

TOWN OF GROTON
 CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION
 REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
 April 24, 2017
 TOWN HALL ANNEX – COMMUNITY ROOM 2

Chair Pro Tem Aument called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m.

I. **ROLL CALL:**

Members Present: Chair Dee Hauber, Chair Pro Tem Scott Aument, Kathy Chase, Jane Dauphinais, Robert Frink, Patrice Granatosky, Rosanne Kotowski, Daniel Mello, Darcy Peruzzotti, and Jennifer White.

Members Absent: Commissioner Brandon Marley

II. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

- a. A motion was made by Chair Hauber, seconded by Commissioner Chase, to approve the minutes of the April 10, 2017 meeting.

Vote on the approval of the minutes: PASSED

In favor 9: (Hauber, Aument, Chase, Dauphinais, Frink, Granatosky, Kotowski, Mello, Peruzzotti)

Opposed 0:

Abstention 1: (Commission White)

III. **COMMUNICATIONS:**

- a. Chair Hauber: None.

- b. Secretary: Commissioner Aument stated that all Commissioners received correspondence from Joyce Flynn.

- c. Members:

Commissioner Kotowski stated that Joyce Flynn is in support of Peggy Adams' effort to let non-resident property owners vote in referendum.

Commissioner Dauphinais made a motion, seconded by Chair Hauber, to suspend the rules, to allow public comment at this meeting.

Commissioner Kotowski stated that there should be citizens' petitions at every meeting; it is important to hear what citizens have to say. She noted that if it allowed at this meeting, then it should be done for every meeting for consistency.

Commissioner Frink suggested limiting the number of speakers to five per meeting. He suggested Suspending the Rules for public comment whenever there are people in attendance.

Commissioner Mello stated that it makes sense to allow speakers at every meeting.

Vote on the motion to Suspend the Rules to allow public comment: PASSED

In favor 9: (Hauber, Aument, Chase, Dauphinais, Frink, Granatosky, Kotowski, Peruzzotti, White)

Opposed 1: (Mello)

Commissioner Mello made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Kotowski, to suspend the rules to allow Citizens' Petitions at every meeting.

Town Clerk Moukawsher clarified that if the Commission wanted to allow Citizens' Petitions at every meeting, then it would need to change the rule of allowing Citizens' Petitions at the first regularly scheduled meeting of the month; no suspension is needed

Commissioner Mello withdrew the motion to suspend the rules to allow Citizens' Petitions at every meeting, Commissioner Kotowski withdrew the second.

Commissioner Mello made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Kotowski, to change the Commission's rules to allow Citizens' Petitions at every meeting.

Commissioner White amended the motion, seconded by Commissioner Granatosky, to not exceed thirty-minutes of Citizens' Petitions per meeting.

Vote on the amended motion to change the Commission's rules to allow Citizens' Petitions at every meeting-not to exceed thirty minutes: PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

Mick O'Beirne, 32 New London Road, Mystic, urged the Commission to rescind or amend the vote for a mandatory budget referendum. He noted that neighboring communities have had multiple referendums before their budgets passed. He noted that referendums are expensive, voter turnout tends to be low, and people tend to not read or study the budget before they vote on it. Mr. Beirne's comments are on file in the Town Clerk's office.

John Scott, 674 Cow Hill Road, Mystic, stated that a referendum form of budgeting/government is a bad idea. He noted that we have a republic form of government which ensures the rights of the minority; he questioned how minority rights would be affected by referendum. He reviewed the effects of the Groton Good Government PAC as they related to property taxes and his tenure on the Town Council. He urged the Commission to reverse its decision on an unfettered referendum. Mr. Scott's comments are on file in the Town Clerk's office.

Peggy Adams, 30 Circle Avenue, Groton, stated that non-resident property owners pay taxes and should be able to vote in referendum. She noted that she cares about Groton. She stated that there are approximately 2,000 non-resident property owners in Groton, and she would like to think that those individuals have the greater good of Groton in mind. She urged the Commissioners to allow non-resident property owners to vote in referendum.

Niel Spillane, 147 High Street, Mystic, reviewed the history of taxation. He stated that the people who run government do the best they can with the funds they have. He stated that the government in Groton runs well. He noted that the cost of government increases every year. He stated that there is budget feedback from the Town Council and the RTM. He noted that less than five percent of hits to the Town's website were on the budget. He noted that if you do not trust the representative government to do the best job it can, you will not get it through the referendum process.

