



# 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 Heather Bond Somers, Councilors Dean G. Antipas, Bruce S. Flax, Bill Johnson, Frank O'Beirne, Jr., Deborah L. Peruzzotti, Rita M. Schmidt, James L. Streeter, and Harry A. Watson*

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Tuesday, February 14, 2012

7:00 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

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#### REGULAR MEETING

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1. **CALL TO ORDER**

*Mayor Somers called the meeting to order at 7:07 p.m.*

2. **ROLL CALL**

Members Present: Mayor Somers, Councilor Antipas, Councilor Flax, Councilor Johnson, Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., Councilor Peruzzotti, Councilor Schmidt, Councilor Streeter and Councilor Watson

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

3. **Calendar and Communications**

*None.*

4. **Approval of Minutes**

**2012-0047 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 January 24, 2012, January 30, 2012, and January 31, 2012 are hereby accepted and approved.

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

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

**Votes:** In Favor: 8 - Mayor Somers, Councilor Antipas, Councilor Flax, Councilor Johnson, Councilor Peruzzotti, Councilor Schmidt, Councilor Streeter and Councilor Watson  
Abstain: 1 - Councilor O'Beirne, Jr.

5. **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

*None.*

6. **NEW BUSINESS**

**2011-0218 Fitch High School Baseball Field - Update**

**A motion was made by Councilor Antipas, seconded by Councilor Flax, that the members of the Town Council, together with Town Manager Mark Oefinger and Town Attorney Eileen Duggan go into executive session at 7:12 p.m., pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes §1 200(6)(B), for the purpose of discussing strategy and/or negotiations with respect to a pending claim regarding the agreement between the Town, Board of Education and Bristol Collegiate Baseball Club, Inc.**

**The motion carried unanimously**

**Discussed**

*The executive session concluded at 7:52 p.m.*

**2012-0037 Parks and Recreation Master Plan Implementation Committee Request**

**Discussed and Recommended no action taken**

*Phil Butta, Chairman of the Parks and Recreation Commission, reminded the Council that the Town benefits from a number of passionate volunteers, some of whom serve on a number of boards*

under the Parks and Recreation Commission. Alan Nordquist, Chairman of the Master Plan Implementation Committee, stated he would like to review the Committee's activities and initiatives with the Council. The 2009 Master Plan made numerous recommendations for improvements to parks and recreation facilities and services. A survey of residents in 2008 indicated the top three priorities were an indoor pool and aquatics center; more trails; and a large multipurpose community center. Mr. Nordquist noted some of the possibilities for an aquatics/community center. The master Plan Commission is requesting the Town Council's support for \$75,000 that has been included in the FYE 2013 CIP budget request for a feasibility study.

Councilor Flax stated he would like to have a community center too, but not at a cost to the taxpayer. He asked why the same type of facility couldn't be provided by a private business. He stated he would be more supportive if it didn't cost the taxpayers money. Councilor Flax noted that one option to fund such a facility could be to sell the golf course.

Mr. Ackerman noted that the purpose of the feasibility study is to look at different models and address some of the questions being raised.

Councilor Watson asked about the Mansfield Community Center and whether it is revenue neutral. Mr. Nordquist stated that the operating costs are, but not the initial construction costs. Councilor Watson encouraged people to speak at the budget public hearing if they want to support the request for the feasibility study.

Councilor O'Beirne also does not see the need for a feasibility study. He feels it is premature to discuss a CIP request without putting it into the context of the full CIP and budget. If a feasibility study recommends a facility, the Town still cannot afford to build it or staff it.

Mr. Ackerman feels that a professional is needed to do the feasibility study which will include a review of potential sites and costs for the facility.

Councilor Peruzzotti feels there is an exorbitant amount of money spent on planning and engineering in the CIP. She would recommend that the Committee consider their options ahead of the budget discussion.

Councilor Antipas asked if the need expressed will still be valid in five years. Mr. Nordquist believes that if there is a significant lag before construction, the Committee would have to consider demographics and the availability of other facilities in the area at that time.

Mayor Somers would need more evidence that this facility is a "need" rather than a "want." The 300 responses to the survey are not significant in light of the Town's population. She would also like to consider a regional approach to such a facility.

Town Manager Oefinger stated the proposed study would be more of a needs assessment. He noted the numerous discussions about constructing a pool in the community over the years. He feels this study is necessary. The Town Manager added that he would love to engage other communities in the discussion, but Groton may have to take the lead.

2011-0257

#### **Groton Parks Foundation - Memorandum of Understanding**

##### **Discussed**

Doug Ackerman, Interim Director of Parks and Recreation, and Neill Brown, Treasurer of the Groton Parks Foundation, were present to address the Council. A grant was previously received by the Groton Parks Foundation to build a small parking lot. The project was completed by Public Works and Parks Maintenance. Remaining funds have been redirected to a passive meadow project. The Foundation has also received a grant to make improvements to the trail

system. There is a need to move ahead so the dollars are not lost. Parks and Recreation and Public Works are looking for authorization to move forward and to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Groton Parks Foundation for the Town to build the facilities on the Foundation's behalf.

