



Town of Groton, Connecticut

45 Fort Hill Road
Groton, CT 06340-4394
Town Clerk (860)441-6640
Town Manager
(860)441-6630

Meeting Minutes

Town Council Committee of the Whole

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 3, 2008

6:00 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

SPECIAL MEETING

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Watson called the meeting to order at 6:06 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

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

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

City Council: Mayor Dennis Popp, Paul Duarte, Celeste Duffy, David Hale, Marian Galbraith, Hubert Poppe

3. NEW BUSINESS

2008-0011 Joint Meeting with City of Groton (2008 Standing Referral)

See 6/3/08 discussion under 2006-0100 Thames Street Rehabilitation, 2003-0177 Renovations and Additions to Groton School Facilities - Phase I, and 2006-0305 Community Wide Fire Protection.

2006-0100 Thames Street Rehabilitation Study

Mayor Popp does not believe this item will be on a November ballot. There is an issue with making Thames Street one way or not, which has prompted a traffic study and the suggestion that a 30-day trial be held. Although a special referendum is possible, the Committee does not want to rush the project and wants to take sufficient time to make final decisions.

Councilor Sheets arrived at 6:10 p.m.

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

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

Colonel Ledyard School - A letter of interest from Mayor Popp was received by the Town Council regarding reuse of Colonel Ledyard School. A reuse committee has not been established. Town Manager Oefinger explained that the Council needs to discuss this issue in light of the City's interest in this property and their status as an adjacent property owner, how best to determine the property's value, and the potential need for a back up plan for the temporary relocation of the Senior Center in light of the objections that have been raised regarding the use of Noank School. The Town submitted its application to Noank last Tuesday. No Town use has been identified for Colonel Ledyard School and the building is in good condition. Councilor O'Beirne asked if consideration is being given to using the building for storage. Town Manager Oefinger stated that there is a plan to do a storage needs analysis, but it will probably be cheaper to build a specific storage facility rather than convert a school.

Mayor Popp stated the City needs to do something soon to address the need for office space. He

noted that there are people currently working out of trailers. The City needs to either plan for Colonel Ledyard School or do something with the auditorium at the Municipal Building. Mayor Watson suggested keeping the lines of communication open on the status of the Noank School proposal. Discussion followed on the opposition that has been expressed to the proposal and establishment of the Noank School Reuse Committee to study the long-term reuse.

Groton Heights - A Groton Heights School Reuse Committee has established, but they have not met. The Town Manager is hoping that the group will meet by the end of June or beginning of July. Even from a storage standpoint, the Town Manager does not see any use for Groton Heights, although it is currently being used for temporary storage. It does seem that everyone would like to see the building stay as an integral part of the neighborhood.

Town Manager Oefinger noted that the Board of Education leased part of the property from the Bill Memorial Library. Now that the school has been turned over to the Town, the lease should be formally changed. Mayor Popp said he would ask the City Attorney to draw up a revised lease. The Town Manager explained that the Town has no intent to market the property with the Bill Memorial piece, but would like to maintain the agreement until the ultimate use is decided. Also, the Town has received requests to access the playground and rent out parking spaces, so the Town Manager would like to bring an updated agreement to the Council.

Assistant to the Town Manager Lee Vincent noted that a memorial plaque to John Ledyard will be placed at the Bill Memorial Library sometime this summer.

Eastern Point School - A reuse committee has not been formed for Eastern Point School. Mayor Popp and Town Manager Oefinger have had discussions with Pfizer. They do not have any intended use for the property, but are interested in it as a buffer. The City has also expressed interest in the property for recreational use and it appears the interests of Pfizer and the City are not mutually exclusive. Mayor Popp noted that there are no soccer or lacrosse facilities in that area of the City. He also noted that the Town must be sensitive to Pfizer's finances. Councilor O'Beirne supported continued low level discussions with Pfizer, without establishing a committee.

2006-0305**Community Wide Fire Protection Analysis**

Town Manager Oefinger noted these discussions came out of a request by the Poquonnock Bridge Fire District for consolidation. At the time, a big issue was provision of mutual aid. A Request for Proposals was prepared, but not authorized, and the consolidation issue went away. Since that time, the Town has experienced a couple of unfortunate fires and a desire to look at the overall preparedness of the community.

The Town Manager made an effort to get the fire chiefs into meetings to see what their concerns are and what services the Town might be able to provide (vehicle maintenance, human resources, etc.) In addition, there are programs that can assess exposure throughout the Town. One example of a coordinated approach might be fire education in the schools. There is no need to have nine fire districts with seven different school programs. The Town Manager met with some of the chiefs, but some chose not to or were told not to attend by their governing bodies. However, the chiefs would all agree that there is a need to work together, reduce costs, and identify efficiencies that could be achieved. After meetings with some district members, the Town Manager now believes it may be better to get the district members together rather than the chiefs who may not feel they have the authority to speak for the district. The Town Council's desire is to provide the resources to fill in the gaps identified in an analysis.

Mayor Popp feels the chiefs have set up their own mutual aid networks and have the equipment they feel they need. The volunteer departments are more social organizations that fight fires. Councilor Streeter noted that the Public Safety Committee is waiting for the chiefs to get back to them on this issue. Mayor Popp agreed that the decision makers must be present for this issue to move forward and the fire Chiefs are not able to make financial decisions.

Councilor O'Beirne agreed that a meeting should be set up with the district presidents. Town Manager Oefinger noted that Poquonnock Bridge Fire District members are trying to organize an initial meeting, which the Town would not be present for. He emphasized that the Town is not trying to get into the fire fighting business, but needs to identify if there are any gaps in training, equipment, etc.

Councilor Galbraith stated she would welcome a town-wide assessment. The Town Manager noted this item is informational at this point, but the City is an important part of this process and it has not been represented at the previous meetings. The Town is asking the City to be at the table or indicate that they don't want to be at the table on this issue. Also, this is not about what the Town wants, but what the chiefs need. The burden is on the districts to identify what the needs are.

2008-0011 Joint Meeting with City of Groton (2008 Standing Referral)

Discussed

Other:

Pfizer Water Pollution Control Facility - Mayor Popp noted that Pfizer has discontinued use of their wastewater treatment facility which presents an opportunity for reuse of the facility. A consultant would have to be hired to look at possible uses or conversion to a sewer treatment facility. Although the City does not need the extra capacity, this is a newer facility with good upgrades and in a good location. It is difficult to get permits for this type of facility and if it is abandoned, the City may not get it back. For approximately the last week, Pfizer has been directing its wastewater into the City's sewer system on a trial basis.

Bluff Point to Preston Trail - Mayor Watson noted that the Town Council passed a resolution in support of the trail and agreeing to be part of the process. Three people were appointed to the Committee to represent Groton: Rick DeMatto, Alan Goulet, and Mayor Watson. Mayor Popp noted the City has been attending committee meetings to protect its interests. Whatever is decided, it should not cost the Groton Utilities ratepayers.

The next joint meeting with the City was scheduled for September 15, 2008 at 6:00 p.m. at the City Municipal Building.

Councilor Sheets noted the Town has a referral on recognizing residents serving in Iraq and Afghanistan and she asked if the City has a program. Mayor Popp stated no.

4. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned by consensus at 7:29 p.m.