



Town of Groton, Connecticut

Meeting Minutes

Town Council Committee of the Whole

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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.

Tuesday, February 13, 2007

6:00 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 2

SPECIAL MEETING

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

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

2. **ROLL CALL**

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

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

3. **Calendar and Communications**

None.

4. **Approval of Minutes**

2007-0024 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 January 23, 2007 are hereby accepted and approved.

Tabled

5. **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

None.

6. **NEW BUSINESS**

2007-0022 Senior Center Expansion

Discussed

Director of Public Works Gary Schneider noted that the Council previously authorized design development for the proposed expansion to the Senior Center. Tom Arcari of Quisenberry Arcari Architects noted that following the preliminary needs assessment, his firm was tasked with designing the Senior Center expansion to a higher level of detail to better evaluate costs. Mr. Arcari directed the Councilors' attention to the most recent floor plan and noted changes. This design development also identified final finishes and specified mechanical and electrical systems for the building. Mr. Arcari noted the proposed new electrical and fire/sprinkler systems, and reviewed lighting and other equipment. Consultants were hired to design the aqua therapy pool system and kitchen equipment. Mr. Arcari's firm executed the final design for site layout for the building including redesigned circulation and parking, landscaping, and utilities. Hard costs were established and the final construction budget developed, including escalation through 2008. A final presentation was made to the Senior Center. The project cost is estimated at \$13.2 million, and a referendum schedule has been outlined by the Town Clerk.

Councilor Kolnaski feels there is a desperate need for the expansion to accommodate

programming since more people are going to the Senior Center. Mary Jo Riley, Senior Center Supervisor, noted that the middle of the day is the busiest time for the Center, although programs continue through the afternoon and into the evening. Programming has been adjusted according to space availability. Councilor Bond questioned staffing impacts associated with the expansion, and Ms. Riley responded that a full time pool manager would be required. Otherwise, all instructors are contractual and program fees cover their salaries. There would be no need for additional maintenance personnel. Councilor Bond also questioned the cost of insurance for the pool and staff indicated they would attempt to get that figure. Ms. Riley noted that an average of 150 to 200 seniors use the facility on a daily basis. 2063 Town residents have used the facility. Seniors from other towns also utilize the Center at a higher fee. Councilor Schmidt asked about traffic flows for both the Senior Center and Library. Mr. Schneider noted that Library traffic will be directed away from the Senior Center, which will help protect the handicap parking closest to the Senior Center. Deliveries will be made at the rear of the building. Councilor Streeter expressed support for the addition, noting that use of the Center will likely increase in the future. Discussion followed on the aqua pool and Ms. Riley noted that the pool could be used to support L&M physical therapy programs, as well as Arthritis Foundation programs. Enrollment of Groton seniors would take precedence. There is the potential for an outdoor pavilion but none is planned initially. A councilor questioned the impact of the project on the mill rate and Town Manager Oefinger stated that could be calculated once the grand list is known.

Ms. Riley noted that there are no aqua therapy centers available in New London County. Councilor O'Beirne expressed concern with expansion of the building and parking, and asked if consideration has been given to tour bus traffic. Mr. Arcari responded that the site circulation has been designed to accommodate the typical tour bus, and there is a dedicated spot for travel busses which will leave the parking spaces closest to the building available for daily activities. The roller hockey rink will be relocated and Director of Parks and Recreation John Silsby suggested that the Copp property is a possible location. Councilor Bond asked if phasing had been considered.

Councilor O'Beirne expressed concern with construction shutting down the existing facility. Mr. Arcari stated that the Center could stay in operation during the construction phase; however it would be a shorter time frame and lower cost to relocate the seniors to a temporary location off site such as a closed school. Town Manager Oefinger explained that relocation plans have not been finalized at this time since it is unknown if this project will go forward and the Board of Education's plans for the schools have not been finalized, but there are options. During construction, it is anticipated that the senior programs would be reduced.

Councilor Sheets sees the need for the expansion given the demographics of the Town. She suggested that with the major school building program underway, phasing is an important issue. Mr. Arcari noted that all of the phased alternates identified can be done at any time, although it is more cost-effective to do them all at once. A councilor asked to see potential revenue numbers that could be generated, since the facility could act as a regional facility. Ms. Riley noted that other groups are non-committal until they see the Town moving forward with the project. There are 11 senior centers in southeastern Connecticut and they currently do regional events and programming.

Discussion followed on the pitched roof alternative offered in a small area where a flat roof is possible. Roof repairs in the range of \$3 to \$3.5 million will need to be addressed in the coming years at the Senior Center if this expansion is not approved.

