

MEETING MINUTES
TOWN OF GROTON
CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION
JUNE 06, 2016
TOWN HALL ANNEX-COMMUNITY ROOM 1

Chairperson Dee Hauber called the meeting to order at 6:34 p.m.

I. ROLL CALL

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

Absent: Brandon Marley

Also present were Town Clerk Betsy Moukawsher and Office Assistant II Nathan Caron

II. PUBLIC HEARING

Town Clerk Betsy Moukawsher read the notice for the Public Hearing that appeared in the New London Day on Wednesday, June 01, 2016.

1. John Scott, 674 Cow Hill Road, Mystic, stated that he was a Town Councilor during a time when a property re-evaluation was occurring. He noted that the Groton Good Government PAC was formed to represent property owners in voting district seven. He noted that the RTM brings a level of fairness to local government. He stated that fairness and balance should be kept with a Town Council and RTM form of government. He stated that there should be consideration given to creating a RTM Economic Development Commission. He noted the current form of government in Groton is beneficial because it represents all people, and if changes are made to Groton's government, it should be people and not its form.
2. Neal Gardner, 111 Mitchell Street, stated that there needs to be a Referendum on the Annual Budget in Groton, and part-time and seasonal residents should be allowed to vote in it. He stated that the RTM should be eliminated. He stated that retired Town employees should not be allowed to serve in elected offices, and he spoke in favor of terms limits for all elected persons.
3. Mick O'Beirne, 32 New London Road, stated that he sympathizes with the work that the Commission is going to be doing. He noted that Section 6.2 reflects an elected versus an appointed Town Clerk. He stated that the Town Clerk should be appointed with approval from the Town Council. He stated that he opposes a budget referendum. He stated that the average tax payer may not spend time to research aspects of the budget. He noted that referendum voter attendance can be low, and if the Revision Commission approves a referendum on the budget, then there should be a requirement for a minimum four-percent budget increase and twenty-percent voter attendance.
4. Jim Nault, 41 Pearl Street, stated that as a member of the RTM, he worked hard to reduce the budget increase. He noted that he is concerned about future mil rate increases that mirror those of the past two years. He stated that he fears property values in Groton will decrease if the mil rate continues to increase, and a lower grad list will trigger tax increases. He urged the Commission to think about changes that would help the Town of Groton get back to a fiscally

responsible budget process. He stated that Section 2.6 (authority for consolidating) could be looked at. He noted that there is an avenue for consolidation, but the process is difficult as it stands. He concluded by stating that he supports a budget referendum and supports suggestions on voter turnout requirements and budget increase caps.

5. Jeff Pritchard, 31 W. Mystic Avenue, Mystic, stated any decision to combine Town Commissions should be researched before they are made.
6. Patti Nugent, 47 Cobblestone Drive, stated that the status quo is not working, and she supports a budget referendum.
7. Andrew Lavery, 210 Poquonnock Road, stated he supports a Strong Mayor form of Government. He stated that he does not have anything against Town Manager Oefinger. He stated that Town Councilors should not be elected at large but from geographical areas of Town. He noted that he is favor of a budget referendum for yearly budgets and mid-year amendments if there is a minimum twenty-percent percent increase in the budget. He stated that he supports separating the Town of Groton and Board of Education budgets for referendum purposes.
8. Bruce McDermott, 328 Noank Road, stated that there may be a conflict of interest on the RTM when members who are Town employees vote on line items that impact them. He stated that he supports separating the Town and Board of Education budgets for the purposes of referendum. He questioned why the budget increases every year. He stated that RTM and Town Councilors do not want to say no to increases in budgets, and their vote is often based upon emotions. He stated that he is in favor of a referendum.
9. Heika Holley, 189 Breezy Knoll, Mystic, stated that her property taxes have increased since she purchased her house, and she supports a budget referendum. She stated that her gut feeling is that the taxpayer money is being wasted. She noted that a street sweeper works on her street when there is no need for street sweeping.
10. Fred Kent, 121 Warren Ave, stated that his concerns are based on taxing and spending, and noted that there is a lot of taxation without representation. He stated that all residents should have a say in taxing and spending by registered voters and non-resident tax payers. He stated that notices of absentee ballots for referendum should be sent to the address on the tax bills. He stated that not all divisions of Groton are represented, such as Groton Long Point.
11. Rosanne Kotowski, 24 Ann Avenue, Mystic, read communications from the following citizens:
(Communications received and included in the record)
Edward Ettinger, 174 Cedar Road, Mystic.
Christopher Daniels, 697 Noank Road, Mystic
Deborah Clarkson, 37 Marlin Drive
Jay Dempsey, 22 S. Prospect Street
Stephen Banks, 199 Pequot Avenue, Mystic
David Luis Costello, 70 Benham Road
Shelley Gardner, 25 New London Road, Mystic
Anne Marie and Dick Dickson, 217 Seneca Drive
Jacqueline M. Keller, 104 Lamphere Road, Mystic

