schmidt, Councilor Antipas, Councilor Flax, Councilor Frink, Councilor Peruzzotti, Councilor Watson and Granatosky

Opposed: 2 - Councilor de la Cruz and Councilor Moravsik

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

*Councilor Frink noted receipt of a letter from Marie Shaw of the Library Board, but he stated he is*

*reluctant to talk about it until the author is offered the opportunity to be present at the meeting. The consensus of the Council was to consider this item at a later date.*

**2015-0241 Letter of Agreement with Red Cross and Area Towns for Emergency Shelters**

**Discussed**

*Town Manager Oefinger explained a proposed agreement between a number of area towns and the Red Cross putting in writing the operating procedure for emergency shelters. Because the Red Cross does not have the resources to staff a shelter in every town during an event, there are regional shelters opened and managed by Red Cross. The proposed agreement acknowledges the need for towns to continue to work together on a regional basis.*

*The Town Attorney has indicated that the Town Manager needs Town Council approval to sign the agreement. It was noted that the agreement places no additional burdens on the Town during an event.*

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

**The motion carried unanimously**

**2015-0232 Sale of William Seely School Property**

**Discussed**

*Town Manager Oefinger distributed a copy of the flyer that was sent to residents in the vicinity of William Seely School for the meeting on Wednesday, October 21st at 6:00 p.m. Councilors were asked to forward any correspondence they receive from residents to the Town Manager's office.*

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

**Discussed**

*There will be joint meeting with the Board of Education on October 20th at 6:00 p.m. Topics for discussion include Fitch Robotics, school facilities initiative update, calculation of impact aid, Board of Education capital improvement projects, interim use of the Merritt house, and internet access in the schools.*

**2014-0202 City Highway Budget Committee - Update**

**A motion was made by Councilor Moravsik, seconded by Councilor de la Cruz, to enter executive session at 9:40 p.m. to discuss #2014-0202 City Highway Budget Committee - Update, and to invite Town Manager Mark Oefinger to attend.**

**The motion carried unanimously**

**Discussed**

*The executive session concluded at 9:55 p.m.*

**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 Watson, seconded by Councilor Frink, to adjourn the meeting at 10:05 p.m.*

*The motion carried unanimously.*