Pat Hurto, Senior Center Club President, stated there are 900+ members, and all are in favor of the Center's expansion. She stated that if the Town builds the addition, the Club will furnish it.

A motion was made by Councilor Scott, seconded by Councilor Kolnaski, to proceed with the process to bond the funds for the full \$13.2 million program.

Discussion followed on phasing.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Votes: In Favor: 6 - Mayor Watson, Councilor Bond, Councilor Kolnaski, Councilor Schmidt, Councilor Scott and Councilor Streeter
Opposed: 1 - Councilor O'Beirne, Jr.
Abstain: 1 - Councilor Sheets

2006-0295

Overview of Town Departments

Discussed

Director of Finance Sal Pandolfo provided a handout showing the Finance Department organizational chart. He noted that 90% of Finance's budget is associated with labor costs. The Finance Department is responsible for the budget book and the annual audit, which influences bond ratings. Finance is involved with notes, bonds and preparation of official statements. Accounting/Treasury handles the Town's investments, payroll and check processing, timekeeping, accounts payable, and debt service. The Assessment division assesses property, administers exemption programs, and assists in revaluation. Purchasing secures goods and services, negotiates leases, manages the surplus sale, assets accounting, and mail. Revenue handles the collection of taxes, sewer assessments, landfill and solid waste billing, and delinquent account collection. The tax collection rate has increased since 1997. The Revaluation Fund accumulates funds for revaluations and mapping. The next full inspection revaluation is scheduled for October 1, 2011.

Upcoming issues are short and long term financing for the school projects, Fort Hill Homes Sewer Upgrade, and WPCF Upgrade; GASB #45 (Other Post Employment Benefits Accounting); and the October 1, 2011 revaluation.

In response to Councilors' inquiries, Mr. Pandolfo stated that most of the Town's investment money is with STIF (State Treasurer's Investment Fund) because it offers a better rate of return. Also, the Town makes deposits every three days, and every day during tax season. Mr. Pandolfo was asked to provide information on the amount of revenue abated under the elderly program and farm/forest program.

Mr. Pandolfo noted that the delinquency rates shown are by fiscal year, but the Town tends to collect 100% over time. There are no breakdowns available on what age group is delinquent.

2003-0198

Public Water & Sewer on Flanders Road/Industrial area

Discussed

Town Manager Oefinger noted that he is still trying to put the Flanders Road Utility Extension Committee together. At this time, there are no representatives from the RTM, Groton Utilities, or Flanders Road residents. The Town will continue to run the advertisement.

It was noted that the alternative water routes identified are consistent with Groton Utilities' long term plans.

Councilor O'Beirne requested that a map showing the various routes and indicating parcels occupied by residents or businesses versus developable land be made available for the committee.

2006-0239

Animal Shelter

Discussed

Town Manager Oefinger and other towns' officials met last week with representatives of the Connecticut Humane Society to begin to talk about specifics of a regional facility. A number of animal control officers attended the meeting and asked good questions. One issue is abandonment of animals and past practice issues. Some type of preliminary results from a needs assessment are

anticipated in four to six weeks. Town staff is also working with an architect to fine tune Groton's proposal, which is expected in approximately four weeks.

2006-0316 Mystic River Homes Tax Abatement

Discussed

Town Manager Oefinger explained that the Council has decided to go ahead with a 100% abatement for the "cottages" portion of Mystic River Homes. Staff looked at the legislative history for the Mystic River Homes tax abatement, and found that there is no reference to the original Ordinance 107 in the Code of Ordinances. There is only a reference to Ordinance 204. The legislative history is very clear, but it appears there was a clerical error that eliminated Ordinance 107. The Town Attorney recommends repealing Ordinance 107 and establishing a new ordinance, with the ordinance to be introduced next week and a public hearing scheduled.

2007-0020 Poquonnock Plains Park - Relay for Life Fundraiser Walk

Discussed

Director of Parks and Recreation John Silsby introduced Denise Nott who has made this request on behalf of Relay for Life. The group previously used the track at Fitch High School for a 24 hour fundraising effort, but it is unavailable this year because of construction. Ms. Nott acknowledged that when Poquonnock Plains Park was built, it was agreed that lights would not be used, however the Town has notified neighbors in the past of the use of lights or other modifications to the park. Ms. Nott noted that Relay for Life activities quiet down at 10:00 p.m. Many Groton businesses donate to this family event, and there are bands and DJs throughout the night. At 9:00 p.m. there is a luminaria ceremony with a bagpiper, and lights can be dimmed after that event. The organizers would like to stay in Groton.

