



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.

Tuesday, March 27, 2007

6:00 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

SPECIAL MEETING

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

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

2. **ROLL CALL**

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

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

3. **Calendar and Communications**

Councilor Sheets attempted to read an e-mail response that she sent to Town Councilors. Councilor Streeter asked for a point of order and a clarification on whether or not the e-mail should be read and if so, he asked if all e-mail communications received by Councilors should be read. Mayor Watson stated his feeling that the e-mail correspondence being cited crossed the FOI line and if there had been any question, the Council should have posted a meeting. Councilor Sheets indicated she did not think it was a 'meeting' when she responded to the e-mail and she is attempting to cure the problem by reading the correspondence for the public. Mayor Watson asked that the communication be submitted to the Town Clerk. Councilor Sheets stated she would no longer be communicating by e-mail. Mayor Watson asked her to summarize the e-mail. Councilor Sheets noted the e-mail concerns revaluation phase in, her support for phase-in, and her concern that the Town Council was never presented with a petition that was submitted to the Town Clerk. It was noted that all Councilors had recently received copies of the petition. Mayor Watson asked all Councilors to make copies of the e-mails they received in the last week regarding revaluation phase in and to forward copies to the Town Clerk.

Mayor Watson made a referral to the Committee of the Whole on e-mails and FOI considerations.

Councilor Bond stated she called seven different towns in the State that have implemented or have considered implementing phase-in. She asked for a referral on the implementation of a three-year phase-in in accordance with Public Act 06-176 and Public Act 06-148. Councilor Bond noted this is a new option, not one that was previously discussed. Councilors Sheets, Bond, and Bartinik supported a referral, and Mayor Watson made the referral to the Committee of the Whole.

Councilor Kolnaski noted that she was told that some people were pressured into signing the petition on revaluation phase-in.

4. **Approval of Minutes**

2007-0056 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 February 20, 2007, February 27, 2007, March 1, 2007, and March 6, 2007 are hereby accepted and approved.

A motion was made by Councilor Bartinik, Jr., seconded by Councilor Kolnaski, to adopt.

The motion carried unanimously

5. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

6. NEW BUSINESS

2006-0045 2006 Revaluation

Discussed

Director of Finance Sal Pandolfo and Assessor John Philip referenced a staff referral memo outlining the projected increase in the Grand List attributable to residential, commercial and industrial property, personal property and motor vehicles. Included in the memo is a stratification of properties by percentage increase. Mr. Pandolfo reviewed projected tax increases noting that properties that have increased over 39% will see increased taxes due to the revaluation. Mr. Pandolfo noted that the Chairman of the Board of Assessment Appeals, Chuck Stevens, was present to answer questions. Councilor Sheets thanked Mr. Stevens for his memo regarding the role of the Board of Assessment Appeals.

2006-0316 Mystic River Homes Tax Abatement

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

The motion carried unanimously

2005-0209 Water Pollution Control Facility Expansion

Discussed

Gary Schneider, Director of Public Works, noted the Town has signed the contract. Mr. Schneider reviewed construction milestone dates and noted an estimated completion date of December 2008. C. H. Nickerson was the low bidder; Fuss & O'Neill are the consulting engineers.

2006-0102 Fort Hill Sewer Project Update

Discussed

Mr. Schneider reviewed the project schedule. The bid closes May 17th, with construction 30-60 days after. Approximately 99 easements remain to be secured; approximately 40 of those are considered critical. Staff is working with Ledge Light Health District to obtain the easements. To make it easier for residents, a notary is available at the community policing station and staff is available after hours. Prices for the project are holding. Mr. Schneider noted that information on the project has been disseminated through the Community Policing program and NRZ.

2003-0177 Renovations & Additions to Groton School Facilities - Phase I

Discussed

Town Manager Oefinger distributed a memo from Gary Schneider on the most current issue facing the school project. Mr. Schneider explained that the two elementary schools will not meet the September 10th opening date due to the window systems specified for the schools not meeting the building code. Everyone is working on a solution, but the problem adds 4 to 12 weeks to the schedule. Additionally, alternatives are being investigated to limit costs. The impact of this issue on the school closure and redistricting plan will be addressed by school officials.

Councilor Bond asked what guarantees exist that there will not be more code oversights. Mr. Schneider noted that the plans are being reviewed again, but the windows were the last major component of the project; staff could find small non-compliance items, but nothing that would compare to the window systems and the long lead time necessary to order new ones. Councilor Bond then asked if any town has ever obtained a code modification like the one sought by the Town. Rick Norris, Project Manager - Schools, noted that there have been residential allowances. He added that the Town is not asking for a modification at the high school because it is the Town's

area of refuge. Councilor Schmidt asked what the wind blown debris rating is for the current window system and Mr. Norris stated that rating is not required at lower wind levels so if the code modification is approved, it will not be an issue. Councilor Streeter asked about plans to protect the buildings through the upcoming hurricane season. Mr. Norris noted that the team is currently looking at temporary options for sealing the buildings. Councilor Scott questioned the amount of contingency money left and Mr. Norris replied \$1.7 million unreserved undesignated funds for Fitch; \$700,000 for Kolnaski; and \$400,000 for Northeast.