Tim Shepard, 45 Newbury Road, South Windsor, asked to be able to vote in referendum. He noted that he pays \$33,000 in taxes to Groton. He stated that he would like to vote in referendum for the money he pays in taxes. He noted that one vote per tax bill could be an option. He stated that allowing non-resident property owners to vote in referendum would be fair and simple.

IV. NEW BUSINESS:

- a. Chapter Nine
- b. Definition of Elector
- c. Consolidation of Boards and Commissions

Commissioner Dauphinais made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Frink, to amend a previous vote.

Commissioner Mello asked for clarification on Robert's Rules.

Town Clerk Moukawsher noted that amending something that has been passed is allowed.

Commissioner Granatosky clarified that a simple majority is needed because prior notice was given.

Commissioner Kotowski clarified that if this passes, every motion that has been approved by the Commission could be amended at future meetings.

The Commissioners discussed voting on the option to amend versus the specifics of the amendment.

Commissioner Granatosky noted that if the Commission approves this, then it opens the door to amending everything. She noted that if this goes through, then she will give notice that she would like to bring back the RTM. She stated that she is in the minority on many things the Commission is doing, and if the Commission starts amending things the Commission has agreed on, then it could become tyranny of the minority.

Chair Pro Tem Aument stated that if this is approved, it sets a bad precedence of spinning the wheels and not getting a lot accomplished. He noted that stipulations could be added to Section 9.11 with respect to what has been previously approved by the Commission.

Commissioner Dauphinais stated that the power of precedent is not powerful here. She noted that every time somebody wants to amend something, there would be a vote, and the discussion would take place. She stated that it is important on substance to get this matter right; this is one of the most visible, significant changes to the Charter. She stated that if the referendum is left the way it is, the Charter will not pass.

Commissioner Kotowski stated that she agrees with Commissioner Granatosky.

Commissioner Mello agreed with Commissioner Granatosky. He noted that the Commission voted on the referendum; he does not support voting in favor of amending.

Commissioner Frink stated that if the Commissioners feel differently about things now than they did when a topic was originally voted on, then they should be allowed to revisit them. He stated that he would support revisiting items that had been approved if there were meetings every week.

Commissioner Chase stated that the Commission is behind where it should be; the Commission should vote on things and then move on.

Chair Pro Tem Aument confirmed that the Commission is behind. He stated that the Commission could made modifications to the referendum without amending.

Commissioner Peruzzotti stated that she is in favor of doing the right thing. She noted that amending would give her the opportunity to voice her opinion on issues. She noted that the Commission should put forth the best product possible.

Vote on the motion to amend: FAILS

In favor 4: (Hauber, Dauphinais, Frink, Peruzzotti)

Opposed 6: (Aument, Chase, Granatosky, Kotowski, Mello, White)

Abstained 0:

Commissioner Frink referenced proposed Section 9.6.1: "Not later than February 28, ~~January 25~~, the Superintendent of Schools shall submit to the Town Manager its estimates of receipts and expenditures, including capital projects, for the next fiscal year and projections for the following fiscal year. Such estimates shall be in the form prescribed by the state board of education, plus such amplification as may be required by the Board of Finance."

Commissioner Peruzzotti questioned if the budget process timeline could be altered to reflect when the Town would know State revenues and assets.

Commissioner White stated that the budget process should not rely on the State. She noted that the Town needs to know that its proposed expenses are and what is needed; the budget should be for Groton. She stated that the missing piece would be the revenue and funding side, it should be taken into account, but the Town should not be changing its process to accommodate something that may or may not meet deadlines. She noted that we should be flexible enough to make changes if the Town no longer receives the funding that is required.

Commissioner Dauphinais stated that State Statute requires municipalities have to have a July-first fiscal year. She noted that the tax bills have to go out in June; with a fiscal year beginning on July first, the timeline cannot change very much.

Commissioner Frink made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Dauphinais, to approve the language for proposed Section 9.6.1: "Not later than February 28, ~~January 25~~, the Superintendent of Schools shall submit to the Town Manager its estimates of receipts and expenditures, including capital projects, for the next fiscal year and projections for the following fiscal year. Such estimates shall be in the form prescribed by the state board of education, plus such amplification as may be required by the Board of Finance."

