



# 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 Harry A. Watson, Councilors Peter J. Bartinik, Jr., Heather Sherman Bond, Catherine Kolnaski, Frank O'Beirne, Jr., Rita M. Schmidt, John F. Scott, Paulann H. Sheets, and James L. Streeter.**

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Tuesday, January 23, 2007

6:00 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

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#### SPECIAL MEETING

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1. **CALL TO ORDER**

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

2. **ROLL CALL**

Members Present: Mayor Watson, Councilor Bartinik, Jr., Councilor Kolnaski, Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., Councilor Schmidt, Councilor Scott, Councilor Sheets and Councilor Streeter  
Members Absent: Councilor Bond

*Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Assistant to the Town Manager Lee Vincent and Executive Assistant Nicki Bresnyan.*

3. **Calendar and Communications**

*Mayor Watson welcomed new Councilor Rita Schmidt, former Moderator of the RTM.*

*Councilor Kolnaski noted that the public hearing on the Board of Education budget will be held on Thursday, January 25th at 6:00 p.m. at the Senior Center. Councilors O'Beirne, Streeter, Schmidt, Sheets and Kolnaski requested copies of the Board's budget. The remaining Councilors indicated they would view the budget on the Board of Education's web site.*

*Councilor Kolnaski noted that there will be public meetings on the redistricting plan on January 29th at Cutler Middle School and January 31st at West Side Middle School.*

4. **Approval of Minutes**

**2006-0283 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 of November 14, 2006, November 28, 2006, December 4, 2006, December 5, 2006, December 12, 2006, December 19, 2006, and January 9, 2007 are hereby accepted and approved.

**Discussed**

*Councilor Sheets asked for a clarification in the December 5th minutes so that a comment would be correctly attributed to Andrew Maynard.*

**A motion was made by Councilor Scott, seconded by Councilor Kolnaski, to approve as amended.**

**The motion carried unanimously**

5. **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

*None.*

6. **NEW BUSINESS**

**2006-0295 Overview of Town Departments**

**Discussed**

*Director of Public Works Gary Schneider noted that the department's current focus is managing*

*the school improvement project, the Water Pollution Control Facility upgrade, and the rehabilitation of Fort Hill sewers. The Department is looking for funding for a new salt shed in the FYE 2008 CIP. Communities are moving toward utilization of treated salt rather than a salt/sand mix. The existing sheds are falling apart.*

*The department's budget is primarily an operations budget with fixed costs. Funds for major projects are funded in the CIP. There are few grants available for Public Works and those that are available require matches or are underfunded.*

*The road program for resurfacing and restoration is currently funded at a level that will result in further deterioration of the roads. The program has been well received by residents, with drainage issues being addressed and road pavement area narrowed to minimum standards.*

*Mr. Schneider noted that changes in Town buildings will be necessary as they are no longer meeting today's needs. Police Station renovations are required and Town Hall needs major electrical work. As schools come off line, the Public Works Department will be responsible for stabilizing the buildings (heat, electricity, security, basic maintenance, groundskeeping). The newly accepted Noank Hatchery will also need maintenance. The Department continues to look at ways to increase energy efficiency.*

*Environmental efforts are directed at fuels, stormwater management including outfall inspections, waste management and recycling, and associated compliance and training, as well as the Town's urban forestry program.*

*More emergency management training is required so that Public Works staff can respond to any type of emergency situation.*

*Mr. Schneider concluded his presentation by noting that all costs are rising. Facilities have already been downsized and consolidations have occurred so there are no further actions that can be taken in those areas..*

*Fuel oil, and associated increases, for all Town departments (except Wastewater and the Board of Education) is located in the Public Works budget. Councilor Bartinik questioned the savings when there is a mild winter. Mr. Schneider noted at this time, fuel oil purchases are equal to last year, but savings are expected if the winter stays mild. Salt has already been purchased; if it can be returned, it will be. The major cost associated with snow removal is overtime. If the winter remains mild, there could be an \$80,000-\$90,000 savings.*

*The Department's budget also includes electricity for all Town buildings, streetlights, and traffic lights. There has been about a 24% increase in electric costs. Town Manager Oefinger noted that only buildings outside of the Groton Utilities service area are eligible to "shop" for electricity. Councilor Sheets asked if a windmill has been considered. Mr. Schneider noted that the Flanders Road site was considered, but it was not stable enough. Alternate energy sources need to be looked at.*

*Mr. Schneider noted that 1200 cubic yards of material is collected annually from the catch basins; he is budgeting \$20,000 in transportation and disposal fees. The material needs to be dried prior to shipping. Using all salt will cut down on catch basin deposits. Councilor Streeter suggested that closing of the school buildings coincide with disposal of the buildings so that extra costs are not incurred. Mr. Schneider has estimated \$77,000 to maintain the two schools proposed for closure for a year. Disposal of the school requires policy decisions.*

*Street sweepings are disposed of at the Welles Road landfill. Screened material can be used at the edge of roads if covered with clean fill. The Town has not received positive feedback from the State on the idea of reopening the landfill to dispose of street sweepings.*

**2006-0307      FYE 2006 CAFR****Discussed**

*Sal Pandolfo, Director of Finance, noted this is an annual presentation of the Certified Annual Financial Report (CAFR). The audit and document are completed by December 31st of each year. The CAFR gives readers a perspective on what happened financially in the Town and is also used by bond rating agencies.*

