



Town of Groton, Connecticut

Meeting Minutes

Town Council Committee of the Whole

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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, October 25, 2016

6:30 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

SPECIAL MEETING

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Flax called the meeting to order at 6:52 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Members Present: Mayor Flax, Councilor Barber, Councilor Antipas, Councilor Morton, Councilor Nault, Councilor de la Cruz, Councilor Peruzzotti and Councilor Watson
Members Absent: Councilor Grim

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

3. Calendar and Communications

Councilor Nault attended an FOIA workshop for the Committee of Chairpersons.

Councilor de la Cruz attended a retirement party for Lieutenant John Varone.

In response to Councilor Barber, Town Manager Mark Oefinger noted that the Town had nothing to do with the Groton Utilities trip to the Kentucky Derby.

Mayor Flax asked Councilors if they would like to attend the launch of the USS Illinois.

A joint meeting with the RTM has been scheduled for Wednesday, November 16th. Councilors de la Cruz and Peruzzotti noted they would not be able to attend.

4. Approval of Minutes

2016-0257 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 October 11, 2016 are hereby accepted and approved.

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

The motion carried unanimously

5. NEW BUSINESS

2016-0255 Purchase of Tablets for the Town Council

Discussed

Brian Hancock, Manager of Information Technology, put together information on various types of hardware without knowing the Council's specifications. He noted that the Town is working on an agenda management software initiative that may impact the purchase of tablets. Mayor Flax asked the Council to consider the questions that were raised in staff's referral memo and provide responses to him. Town Manager Oefinger suggested that a group discussion of the issues would be helpful.

Mayor Flax asked for the costs per year for an agenda packet (copying and mailing).

Discussion followed on various considerations with the initiative.

2016-0254 Recreation Trails Grant

Discussed

Town Manager Oefinger noted this is a request for authorization to submit a grant application for two trails on the Copp property. The total project cost is \$125,000, with \$25,000 coming from the Town from an approved FYE 2105 CIP project.

A motion was made by Councilor Watson, 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

Mayor Flax has received prioritized lists of Town departments/services from a few Councilors. Councilors received information from all the Town departments in their agenda packets.

Councilor Morton suggested that the Council prioritize the areas of the budget to look at first. Councilor Peruzzotti considered the actual discussions that took place during budget review that focused on areas such as ambulance services and outside agencies, City police, fleet and computer replacement funds, Public Works, outside libraries, and other policy issues. She suggested that these issues be tackled before diving into lifeline departments that make the Town function.

Councilor Barber thinks it is about efficiencies and merging departments. Councilor Nault suggested a special meeting to review individual Councilors' areas of focus. Councilor de la Cruz noted how difficult it is to set policy during a two-year term and cuts can lead to unintentional cost increases. Councilor Antipas suggested the Council look at the areas of the budget that will provide the greatest effect. Councilor Watson noted that Town Operations has been cut for many years and he feels the Council must look at other areas of the budget and consider quality of life issues. Councilor Morton suggested that any service that the Town is not legally required to fund should be looked at in terms of elimination.

Discussion followed on the Town Council identifying services to cut versus allowing the Town Manager and department heads to decide, as well as combining Town and Board of Education services. Mayor Flax suggested that the topic could be discussed at the joint meeting with the RTM on November 16th.

2016-0256 Merritt Property Conversion

Discussed

Town Manager Oefinger explained that staff has had discussions with DEEP regarding potential conversion of the Merritt property for construction of a new consolidated middle school in exchange for another parcel of open space at the end of Colver Avenue. A revised Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was distributed to the Council. The Town Manager stated that any strategy discussion should occur in executive session.

Jon Reiner, Director of Planning and Development Services, described the minor changes to the MOU. Town Manager Oefinger noted that the Colver Avenue property was obtained by the Town through foreclosure. An appraisal has been done and the property has a higher value than the Merritt property. There is a process that will have to be followed including referral of the proposal to the Planning Commission under CGS Section 8-24.

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

Town Manager Oefinger explained that the Town has offered a number of properties to DEEP, but

this is the only one that they would accept. Discussion followed on the value of the Colver Avenue property and the lack of open space in the area.

The motion carried unanimously

2016-0007 Property Acquisition/Sale (2016 Standing Referral)

Discussed

This item concerns two parcels of land owned by the Town that have been actively marketed by the Office of Planning and Development Services. Staff wants to review the proposals received with the Town Council.

A motion was made by Mayor Flax, seconded by Councilor Watson, to enter executive session at 8:15 p.m. with Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Director of Planning and Development Services Jon Reiner, and Manager of Community and Economic Development Paige Bronk, to discuss the 2016-0007 Property Acquisition/Sale.

The motion carried unanimously

Discussed

The executive session ended at 8:53 p.m.

2013-0249 Parking Ticket Fees

Discussed

Town Manager Oefinger noted that Police Chief L. J. Fusaro surveyed other communities with respect to their parking fees and the Town's fees are low. There was a discussion with the Council about raising the fees a number of years ago, but there was no follow through. The existing ordinance would have to be modified, hopefully in a way that gives the Council the authority to change the fees in the future without modifying the ordinance. If The Town Council is comfortable with the proposal, the request is to authorize the Town Attorney to prepare a modified ordinance.

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

Discussion followed on the impact of the fees on various persons.

The motion carried unanimously

2016-0258 Animal Control Fees

This matter was Recommended for a Resolution.

Town Manager Oefinger explained that the Town has animal control fees in place, but it does not appear that they were adopted by ordinance, and they probably should be. The issue must be discussed with the Town Attorney if the Council is comfortable with the proposed fees, which were based on a survey of area towns. Councilors expressed support for the proposed fee schedule.

2016-0222 Town Manager Annual Evaluation

Discussed

Mayor Flax stated he is missing one evaluation.

A motion was made by Mayor Flax, seconded by Councilor Nault, to enter executive session at 9:05 p.m. with Town Manager Mark Oefinger to discuss 2016-0222 Town Manager Annual Evaluation.

The motion carried unanimously

Discussed

The executive session ended at 10:15 p.m.

6. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Councilor Nault, seconded by Councilor Peruzzotti, to adjourn the meeting at 10:17 p.m.

The motion carried unanimously.