Commissioner Dauphinais stated that at this point in the process, it is the Board of Education's budget, not the Superintendent's.

Commissioner Dauphinais amended the motion, seconded by Commissioner Granatosky, to the following language in proposed Section 9.6.1:
 "Not later than February 28, ~~January 25~~, the ~~Superintendent of Schools~~ Board of Education shall submit to the Town Manager its estimates of receipts and expenditures, including capital projects, for the next fiscal year and projections for the following fiscal year. Such estimates shall be in the form prescribed by the state board of education, plus such amplification as may be required by the Board of Finance."

In response to Commissioner White, Commissioner Frink stated that the Board of Finance does not direct the budget workshops; it is the number-crunching body. He noted an example would be if there was a request to hire one hundred teachers, the Board of Finance would report how much that would cost.

Commissioner Mello noted that he believes the Chair of the Board of Education should propose the budget.

Commissioner Mello made a second amended motion, seconded by Commissioner Chase, to the following language for proposed Section 9.6.1: "Not later than February 28, ~~January 25~~, the ~~Superintendent of Schools Board of Education~~ Chair of the Board of Education shall submit to the Town Manager its estimates of receipts and expenditures, including capital projects, for the next fiscal year and projections for the following fiscal year. Such estimates shall be in the form prescribed by the state board of education, plus such amplification as may be required by the Board of Finance."

In response to Commissioner Granatosky, Commissioner Frink noted that amplification refers to the Board of Finance looking for clarity from the Board of Education.

Vote on seconded amended motion for proposed language Section 9.6.1: PASSED UNANIMOUSLY
 9.6.1: "Not later than February 28, ~~January 25~~, the ~~Superintendent of Schools Board of Education~~ Chair of the Board of Education shall submit to the Town Manager its estimates of receipts and expenditures, including capital projects, for the next fiscal year and projections for the following fiscal year. Such estimates shall be in the form prescribed by the state board of education, plus such amplification as may be required by the Board of Finance."

The Commission changed, by unanimous consent, the approved language in Section 9.5.1 to the following language:

(Changing "Superintendent of Schools" to "Chair of the Board of Education")

"Based on the Council guidance ~~from the strategic planning sessions~~ and on a date set by the Town Manager but not later than February 1 ~~January 7~~ of each year, each department, office, board, commission, committee and agency of the town, excepting the ~~Superintendent of Schools~~ Chair of the Board of Education, shall submit to the Town Manager, in such form as the Town Manager may prescribe, its estimates of receipts and expenditures, including capital projects, for the ensuing fiscal year and projections for the following fiscal year. Each such department, office, board, commission, committee and agency shall be entitled to an opportunity to be heard by the Town Manager with respect to these estimates."

Commissioner Frink made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Kotowski, to approve the following proposed language of Section 9.7.1: "Not later than February 28, ~~January 25~~, the governing body of any political subdivision within the Town requesting town appropriations, shall submit to the Town Manager its estimates of receipts and expenditures, including capital projects, for the ensuing fiscal year and projections for the following fiscal year. Such estimates shall be in the form prescribed by the Council, plus such amplification as may be required by the Board of Finance."

Commissioner White noted that there should be consistency and requirements for the format of the financial data.

Commissioner Granatosky stated that the Town Council should determine the format.

The Commissioners discussed the Town Council's power to determine the format of the estimates.

Commissioner Mello moved the question on Section 9.7.1, seconded by Commissioner Kotowski.

PASSED Unanimously

Commissioner Granatosky and Town Clerk Moukawsher noted that State Statutes need to be checked to ensure the State does not prescribe a certain method of reporting for the Board of Education's budget.

Vote on the proposed language of Section 9.7.1: PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

"Not later than February 28, ~~January 25~~, the governing body of any political subdivision within the Town requesting town appropriations, shall submit to the Town Manager its estimates of receipts and expenditures, including capital projects, for the ensuing fiscal year and projections for the following fiscal year. Such estimates shall be in the form prescribed by the Council, plus such amplification as may be required by the Board of Finance.

Commissioner Frink made a motion, seconded by Chair Hauber, to approve the proposed Section 9.8, 9.8.1:

"9.8 Duties of the Town Manager on the budget.