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

Councilor O'Beirne asked what an 'events park' is. Mr. Ackerman explained that it would be a meadow and the work will prevent it from being reforested. There is a long term potential for additional uses when there are more amenities such as parking. Mr. Brown noted that originally Poquonnock Plains Park was envisioned as an events field, but it was determined to not be appropriate for that location because of the fields. The Copp Board has determined that there is opposition to active development of the property so they are leaning toward passive recreation. The private initiative by the Groton Parks Foundation to open the dog park led to more use of the property. The priority now is to develop existing trails and to make space available for other purposes.

The group that still feels there is a need for an events field is associated with the Submarine Base. The Copp Board wants this area to be a low impact, passive field that fits in with the surrounding environment. Councilor O'Beirne asked about the availability of parking. Mr. Brown estimated the carnival at Burrows field used about 10 acres. The Sub Base's carnival would require 6 acres so that parking would be on the field.

Mr. Brown also made the Council aware of areas on the property considered to be vernal pools that need to be protected.

Councilor Watson asked if an archaeological study has been done. Mr. Brown stated that the original farm site is in the middle of the property and this proposal is not anywhere near there.

**The motion carried unanimously**

**2012-0048 Purchase of Spicer Properties, Thomas Road**

**Discussed**

Town Manager Oefinger explained that he hopes to have a signed agreement for purchase of the Spicer properties at the February 28th meeting. The Planning Commission has expressed support for the acquisition in response to the CGS Sec. 8-24 referral. Town staff continue to work on grants. The terms and conditions previously discussed with the Council are acceptable to the Spicer family.

**2012-0049 Purchase of Fusconi Property, Crystal Lake Road**

**Discussed**

Town Manager Oefinger reported that the State Bond Commission meeting scheduled for February 24th has been cancelled. The next meeting will be toward the end of the March. There is no value in starting the purchase process until the Bond Commission has acted.

**2012-0039 Aquarion License Agreement**

**Discussed**

Town Manager Oefinger provided a history of this issue. When the Mystic Academy parcel was sold by the Town, all of the off-street parking for the retained parklet was lost. Aquarion is willing to allow people to park in the lot associated with their pump station, but they are requiring a license agreement. There are no fees associated with the agreement.

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

Councilor Antipas noted that the Town is assuming the risks associated with the agreement. The Town Manager indicated there will be no increase in liability insurance costs.

The motion carried unanimously

2012-0033

**Senior Center Modifications**

**Discussed and Recommended no action taken**

*Town Manager Oefinger reminded the Council that there were three components to the Senior Center modifications that were previously disapproved by the Council. The Council's main concern was the generator, and this referral was made to address the remaining two items. The HVAC issue has already been taken care of using Public Works operating funds. The additional door assists will be addressed using remaining funds in the Public Works and/or Parks and Recreation operating budgets at the end of the fiscal year. The Council expressed support for this approach.*

2012-0043

**Energy, Efficiency and Conservation Committee Membership Modification**

**Discussed and Recommended no action taken**

*Mayor Somers stated that she has spoken with the Town Manager about this Committee and she would now like to delete the referral. She no longer feels the Committee is too large. Mayor Galbraith will be providing a recommendation for the Groton Utilities' representative. Councilor Schmidt expressed an interest in serving as the Town Council's representative.*

2011-0231

**Town Council Orientation**

**Discussed**

*- Miscellaneous and Ad Hoc Committee Appointments*

*The Town Manager explained that staff has made an attempt to identify all miscellaneous appointments so that they can be made when a new Council comes on board. The Council reviewed the appointments in detail, choosing to wait on some and identifying people to serve for others.*

*- Town Department Issues/Highlights*

*The Town Manager asked Councilors to review the Town Department issues/highlights and suggested that the document will give Councilors some background on issues that will be coming up over the next year. Councilors were encouraged to forward any questions to the Town Manager.*

**7. Consideration of Committee Referral Items as per Town Council Referral List**

*The Town Manager asked that 2011-0238 Road Reconstruction Bond Ordinance be moved to the Committee of the Whole and Mayor Somers agreed.*

**8. OTHER BUSINESS**

*On February 21st, there will be a special meeting with the Board of Education at 6:00 p.m. to continue the discussion from the previous joint meeting.*

*On February 28th, in addition to the regular Committee of the Whole meeting, there will be a joint meeting with Stonington and a meeting of the Groton Resource Recovery Authority. The consensus of the Council was to cancel the Group II meeting.*

*Councilor Flax stated he would like to discuss the waiving of transfer station fees after Tropical Storm Irene and the status of the Town's snow removal budget.*

*Mayor Somers stated she would like to set up a Revenue Generating Task Force to study how we can generate revenues in Town. She would like to open the task force up to entrepreneurs, not just Town residents. Mayor Somers envisions representatives from the Town Council, RTM, Board of Education and Town staff as well. She asked the Council to think about the proposal.*

9. ADJOURNMENT

*A motion was made by Councilor Watson, seconded by Councilor Streeter, to adjourn the meeting at 9:26 p.m.*

*The motion carried unanimously.*