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

Councilor O'Beirne suggested that more input from the neighbors is needed because lighting was a big issue when the park was built. The Town has only broken the promise once and lights were off at 9:00 p.m. Mr. Silsby agreed that the Town can solicit input from neighbors since the event is not until August. Ms. Nott noted the only other possible location in Groton is Washington Park. Town Manager Oefinger suggested sending a letter to neighbors with specific information, a site map, and a specific time that residents can address the Council (February 27th Committee of the Whole meeting), prior to taking action on this item. The motion and second were withdrawn.

2007-0008 Legislative Policy (2007 Standing Referral)

Discussed

Mayor Watson and Councilor Scott will be attending the NLC Conference in Washington D.C. Town staff prepares a legislative agenda for the Mayor to take to Washington, and suggested items for consideration are: Sub Base enhancement issues; modifying future BRAC criteria; improvements to railroad underpasses to improve access to the airport; Flanders Road utility extension; interconnection between Groton Utilities and Aquarion; and federal impact aid. The Town Manager asked that any other suggested items be forwarded to staff as soon as possible.

Councilor O'Beirne suggested coastal property insurance and impact aid issues associated with civilian rental of navy housing.

In addition, state legislators will meet with the Committee of the Whole on February 20th at 6:00 p.m. Town Manager Oefinger distributed a handout from Governor Rell on the budget, and a handout on topics discussed at today's CCM Legislative Committee meeting. Discussion followed on topics to discuss with the state legislators.

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

pulled off the list for deletion.

A motion was made by Councilor Kolnaski, seconded by Councilor O'Beirne, to delete the referrals as noted in the modified list.

The motion carried unanimously.

- 2003-0068 Establishment of Agricultural Land Preservation Fund**
Recommended for Deletion
- 2003-0195 Nuisance/Property Maintenance Code**
Recommended for Deletion
- 2003-0237 Annual Report Content/Format Review/Revisions**
Recommended for Deletion
- 2004-0021 Spicer/Sparkle Lake and Nigrelli Property Acquisition**
Recommended for Deletion
- 2004-0048 Groton Code of Ethics**
Recommended for Deletion
- 2004-0055 Comprehensive Tax Burden Analysis**
Recommended for Deletion
- 2004-0068 Participation in Town Council Meetings by Telephone**
Recommended for Deletion
- 2004-0134 Gravel Street Pump Station Dock**
Recommended for Deletion
- 2004-0195 Tax Incentive Policy - Revisit**
Recommended for Deletion
- 2004-0203 Bulky Waste Disposal Options**
Recommended for Deletion
- 2004-0233 Updating the Build Out and Fiscal Impact Analyses**
Recommended for Deletion
- 2005-0153 Sewer Investigation on South Road and Trent Lane**
Recommended for Deletion
- 2005-0271 Watershed Protection Ordinance**
Recommended for Deletion
- 2005-0290 Groton Community Center**
Recommended for Deletion
- 2006-0001 Unaffiliated and Other Appointments (2006 Standing Referral)**
Recommended for Deletion
- 2006-0002 Republican Town Committee Appointments (2006 Standing Referral)**
Recommended for Deletion
- 2006-0003 Democratic Town Committee Appointments (2006 Standing Referral)**
Recommended for Deletion
- 2006-0004 Revised Position Descriptions (2006 Standing Referral)**
Recommended for Deletion
- 2006-0009 Town Council Rules Revisions (2006 Standing Referral)**

- 2006-0015 **Town Attorney Involvement in Land Use Appeals**
Recommended for Deletion
- 2006-0046 **Fiscal Impact Statements for New Programs**
Recommended for Deletion
- 2006-0083 **Copp Property Management**
Recommended for Deletion
- 2006-0107 **Policy for Town-Owned Open Space**
Recommended for Deletion
- 2006-0110 **Marketing of Marine Science Opportunities**
Recommended for Deletion
- 2006-0118 **Reuse of Town Buildings**
Recommended for Deletion
- 2006-0134 **Noise Ordinance**
Recommended for Deletion
- 2006-0135 **Potential Designation of Shennecossett Golf Course on National Historic Register**
Recommended for Deletion
- 2006-0168 **Ledyard's Request for Sewer Service**
Recommended for Deletion

8. OTHER BUSINESS

A joint meeting with the City of Groton was tentatively scheduled for March 6th at 6:00 p.m.

Town Manager Oefinger requested a referral on boiler replacement at Cutler Middle School. The Mayor referred the item to the Committee of the Whole.

9. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Councilor Kolnaski, seconded by Councilor Streeter, to adjourn the meeting at 8:25 p.m.

The motion carried unanimously.