9.8.1 Not later than March 1, ~~February 1~~, the Town Manager shall present to the Board of Finance a proposed Town budget, in the general form and content described in Section 9.2, including recommendations of the amounts to be appropriated for the several departments, departmental functions, offices or agencies of the Town for the ensuing fiscal year, and projections for the following fiscal year for all items, as well as the requests of the Superintendent of Schools and the Subdivisions."

Commissioner Frink amended the motion, seconded by Chair Hauber, to approve the following language of Section 9.8.1: "Not later than March 1, ~~February 1~~, the Town Manager shall present to the Board of Finance and the Town Council a proposed Town budget, in the general form and content described in Section 9.2, including recommendations of the amounts to be appropriated for the several departments, departmental functions, offices or agencies of the Town for the ensuing fiscal year, and projections for the following fiscal year for all items, as well as the requests of the Superintendent of Schools and the Subdivisions."

Commissioner Frink made a second amendment to the motion, seconded by Commissioner Chase, to approve the following language for Section 9.8.1: "Not later than March 1, ~~February 1~~, the Town Manager shall present to the Board of Finance and the Town Council a proposed Town budget, in the general form and content described in Section 9.2, including recommendations of the amounts to be appropriated for the several departments, departmental functions, offices or agencies of the Town for the ensuing fiscal year, and projections for the following fiscal year for all items, as well as the requests of the ~~Superintendent of Schools~~ Chair of the Board of Education and the Subdivisions.

Chair Hauber stated that she believes the Superintendent will want to speak on the Board of Education's budget.

Commissioner Frink stated that he is happy with the elected bodies taking ownership of their budgets.

The Commissioners discussed keeping the language as the Chair of the Board of Education for consistency.

Vote on second amended motion for proposed language Section 9.8.1: PASSED

"Not later than March 1, ~~February 1~~, the Town Manager shall present to the Board of Finance and the Town Council a proposed Town budget, in the general form and content described in Section 9.2, including recommendations of the amounts to be appropriated for the several departments, departmental functions, offices or agencies of the Town for the ensuing fiscal year, and projections for the following fiscal year for all items, as well as the requests of the ~~Superintendent of Schools~~ Chair of the Board of Education and the Subdivisions."

In favor 9: (Aument, Chase, Dauphinais, Frink, Granatosky, Kotowski, Mello, Peruzzotti, White)

Opposed 1: (Hauber)

Abstained 0

Commissioner Frink made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Kotowski, to approve the proposed language in Section 9.8.2: "The Manager's proposed budget shall faithfully incorporate the guidance described in Section 9.4 except that if, in the Manager's judgement, deviations from the guidance are warranted, the Manager shall provide explanation for those cases."

Commissioner Frink clarified that this refers to the Town's budget. He noted that the Manager will follow the guidance, however, if guidance is not followed, then there should be an explanation for it.

The Commissioners discussed grammatical changes to proposed Section 9.8.2. They discussed removing "in the Manager's judgment" from the Section.

Commissioner Chase amended the motion, seconded by Granatosky, to the following language in Section 9.8.2: "The Manager's proposed budget shall faithfully incorporate the guidance described in Section 9.4 except that if, ~~in the Manager's judgement~~, deviations from the guidance are warranted, the Manager shall provide explanation for those cases."

Commissioner Frink noted that he wants the Manager's judgment included in this section.

Vote on the amended motion to approve the proposed language of Section 9.8.2: PASSED

"The Manager's proposed budget shall faithfully incorporate the guidance described in Section 9.4 except that if, ~~in the Manager's judgement~~, deviations from the guidance are warranted, the Manager shall provide explanation for those cases."

In favor 8: (Hauber, Aument, Chase, Dauphinais, Granatosky, Kotowski, Mello, White)

Opposed 2: (Frink and Peruzzotti)

Abstained 0

Commissioner Frink made a motion, seconded by Chair Hauber, to approve the proposed language for Section 9.8.3:

"The Town Manager shall not act on the budget estimates of the Superintendent of Schools or the subdivisions. ~~Upon the request of the Board of Finance, t~~The Town Manager may provide comments on the budget estimates of the Superintendent of Schools and any political subdivision. ~~The Town Manager shall present reasons for all the Town Manager's recommendations with other such information as may be required by the Board of Finance.~~"

Commissioner Dauphinais noted that currently the Town Manager can comment on subdivisions' budgets but not the Board of Education's budget.

