



# 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, Genevieve Cerf, Joe de la Cruz, Bruce S. Flax, Bob Frink, Rich Moravsik, Deborah L. Peruzzotti and Harry A. Watson*

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Tuesday, October 28, 2014

6:00 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

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#### REGULAR MEETING

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1. **CALL TO ORDER**

*Mayor Schmidt called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.*

2. **ROLL CALL**

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

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

3. **Calendar and Communications**

*Town Manager Oefinger noted that the retirement party for Assistant Town Manager Doug Ackerman is scheduled for October 30th.*

4. **Approval of Minutes**

**2014-0285 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 October 7, 2014 and October 14, 2014 are hereby accepted and approved.

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

**The motion carried unanimously**

5. **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

*None.*

*Councilors Watson and Peruzzotti arrived at 6:04 p.m.*

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

6. **NEW BUSINESS**

**2014-0236 FYE 2015 Fire District PILOT**

**Discussed**

*- Noank*

*Fire Chief David Steele and Paul Bates, a member of the Executive Committee, were present to address the Council. Mayor Schmidt noted receipt of information from the district.*

*Councilor Frink, a resident of the district, stated he is very happy with the service provided by the district.*

*In response to Mayor Schmidt, Chief Steele noted that Noank's personal protective equipment is on order and firefighters will train when it is received.*

*With respect to the layoffs at the Poquonnock Bridge fire department, Noank has had only one call. Chief Steele is concerned about the situation as well as Noank's need for additional volunteers.*

*The last fire in Noank/Mumford Cove was in June 2011. Noank has automatic mutual aid with Groton Long Point, but they would need more assistance for a fire. 60-65% of the Noank Fire District budget is for fire protection. The Noank Fire Department has one paid person and 20-22 active volunteers. Only nine of the volunteers are interior firefighters. Most days, the department is covered from 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. The district puts money aside every year to purchase equipment.*

*Mayor Schmidt thanked the Noank representatives for coming.*

*- Groton Long Point*

*John Tuohy, president of Groton Long Point Association, and Sam Acquaviva, Deputy Chief, were present to address the Council. Mr. Tuohy noted that the only personal protective equipment for first responders that Groton Long Point has is firefighting gear.*

*In Groton Long Point, the police force is the first responder for medical calls and the fire department generally does not respond. The Fire Department's operation budget is \$40,000 and capital expenditures come out of the Association's CIP. There are 25-30 volunteers and eight are fully certified. Groton Long Point has a fire boat and fire rescue boat. The fire department is an independent entity from the Association/. Mr. Acquaviva stated that Groton Long Point's challenges are equipment and volunteers. He reviewed Groton Long Point's response to different types of calls.*

*Mayor Schmidt thanked the Groton Long Point representatives for coming.*

**2014-0263**

### **Mystic Indoor Sports - Request for Financial Incentive**

#### **Discussed**

*Town Manager Oefinger provided a brief overview of the request by Matt McCormack for financial assistance that would allow him to purchase and improve Mystic Indoor Sports. The proposal includes consideration for taxes that are due on the current development, not just new development. Mr. McCormack is proposing a fairly large outlay for this type of business and it will take time for the business to hit its stride.*

*Mr. McCormack explained his interest in developing the property for indoor sports and his discussions with Town staff. This has been a distressed property for many years with zoning, environmental, and fire issues. Mr. McCormack plans to remove the old building, address violations, and clean up the property. The Town is owed over \$150,000 in back taxes, which Mr. McCormack plans to pay. Mr. McCormack has worked with the current owner, who is in bankruptcy, and there is a purchase and sales agreement in place with the court. The proposed includes construction of a new multi-use sports building and demolition of the house for construction of a state of the art club house. Mr. McCormack spoke of the synergy with a fitness center that is being developed and the opportunity to create a wellness center in Old Mystic.*

*In response to Councilor Antipas, Mr. McCormack stated he is not affiliated with any current owners and he will be financing the project himself.*

*Discussion followed on the current and potential taxes on the property. It was noted that the incentive policy is flexible and allows the Town Council to set the terms. Staff will provide a report for the Council outlining the incentive if the Council is amenable to applying the abatement*

to the current development as well as future improvements. Discussion followed on the mechanics of applying the abatement as buildings are constructed and including a 'clawback' provision.

All Councilors expressed support for the facility and the abatement on current and proposed improvements.

A public hearing could tentatively be held on November 18th, pending finalization of the proposal (costs and impacts).

**A motion was made by Councilor Watson, seconded by Councilor Peruzzotti, to schedule a public hearing on the Mystic Indoor Sports request for financial incentive.**

**Councilor Moravsik stated he would like to see a work schedule for the project.**

**The motion carried unanimously**

**Discussed**

The Town Manager noted that the property is residentially zoned and the proposed development will require a zone change or regulation amendment. Councilor Peruzzotti asked for various incentive scenarios for the Council to review.

2014-0287

**Project LEARN Use of Fitch Middle School**

**Discussed**

Town Manager Oefinger noted LEARN's interest in using a portion of Fitch Middle School for two years, which would have started this fall. The Fire Marshal has indicated that the wing initially identified by LEARN must be sprinklered or a waiver obtained from the state. LEARN has chosen not to seek a waiver and instead would like to use the portion of the building that has sprinklers.