Councilor Sheets asked for an explanation of how this problem occurred. Mr. Schneider noted the current focus is on salvaging the window system if possible, and beyond that the Town is seeking the Town Attorney's advice on the matter. All payments made to date to contractors are for work completed. The Town has paid \$65,000 for the Kolnaski windows, which can be used at Northeast if a modification is granted; \$22,000 for some windows at Northeast that they hope to still be able to use; and no funds have been expended for the windows at Fitch.

Councilor Kolnaski noted that Mr. Norris and the Permanent School Building Committee have been very conscientious throughout the project.

Councilor Sheets noted that all of the school information is located on the Board of Education web site and she requested a link on the Town's web site to the school information.

2006-0282

School Improvement Project - Phase II**Discussed**

Mayor Watson noted that Councilors Scott and O'Beirne were appointed from the Town Council to the School Design Committee.

Councilor Bond asked that the Permanent School Building Committee representation be increased to two so that John Webster can serve, but not as a "member of the public". Town Manager Oefinger asked for suggestions for members of the public to serve, noting that no one else has volunteered.

A motion was made by Councilor Bond, seconded by Councilor Scott, to recommend a resolution modifying the School Design Committee membership.

The motion carried unanimously

2007-0071

Tercentennial Legacy Playground Fundraiser - Spring Fling**Recommended for a Resolution**

Town Manager Oefinger noted the contract with the Mystic Marriott for the Spring Fling is for a minimum of 200 people at \$37.00 per person; tickets are \$50.00 per person. He noted the significant amount of promotion that has been done for the event.

A motion was made by Councilor Sheets, seconded by Councilor Bond, to recommend a resolution authorizing the Town Manager to enter into a contract with the Mystic Marriott for the Spring Fling.

The motion carried unanimously

2006-0303

FYE 2008 Budget**Discussed**

The Town Manager reviewed the budget calendar and noted that lunch will be provided at the Saturday budget session. He stated he was prepared to provide a budget overview if so desired by the Council, but the consensus was not to have an overview. Town Manager Oefinger asked that Councilors forward any questions or requests for specific information to him prior to the budget sessions.

Councilor Bond asked the Town Manager to explain the request for more inspectors. The Town Manager is proposing to eliminate an Inspector I position in Community Development, but still

the Town needs inspectors. Inspector I's have limited sign off capabilities, so it is better to have an Inspector II. The Town Manager did not request the position this year because the Town has hired an Inspector II for the school project that he would like to be able to transition over from grant funds to general funds starting next year. Still, Building Inspection has been significantly understaffed for a very long time and the Town Manager would like to see another Inspector II position added in the future.

2007-0008 Legislative Policy (2007 Standing Referral)

Discussed

Assistant to the Town Manager Lee Vincent stated he gave formal testimony in support of restoring 100% of MM&E reimbursement, getting a portion of the Mohegan-Pequot funds, and preventing the conveyance tax from being sunsetted. Current discussions focus on the Governor's budget and her proposal to raise the income tax, and proposed modifications to heart and hypertension legislation.

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

Recommended for Deletion

The Town Manager informed the Council that the group will be conducting its event at Stonington High School. The referral was recommended for deletion.

2007-0025 Land Use Leadership Alliance Sponsorship

Recommended for a Resolution

Mayor Watson noted he attended a four-day program offered by the Land Use Leadership Alliance on problem-solving land use issues in a reasonable, common sense way. He offered to do a presentation for the Council with Sidney VanZandt of GOSA, who also attended.

A motion was made by Councilor Sheets, seconded by Councilor Bond, to recommend a resolution in support of the Land Use Leadership Alliance.

The motion carried unanimously

2003-0198 Public Water & Sewer on Flanders Road/Industrial area

Discussed

Town Manager Oefinger noted the status of appointments to this committee. The two resident appointments are still vacant. The Committee can start to meet and perhaps through their activities identify residents to serve. There will be no representative from Groton Utilities because Mayor Popp feels it is a conflict. Discussion followed on modifying the Committee to include a Citizen at Large (Jim Musante), and continuing to look for residents, perhaps soliciting with a mailing.

A motion was made by Councilor Sheets, seconded by Councilor Schmidt, to recommend a resolution modifying the Flanders Road Utilities Extension Committee membership.

The motion carried unanimously

2007-0072 Citizen Committee on Property Tax Relief - Update

Discussed

Seven individuals have expressed an interest in serving on this Committee. Councilor Bond stated she will attend the meetings. Absent any objections, the Town Manager stated he would make the appointments.

2007-0057 Bank of America Grant - Tercentennial Legacy Playground

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

The motion carried unanimously

2007-0067 Department of Education Youth and Family Services Funding

A motion was made by Councilor Kolnaski, seconded by Councilor Scott, that this matter be

Recommended for a Resolution.

The motion carried unanimously

2007-0068 Summer Food Service Program (2007)

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

The motion carried unanimously

2007-0069 Department of Transportation Elderly and Disabled Transportation Grant

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

The motion carried unanimously

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

None.

8. OTHER BUSINESS

None.

9. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Councilor Scott, seconded by Councilor Kolnaski, to adjourn the meeting at 7:50 p.m.

The motion carried unanimously.