



Town of Groton, Connecticut

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Meeting Minutes - **Draft**

Town Council Committee of the Whole

Mayor Bruce Flax, Councilors Dean G. Antipas, Diane Barber, Greg Grim, Rich Moravsik, Karen F. Morton, Bonnie Nault, Deb Peruzzotti, and Harry A. Watson

Tuesday, December 13, 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 Barber, Councilor Grim, Councilor Antipas, Councilor Morton, Councilor Watson and Councilor Moravsik
Members Absent: Councilor Nault and Councilor Peruzzotti

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

3. **Calendar and Communications**

Mayor Flax asked for a moment of silence in memory of Joey Gingerella, son of Tammy and Joe de la Cruz.

4. **Approval of Minutes**

2016-0278 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 November 9, 2016, November 15, 2016, and November 22, 2016 are hereby accepted and approved.

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

The motion carried unanimously

5. **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

None.

6. **NEW BUSINESS**

2016-0011 Meeting with State Legislators (2016 Standing Referral)

Discussed

State Senator elect Heather Somers and Representative elect Chris Conley were present to meet with the Council. Ms. Somers asked the Town Council what it is interested in pursuing in the upcoming legislative session.

Items mentioned were:

- Legislation requesting a waiver of the maximum cost per square foot for renovate to new school construction - Ms. Somers noted that a bill has been submitted and she feels the justification is strong. However, at this time, it is unknown if there will be school bonding because of the state's financial situation.

- Education Cost Sharing (ECS) funding status - A recent Court ruling is under review by the State Supreme Court.

- EZ Pass tolls - There is a bill in the Transportation Committee.

- Minimum Budget Requirement (MBR) - This is one of a number of bills that are routinely

submitted by the minority party, but it not known if it will get any traction.

- Increase in tourism dollars to the area
- Heritage Trust Fund and DEEP/GOSA purchase of Tilcon property - Ms. Somers noted there is a Constitutional amendment under consideration regarding towns obtaining state owned land being considered. She would like to amend the legislation to require that towns be notified before the state takes ownership of a parcel.
- Reuse of Mystic Educational Center property

Town Manager Oefinger noted the following items:

- Thames River Heritage Park water taxi - The Town Manager provided a history of the Thames River Heritage Park project and past attempts to build a dock at the Nautilus Memorial. The Town is looking for a commitment of state funding. Ms. Somers requested data on ridership, costs, town contributions for the water taxi and costs for the docks.
- Proposal by the Commissioner of the Department of Health to fund regionalization of health districts - The Town Manager noted that the mindset is switching to penalizing towns that don't regionalize rather than incentivizing.
- Elimination of Connecticut funding and potential impact on Library services to other towns.
- The Town's desire to acquire a strip of right-of-way in front of the Library/Senior Center.

Mayor Flax thanked the legislators for attending.

2015-0178 Noank School Public Gardens Task Force Semiannual Report

Not Discussed

No representatives from the Task Force were present so this item was not discussed.

2016-0286 Contract Agreement Between the Groton Board of Education and the Association of Groton School Administrators

Discussed and Recommended no action taken

Floyd Dugas, the Board of Education's attorney, and Laurie LePine from Groton Public Schools were present. The administrator's contract represents approximately 30 employees and is governed by the state teachers' act. The negotiated contract is consistent with average state increases and includes a slight adjustment to the high deductible health plan. The contract is negotiated a year ahead of time in accordance with statutory requirements so this contract will be effective July 1, 2017. There is a reopener in the contract in case of a Cadillac Tax. The contract increases the work year for some employees. The contract base salary is \$4 million so a 2% increase is about \$80,000. The administrators are part of the state teacher retirement system so there are no pension negotiations and no impact on the local budget.

Councilor Morton noted she sat in on negotiations on behalf of the Town Council and she feels it is a fair contract.

Discussion followed on salaries and longevity of administrators as well as the state-regulated evaluation process that includes accountability measures.

The consensus of the Councilor was to take no action on the contract.

2016-0291 Request for Donation for Thames River Heritage Park Water Taxi (FYE 2018)

Discussed

The Town received a letter from Chris Cox requesting \$10,000 for FYE 2018 for the Thames River Heritage Park water taxi. Town Manager Oefinger reviewed the Council's options.

A motion was made by Councilor Moravsik to make a supplemental appropriation out of the current year budget. There was no second.

Discussion followed on the request and accountability for the funding. Mayor Flax noted that both Groton Town and Groton City contribute \$10,000 each. The consensus of the Council was to take the funds out of Contingency.

