



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 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, December 15, 2015

6:00 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

SPECIAL MEETING

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Flax called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

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

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

3. NEW BUSINESS

2015-0287

FOI Presentation by Tom Hennick on 12/15/15

Discussed and Recommended no action taken

Tom Hennick, Public Information Officer for the Freedom of Information (FOI) Commission, was present to give an overview of FOI. He explained that FOI in Connecticut was borne of a desire to make government more open. Although the law is based on an easy concept, there are many grey areas open to interpretation. Basically, FOI guarantees access to public meetings and public records. Mr. Hennick emphasizes that he is always available to answer questions.

Mr. Hennick started by providing the definition of a "meeting." A meeting must be properly noticed, open to the public, and have minutes. If people gather to do the work they are assigned to do, it's a meeting. FOI covers all public agencies including committees. Even absent a quorum, there can be a meeting. Meeting types are regular, special, and emergency. An agenda must be available 24 hours in advance. Only one agency within a municipality needs to take the lead for joint meetings for agenda posting and minutes. Items cannot be added during a special meeting. Mr. Hennick discouraged emergency meetings, which are unnoticed, noting that the bar is very high for what constitutes an emergency. The public has the right to record meetings. FOI does not require that the public be allowed to speak during meetings.

Mr. Hennick cautioned the Council about doing business by e-mail. E-mail can be used to distribute agendas and share information, but there should be no conversations or deliberations because that would be an improper meeting.

Executive sessions are part of a properly noticed meeting. It takes a 2/3rds vote to go into executive session and the group must come out of executive session to take action. In executive session, discussion must be kept to the advertised subject matter. No minutes are taken in executive session.

Meeting "does not include collective bargaining sessions, executive level search committees, social gatherings, or caucus. A caucus is a group of people from the same board and the same party. No one else can attend. A board can attend another board's meeting to observe without noticing the meeting. Communication for agenda development is not considered a meeting.

The only legal requirement for minutes is a record of votes. Minutes must be available within

seven days of the meeting.

Mr. Hennick read a definition of public records. Every time a record is created (no matter where it is created) related to the conduct of public business, it becomes a public record. Mr. Hennick advised the Council to respond to requests for records within four days. He added that record retention is a separate issue from FOI.

Mr. Hennick addressed scenarios raised by those present and noted that nuisance FOI requests are becoming a problem. He distributed highlights of the FOI.

The Council thanked Mr. Hennick for his presentation.

2015-0006

Labor Negotiations (2015 Standing Referral)

A motion was made by Councilor Peruzzotti, seconded by Councilor Morton, that members of the Town Council Committee of the Whole, together with Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Chief of Police Louis J. Fusaro, Jr., and Town Attorneys Eileen Duggan and Kristi Kelly go into executive session at 7:18 p.m. for the purpose of discussing strategy and/or negotiations with respect to 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 Section 1-200(2).

The motion carried unanimously

The executive session ended at 8:20 p.m.

A motion was made by Councilor Morton, seconded by Councilor Peruzzotti, that the Town Council Committee of the Whole approve the request for funds necessary to implement the agreement between the Town and the Groton Police Union Local #3428, Council #4 AFSCME, AFL-CIO, for the period July 1, 2014 through June 30, 2016.

The motion carried unanimously

4. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:21 p.m.