



Town of Groton, Connecticut

Meeting Minutes

Town Council Committee of the Whole

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Mayor Harry A. Watson, Councilors Heather Sherman Bond, Kathryn M. Brown-Tracy, Catherine Kolnaski, Deborah B. Monteiro, Frank O'Beirne, Jr., Rita M. Schmidt, Paulann H. Sheets, and James L. Streeter

Tuesday, June 17, 2008

6:00 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

SPECIAL MEETING

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

(First Selectman Haberek called the Board of Selectmen meeting to order.)

2. ROLL CALL

Members Present: Mayor Watson, Councilor Brown-Tracy, Councilor Kolnaski, Councilor Monteiro, Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., Councilor Schmidt, Councilor Sheets and Councilor Streeter
Members Absent: Councilor Bond

Also present were Acting Town Manager Doug Ackerman, Assistant to the Town Manager Lee Vincent and Executive Assistant Nicki Bresnyan.

Board of Selectman: Ed Haberek and Pete Balestracci

3. NEW BUSINESS

2008-0122 Joint Meeting with the Stonington Board of Selectmen

Discussed

Mayor Watson explained that this meeting resulted from his conversations with First Selectman Haberek and their interaction at Mystic Cooperative Task Group meetings.

Mayor Watson suggested and Mr. Haberek agreed to a semi-annual joint meeting schedule. Mr. Haberek thanked the Town for the opportunity to meet and discuss issues and initiatives of regional interest.

- Mystic Streetscape Project

Director of Planning and Development Mike Murphy provided a brief update on the project noting a number of delays caused by the state, the latest schedule, significant unit cost increases, and alternatives for under grounding of utilities. A total of 17 easements will be required for the project.

Mr. Haberek gave a brief update on the project on the Stonington side. The project will extend from the bridge to the Mystic Post Office. The project was shelved in Stonington for some time and Stonington missed a small window for designing the plan. Mr. Haberek expects that the project will be bid in December, start in spring 2009, and be completed in fall 2009. Stonington is committed to completing the project.

Councilor Streeter asked how the streetscape project will coincide with development of the Central Hall Building. Mr. Murphy described how the efforts will be coordinated depending on when construction begins. Discussion followed on impacts on traffic circulation. Councilor O'Beirne expressed concern that the utility poles will remain even after the wires are undergrounded. Mr. Murphy noted efforts to find other sources of money to bridge the gap and

complete the project as envisioned.

- Global Warming

Mr. Haberek noted that Stonington has adopted a resolution on the 20% by 2010 initiative. Eight individuals have been appointed to a Clean Energy Task Force that will meet to discuss energy options. Stonington will be receiving two free solar panels as a result of 258 Stonington residents enrolled in Connecticut Clean Energy Options. Stonington is also working on developing regulations for wind turbines for residential use. Another initiative involves exempting solar panels from assessments. Mr. Haberek noted that three middle school students were the catalyst for Stonington's effort.

Councilor Bond arrived at 6:35 p.m.

Roll Call: Members Present: Mayor Watson, Councilor Bond, Councilor Brown-Tracy, Councilor Kolnaski, Councilor Monteiro, Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., Councilor Schmidt, Councilor Sheets and Councilor Streeter

Discussed

Councilor Sheets noted that Groton's Environment and Energy Committee will be recommending a task force on climate change and sustainable communities to the Committee of the Whole. Mr. Haberek was asked to summarize Stonington's efforts and provide the information to Councilor Sheets.

- Mystic Transportation Study

Mr. Haberek noted this project was also "sitting on the shelf" in Stonington. There was an initial \$50,000 transportation study done, which can be found on Stonington's web site. Another \$500,000 transportation study will sunset soon and Stonington is trying to move it forward. Mr. Murphy commented on the initial traffic study. It is hoped that the \$500,000 study can be developed into a scope of services. Mr. Haberek noted the overall philosophy is some type of alternative transportation option in the area.

Councilor O'Beirne expressed concern with the number of transportation studies that have been done. Mr. Haberek noted that there are two major entities (the casinos) that do not want to participate in the process. The challenge is to find a way to move people in a financially responsible way.

- Pump Out Boat Program

Mayor Watson provided a brief history of the program. The Council noted that DEP has taken over the program. Acting Town Manager Doug Ackerman noted that DEP will still be looking for contributions from the towns of Stonington and Groton. Councilor Bond stated that the Town will be looking for an equitable contribution from Stonington. Mr. Haberek noted that Stonington is struggling with budget issues. Mayor Watson suggested a meeting with Rick Huntley from DEP and Mr. Haberek supported the idea.

Councilor Monteiro left the meeting at 7:00 p.m.

Roll Call: Members Present: Mayor Watson, Councilor Bond, Councilor Brown-Tracy, Councilor Kolnaski, Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., Councilor Schmidt, Councilor Sheets and Councilor Streeter
Members Absent: Councilor Monteiro

Discussed

- Mystic-Noank Library

The Town of Groton contributes \$206,700 to the Mystic-Noank Library. Councilor Bond noted it is approximately a 60/40 funding split with Stonington. She stated that she understands

Stonington's budget concerns, but the Town of Groton also has budget issues. Mr. Haberek noted that Stonington has an Outside Agency Subcommittee and the Mystic-Noank Library was flat funding this year. The Stonington Free Library was funded at a higher rate. Mr. Haberek hopes to provide the Mystic-Noank Library with more resources next year. Assistant to the Town Manager Vincent noted that if Stonington's contribution was based on patronage, Stonington's share would be \$138,000. Stonington's continued under funding of the library has been a source of frustration for the RTM.

- Mystic River Ambulance

Councilor Bond stated the funding issue is the same with Mystic River Ambulance. The Town contributes \$37,000. Mr. Haberek stated Stonington contributes around \$30,000. Mayor Watson cited an incident at the Town's Senior Center. An ambulance was called, and the first to respond - 15 minutes later - was Mystic River Ambulance. Mr. Haberek also has concerns with ambulance delays.

- Stonington Sewer Projects

Mr. Haberek noted that Stonington's wastewater treatment proposal has been under review by DEP for the past 15 months. Once approved, Stonington will look at its approach and determine how many plants to fix. Mr. Haberek noted that every day the costs go up.

The consensus of the Town Council was to send a letter in support of Stonington's efforts to the DEP.

- Other

Mr. Haberek stated he is looking forward to conversations with the Town Manager about combining services and lean strategies initiatives for purchasing, maintenance and repairs, etc. Mr. Ackerman noted that there are economies of scale available with regard to dispatch services.

Mr. Haberek noted space problems at Stonington Town Hall. He asked about the Town's experience with the Annex arrangement. Mr. Ackerman noted the Town of Groton is used to being spread around. Staff misses the day-to-day contact, but it is workable and good computer communication is essential.

Councilor Bond left the meeting at 7:12 p.m.

Roll Call: Members Present: Mayor Watson, Councilor Brown-Tracy, Councilor Kolnaski, Councilor Monteiro, Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., Councilor Schmidt, Councilor Sheets and Councilor Streeter
Members Absent: Councilor Bond

Discussed

Councilor Kolnaski noted that meeting room space is critical. The meeting rooms at the Annex are used by many other boards and commissions.

The Stonington Board of Selectmen meets the second and fourth Wednesdays of the month. The next joint meet was scheduled for Wednesday, November 11th at 6:00 p.m. at the Stonington Police Station.

4. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned by consensus at 7:16 p.m.