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

Councilor Morton asked that the request be made in a timelier manner. Town Manager noted that the request is for the upcoming fiscal year, which for the Town starts on July 1, 2017. The Town Manager has suggested that the group may want confirmation of the funding sooner to plan for their season.

The motion carried unanimously

2016-0287 Department of Transportation Easement - Route 1/South Road

Discussed

Town Manager Oefinger noted receipt of two requests from the Department of Transportation for an easement over Town property on Poquonnock Road for a utility pole guy wire. The state also has plans for a new streetlight stanchion in the future. Public Works has indicated that the easement area will not impact the pump station. The state has offered \$500 for the easement.

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

The motion carried unanimously

2016-0292 Adoption of Ordinance to Amend the Enterprise Zone Ordinance

Discussed

The Town Council conducted a public hearing on December 6th and there were no comments received.

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

The motion carried unanimously

2016-0177 City Highway Budget - FYE 2016

Discussed

Town Manager Oefinger noted that he and the Mayor met with City Mayor Marian Galbraith and received a handout documenting the City's Highway budget expenditures for FYE 2016. The Town is awaiting further documentation on the final audited numbers. There is an issue regarding funding for a vehicle purchase that was not purchased in FYE 2016 because the funds were in dispute. The Town Manager recommended that the Committee take action and he will reach out to the City Finance Director for the additional information prior to the Town Council's action on a resolution.

Discussion followed on the budget figures, what amount of funding to give to the City at this time, and/or waiting for the audit to be completed. The Town Manager noted that the purchase of two vehicles was included in the City's original budget request. They do not have a vehicle replacement fund and requests for vehicles have historically been included in their operating budget.

It was noted that the funds would be calculated including the money for the two vehicles, but subtracting unspent funds.

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

A motion was made by Councilor Antipas, seconded by Councilor Grim, to amend the motion to note that the payment is being made pursuant to the arbitration award.

The motion to amend carried unanimously.

The motion carried unanimously

2016-0090

City Highway Budget - FYE 2017

Discussed

Mayor Flax explained a letter provided by Mayor Galbraith proposing that the key finding of the FYE 2016 City Highway budget arbitration be applied to the FYE 2017 disputed amount. The award encouraged the Town and City to work together to figure out why there is such a difference in the costs in the Town and City. Councilor Antipas does not feel that the award includes a principle to be applied to FYE 2017, other than to continue discussions.

Discussion followed on the nature of the Department of Transportation's offer to assist in the Town's and City's process. Councilor Antipas explained how the arbitration process was conducted. Town Manager Oefinger suggested meeting with DOT to see if they will help or if they are looking for the Town and City to hire an outside consultant.

Mayor Galbraith's letter also includes a request to meet on the FYE 2018 budget. The Town Manager suggested meeting in early to mid-January.

2016-0204

Review of Town Services and Operations

Discussed

Department staff prepared an overview of Town services, which was previously provided to the Town Council.

A motion was made by Councilor Grim, seconded by Councilor Antipas, to ask Public Works to attend a Committee of the Whole meeting to review their services and operations in detail.

The motion carried unanimously

2016-0260

FYE 2018 Budget Discussion

Discussed

The Town Council has met with the RTM and Board of Education, and discussed coordinating budget calendars between the Town Council and RTM.

Mayor Flax requested that the Computer Replacement Fund, Vehicle Replacement Fund, and CIP projects be discussed at a special meeting of the Committee of the Whole and that the RTM be invited to the meeting. The Town Manager stated he would also like to discuss some personnel/reorganization issues. A special meeting was scheduled for January 17th at 6:00 p.m.

Other suggestions for budget review sessions were to schedule all police departments on the same day and to coordinate with RTM committees.

A motion was made by Councilor Watson, seconded by Councilor Barber, to add an item to the agenda on the purchase of an historical document relative to Groton.

The motion carried unanimously.

2016-0293

Purchase of Historical Document

Discussed

Councilor Watson noted that the Town Historian, Jim Streeter, has brought to the Council's attention an historical document relating to the Town that is being offered for sale. Discussion followed on the age of the document, verifying its authenticity, the location of the original, and fundraising to support the purchase. The actual cost will be verified with Mr. Streeter. The consensus of the Council was to transfer the funds from Contingency to Legislative.

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

The motion carried unanimously

2016-0222 Town Manager Annual Evaluation

A motion was made by Mayor Flax, seconded by Councilor Grim, to enter executive session at 8:26 p.m. to discuss 2016-0222 Town Manager Annual Evaluation and invite the Town Manager to attend.

The motion carried unanimously

Discussed

The executive session ended at 9:12 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 9:15 p.m.