Eileen Howley of LEARN noted that a waiver would put students and Groton at risk. She affirmed that the use of Fitch Middle School would be temporary. The original two year term would have ended in June 2016 and LEARN would look to extend the term if possible. LEARN would like to use the gymnasium, but would work around Parks and Recreation's schedule.

Councilor Flax suggested that a plan should be in place if William Seely must be vacated. The Town Manager would recommend that Parks and Recreation move into C/D wing.

An architectural firm has done a base-line assessment of Fitch Middle School, which will be reviewed with the Council. He reminded the Council that reuse of Fitch Middle School is one of the Council's goals and it will require a referendum. The project will move fairly quickly and represents a long overdue need and tremendous opportunity that would facilitate customer service in the Town. It was felt that the terms of the lease should remain the same, with the option to extend beyond June 2016.

The Town Attorney is reviewing the need for a new CGS Section 8-24 referral and public hearing, which would be scheduled for November 18th.

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

**The motion carried unanimously**

2014-0005

**Labor Negotiations (2014 Standing Referral)**

**A motion was made by Mayor Schmidt, seconded by Councilor Peruzzotti, that the Town Council Committee of the Whole along with Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Assistant Town Manager Doug Ackerman, and Town Attorney Eileen Duggan go into executive session at 7:31 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 ended at 9:00 p.m. The Committee recessed and reconvened at 9:07 a.m.*

**2013-0221****Poquonnock Bridge Fire District/Attorney-Client Privileged Discussion**

A motion was made by Councilor Watson, seconded by Councilor Frink, that the Town Council, along with Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Assistant Town Manager Doug Ackerman, and Town Attorney Eileen Duggan, go into executive session at 9:07 p.m. pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes 1-200(6) (b) to discuss pending litigation regarding the Poquonnock Bridge Fire District in which the Town has intervened.

**The motion carried unanimously**

**Discussed**

*The executive session ended at 9:15 p.m.*

**2014-0286****Implementation of Police Study Recommendations****Discussed**

*Town Manager Oefinger explained that this referral is to determine how the Council would like to proceed and whether or not to implement some or all of the recommendations in the PERF report.*

*Councilor Peruzzotti noted that there new Councilors and RTM members who may not have had a presentation on the Police Study. If the study is going to be used for guidance in the budget process, there may be a need for another presentation. Town Manager Oefinger noted that the previous PERF presentation was videotaped so it can be reviewed or re-broadcast at a future meeting. The other option is to pay Mr. Wilson from PERF to make another presentation.*

*Councilor Frink stated he has reviewed the study and identified 12 recommendations covering costs savings, duplication of effort, and enhancement of services, which he will provided to the Town Manager.*

*Town Manager Oefinger noted that interviews for the Police Chief are scheduled for November 5th and he hopes to have someone in place at the beginning of the year.*

*Discussion followed on funding the various police departments.*

*Councilor Flax provided an overview of the discussions and budget issues that led to the police study. Review of the recommendations will take a lot of effort by the Council. He suggested that the Town notify the other departments of the Council's intent to provide the dollar amount identified in the study, but then have ongoing discussions that include the RTM and citizens.*

*Councilor Watson expressed support for having Mr. Wilson make another presentation.*

*Councilor Cerf stated that as a Groton Long Point resident, she would be happy with Groton Long Point receiving the money that it would cost the Town to provide the police service, but it is impossible to get past the culture problem.*

*Councilor Frink supported bringing in Mr. Wilson and asking the new Police Chief to prioritize the recommendations in the study.*

*Discussion followed on seeking input from a subcommittee versus citizens and police officers.*

*In response to Councilor Moravsik, the Town Manager stated this referral is about implementing the recommendations of the study, not correcting it. Mr. Wilson made every effort to engage all three departments at the time the study was done and provided many opportunities for input, so if there are mistakes, it is not PERF's fault.*

*Discussion followed on engaging the public for their thoughts about the study and its recommendations.*

*Councilor Antipas explained that the Town Council is a Council of the Town, river to river. The charters are a barrier to looking at a Town-wide police service and there is no desire or ability to change charters. Therefore, this is a budget issue only.*

*The consensus of the Council was to ask Mr. Wilson to make another presentation for the Council and to invite the three police chiefs and RTM.*

*Councilor Frink provided a brief update on the City Highway Budget Committee. Members of the committee will be meeting with the Town Attorney prior to making a presentation to the Council.*

*The Town Manager reiterated that the PERF study is a good study. The Council needs to fully understand the recommendations in the report and have confidence in them. Ultimately, the question is how much the Town is going to pay. Unlike the highway budgets, the Town is not obligated to pay for police services in Groton Long Point or the City and adding or subtracting money does not affect whether or not the police departments exist.*

**2014-0288      Review of Recognition of Student Achievement Policy**

**Recommended for a Resolution**

*Councilor Flax stated that the Fitch Women's Softball Team is within \$300 of its goal. He believes that if a high school level team wins a state championship, the Town should help in its endeavors.*

**A motion was made by Councilor Cerf, seconded by Councilor Moravsik, to donate \$300 to the Fitch Women's Softball Team**

**Councilor Frink noted that the group did a lot of fundraising. Peruzzotti praised their effort. The Town Manager stated that funds will have to come out of the Legislative cost center. He suggested that at some point, the Council should have a discussion with the Board of Education about their contribution policy.**

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

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

**2012-0050      Potential Disposition of William Seely School Property**

**Not Discussed**

**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 Moravsik, to adjourn the meeting at 10:12 p.m.*