Commissioner Frink stated that this Section clarifies that the Manager cannot act on those budgets clear to the public.

Commissioner Mello noted that the Board of Finance could provide comments on the budget.

Commissioner Frink noted that the Town Manager could make comments on the Capital projects of the Board of Education.

Commissioner Dauphinais noted that this Section would clarify that the Town Manager could comment on the Board of Education and Subdivisions' budgets.

Commissioner Kotowski stated that this year the Town Manager commented on the Board of Education's budget.

In response to Commissioner Granatosky, Town Clerk Moukawsher stated that there may be State Statutes that would prohibit the Town Manager from commenting on the Board of Education's budget.

Commissioner Granatosky made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Mello, to table approval of the proposed language of Section 9.8.3: PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

The Commissioners discussed adding additional meetings to the Commission's schedule.

Commissioner Frink made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Dauphinais, to approve the proposed language of Section 9.8.4: "The Town Manager shall recommend, and include in his proposed budget, those Capital projects to be undertaken during the ensuing fiscal year and the methods of financing the same in accordance with Section 9.2.2. All proposed capital projects, regardless of the proposed method or source of funding, shall be included in the Budget."

In response to Commissioner Granatosky, Commissioner Frink noted that the proposed budget for the next year only contains the Capital projects for the next year. He stated that the CIP, the five-year plan, is in Section 9.2.2. He stated that this section refers to the next year's projects.

Vote on approving proposed language in Section 9.8.4: PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

"The Town Manager shall recommend, and include in his proposed budget, those Capital projects to be undertaken during the ensuing fiscal year and the methods of financing the same in accordance with Section 9.2.2. All proposed Capital projects, regardless of the proposed method or source of funding, shall be included in the Budget."

V. **Adjournment:**

A motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Mello, seconded by Commissioner Chase. Chair Pro Tem Aument adjourned the meeting at 8:30 p.m. The motion carried unanimously.

Attest:

Scott Aument, Secretary

Proposed Budget Development Timeline

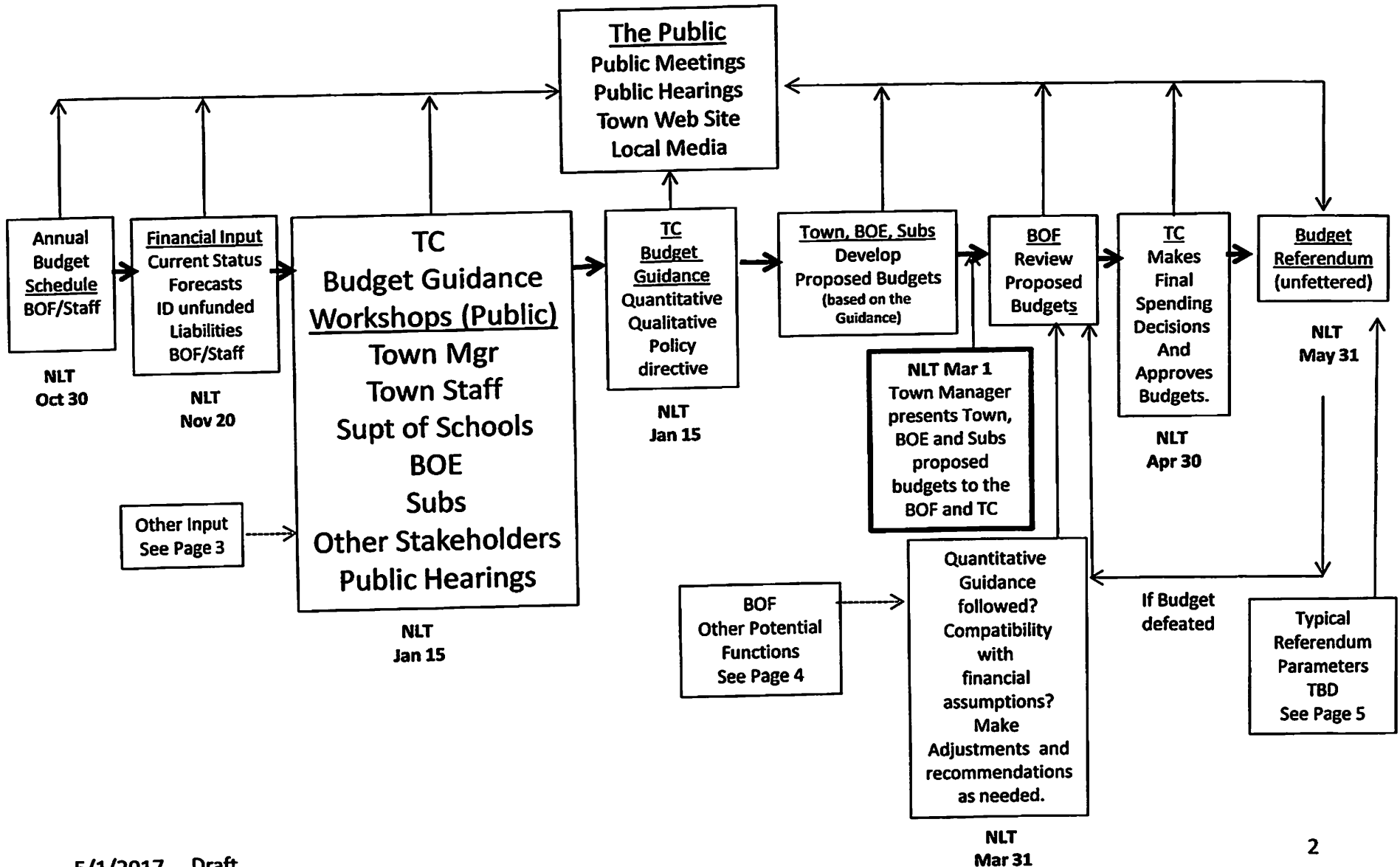
With enhanced details

April 24, 2017

CRC Meeting

Proposed Budget Process Outline

Updated from 4/10/2017 Meeting



Other Input

Budget Guidance Workshops

1. Town Council Goals

(Chapter V The Town Council, Ordinances)

Town Council goals naturally feed into budget guidance as well as establishing accountability for elected officials. These are examples of Goals from the 1997 Groton Town Council.

- Limit the cost and size of Town Government
- Limit budget increases
- Improve efficiency of Town agencies
- Listen to the expressed desires of citizens and taxpayers
- Seek advice from professional government administrators

2. Town Council 'On-the Road' Listening Meetings through-out the Year

(Chapter V The Town Council, Ordinances)

These would be, 'bring the government to the people' events, and would help shape budget guidance conversation.

- Could be conducted out in the voting districts at various times throughout the year.
- TC could update citizens on accomplishments (or lack of) and receive citizen comments.

3. Performance Measures

(Chapter VII. The Town Manager; Departments)

Town Departments would have performance measures. Refer to Town of Manchester, CT, Annual Operations and Performance Report, for the fiscal year ending June 2015, for example (emailed to CRC members on March 20).

Performance measures would provide important information to the Budget Workshop participants to help them make more informed decisions such as deciding whether a program needs to be expanded, altered, or discontinued in future years.

BOF
Other Potential Functions
(Chapter IV The Board of Finance)

- Support the Town Council in Town Financial matters, research and provide decision support information.
- Function as the year-round 'Financial Watchdogs' for the Citizens of Groton (deep dives).
- Provide critical analysis and visibility to the Town's public financial reports and transactions (more deep dives).
- Make informed revenue forecasts for mill-rate setting purposes.
- Oversee* funding for Capital Improvement Program (CIP).
- Oversee* funding for Retirement Benefit Programs, make recommendations.
- Perform 'What-If' analysis on spending options.
- Perform Life-Cycle cost analysis of proposed initiatives.
- Determine Cost / Benefit of Town surplus assets.
- Conduct audits when appropriate.

*Oversee – Provide watchful and responsible care

Referendum Conditions for an Unfettered Budget Referendum

(Chapter IX Budget and Finance)

Typical Parameters - TBD

- Minimum voter turn-out requirement (expressed as a percent of electors/tax payers)
- Bifurcated Yes/No (Town and Education budgets voted on separately or as one)
- Number of Budget Referendums per year (varies from 1 to no-limit)
- Referendum asks for reasons for 'No' votes (Is the Budget too high or too low)
- Other?