*Vanessa Rositto of Blum Shapiro highlighted areas of the document starting with the introductory letter written by the Director of Finance. Periodically, she also expanded her explanations to address questions raised by Councilor O'Beirne.*

*The Town of Groton has received the GFOA Certificate of Achievement in Financial Reporting for 12 years. Ms. Rositto noted that the Town was given an unqualified clean opinion by Blum Shapiro, which is the highest rating that can be received. The MD&A provides an overview of the year's transactions. Financial statements are based on GASB 34 (accrual basis) reporting and present all assets and liabilities of the Town including capital assets, infrastructure, and Town debt. The statements do not include any fiduciary funds. There is a statement of expenses and revenues by major funds. The fund balance is \$11.4 million or 8.8% of the General Fund, which exceeds the 7.25% goal. The adjustments statement shows adjustments made to get from the modified accrual basis to the accrual basis. Revenues and expenditures are shown on another statement on a fund basis for the three major funds. Another statement shows the original adopted budget and the final budget. Internal service funds for the Town of Groton are shown in a separate statement. Ms. Rositto also noted the statement on the fiduciary funds of the Town of Groton. A significant portion of the report consists of notes to the financial statements.*

*There is a comparative balance sheet of the General Fund followed by a more detailed General Fund budget, showing revenues and expenditures. Non-major governmental funds are shown in more detail on a separate statement as are the internal service funds. The next portion of the report covers the fiduciary funds of the Town, and schedules mandated by the State of Connecticut. The last section in the CAFR is the statistical section, prepared in accordance with GASB 44, broken into five categories.*

*Ms. Rositto noted the management letter from Blum Shapiro. Discussion followed on IT/security review and Ms. Rositto explained that the letter makes suggestions only.*

*Discussion followed on education funds, surety bond monies received from developers, and cafeteria fund balance.*

**A motion was made by Councilor Bartinik, Jr., seconded by Councilor Sheets, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.**

**The motion carried unanimously**

**2007-0018      Job Description for Mail Courier - Finance Department****Discussed**

*Town Manager Oefinger provided background on this job description.*

**A motion was made by Councilor Bartinik, Jr., seconded by Councilor Streeter, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.**

**The motion carried unanimously**

**2005-0209      Water Pollution Control Facility Expansion****Discussed**

*Town Manager Oefinger noted the project is still moving forward. He met with DEP staff on a number of issues including documentation, funding sources (bonds and grants), scheduled*

completion date, alternatives that were bid, and wording regarding the State Plan of Conservation and Development.

**2007-0012 Homeland Security Commercial Equipment Direct Assistance (CEDA) Program Grant**

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

The motion carried unanimously

**2006-0303 FYE 2008 Budget**

Discussed

The pre-budget public hearing will be held on February 6th. The budget will be distributed to the Town Council by March 15th. Councilors were asked to mark their conflict for March 1- April 30 on a calendar distributed by staff, and to return the calendars to staff by February 6th so that budget work sessions can be scheduled. The Board of Education, City of Groton, and Groton Long Point budgets are due to the Town Manager by February 28th. Councilor Bartinik asked for the dates of the Board of Education work sessions. He also requested an analysis of the change in the Grand List. The Town Manager explained that once the Grand List is signed, staff will be in a position to do that. He noted that increases will be large because of the revaluation.

**2006-0314 Charter Revision**

Discussed

Mayor Watson suggested that the Council make a decision as to whether to establish a Charter Revision Committee or not. Discussion followed.

A motion was made by Councilor O'Beirne, seconded by Councilor Streeter, to establish a Charter Revision Commission within the guidelines established by State Statute.

Town Manager Oefinger noted that the Town Clerk may have issues that she wants to discuss with the Council regarding the charter revision process. Discussion followed on postponing discussion on establishing the Committee until the next Committee of the Whole meeting. The motion and second were withdrawn. The consensus of the Council was that the charter needs to be looked at.

**2007-0017 Re-establishment of Tolls on Connecticut Interstate Highways**

Discussed

Assistant to the Town Manager Lee Vincent noted that CCM is waiting for the Governor's budget to be released. Mr. Vincent spoke with Ted Moukawsher who indicated that legislators want to look at the whole transportation package and he would anticipate lengthy debate on this issue. Councilor Kolnaski noted the State's highways are in terrible shape and transportation funds are going to be reduced. Mr. Vincent will be reviewing this issue at an upcoming CCM meeting and the Council can discuss it with legislators at an upcoming meeting. Town Manager Oefinger noted that the Transportation Strategy Board is suggesting a comprehensive review of electronic tolls.

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

Discussion followed and the Committee asked that referrals older than 6 months be put on the Town Council's consent calendar for deletion, according Town Council Rules. Discussion will take place at the February 6th Town Council meeting.

**8. OTHER BUSINESS**

A joint meeting with the City of Groton to discuss watershed management was tentatively scheduled for the Committee of the Whole meeting on February 13th at 7:00 p.m.

Councilor Sheets asked for an update on the Flanders Road Utilities Committee. Town Manager Oefinger indicated he has had a difficult time getting appointments from a number of groups, so there is no meeting planned yet.

*Councilor Scott asked the Town Manager for his opinion on a proposal by a legislator that was outlined in the newspapers to eliminate local property tax and substitute other types of tax. Town Manager Oefinger stated that he feels it is a ridiculous idea.*

**9. ADJOURNMENT**

*A motion was made by Councilor Bartnik, seconded by Councilor Kolnaski, to adjourn the meeting at 8:05 p.m.*

*The motion carried unanimously.*