12. Patricia Sparkman, 52 Sound Breeze Ave., stated that she supports the Charter Revision Commission and a budget referendum because a referendum would force elected officials to represent the people who elected them.
13. Genevieve Cerf, 17 Crescent Street, noted that she recently sold her house due to property tax increases. She stated that in the past she served the Town as a member of the RTM and the Town Council. She stated that she was frustrated that the Town Council and RTM were not able to curtail the budget process. She stated that the Town Manager has too much power and control over the budget and commissions, especially when it comes to specific funds such as the Fleet Fund and the Retirement Fund. She stated that the budget is very complicated. She stated that a referendum would make the will of the people known. She concluded by stating that the RTM should remain and there should be a budget referendum.
14. Aundre Bumgardner, 45 Shennecossett Road, stated that that Stonington's referendums result in minimal budget increases, and he supports budget referenda. He stated that budget hearings should be held in the Senior Center. He stated that he is against the status quo, and urges the Commission to consider budget referendums, and he suggested ways in which to draft referendum language.
15. Jean Claude Ambroise, 169 Shennecossett Parkway, stated that a major flaw in the budget process is the eventual tax increase because of increases in expenses. He stated that there is often bloating of higher-salaried individuals, and a salary cap may be needed. He noted that he supports term limits for elected officials.
16. Commissioner Scott Aument read correspondence from the following citizens:
Jim Zamzes, 248 Fort Hill Road.
Mike Boucher, 11 Hillside Avenue.
Justin and Fran Camaretta, 18 Adly Court.

A motion was made by Commissioner Granatosky, seconded by Commissioner Frink to close the Public Hearing. The motion carried unanimously. Chairperson Hauber closed the Public Hearing at 7:45 p.m.

Commissioner Marley arrived at 7:06 p.m.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion was made by Commissioner Peruzzotti, seconded by Commissioner Granatosky, to approve the minutes of the May 23, 2016 meeting. The motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Frink stated that he was looking to have minutes written in action-item form.

IV. COMMUNICATIONS

- a. Chairperson: None.
- b. Secretary: Commissioner Aument stated that minutes will be submitted before the next meeting.
- c. Members: None.

V. NEW BUSINESS

Town Clerk Moukawsher distributed the meeting schedule. Chairperson Hauber stated that future meetings will be in Community Room 2 at the Town Hall Annex.

- a. Adoption of Meeting Schedule.
A motion was made by Commissioner Granatosky, seconded by Commissioner Mello, to approve the meeting schedule. The motion carried unanimously.

- b. Provision for Citizen Comments:

In response to Chairperson Hauber's question, Commissioner Kotowski stated that she supports citizens' comments at every meeting.

Commissioner Frink stated that he supports citizens' comments be allowed once a month.

Commissioner Granatosky stated that there are ways for citizens to contact Commissioners. She stated that she does not support public comment at every meeting.

Commissioner Peruzzotti stated that she supports citizens' comments once a month with time limits.

Chairperson Dee Hauber stated that she supports limiting the time spent on public comment at each meeting so the Commission can get more work done at the meetings.

Commissioner Aument stated that he was leaning towards public comment at every meeting. He stated that the Town of Groton's website should be more accessible in terms of locating contact information for Commissioners.

Town Clerk Moukawsher stated that the e-mail addresses for the Commissioners will be placed on the Town's website.

Commissioner Frink made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Peruzzotti, that public comment will be held once a month on the first meeting of the month.

Commissioner Kotowski amended the motion, seconded by Commissioner Mello, to have public comment at every meeting. The motion failed by a vote of 3-8-0.

Commissioner Granatosky amended the motion, seconded by Commissioner Frink, to have public comment to public hearings only. 4-7-0 (Failed)

Commissioner Granatosky, amended the original motion, seconded by Commissioner Frink, to have citizens comments on the first meeting of the month, limited to fifteen minutes total. The motion passed by a vote of 7-4-0.

Commissioner Dauphinais questioned what approach the Commission will take when discussing parts of the Town Charter.

Chairperson Hauber stated that a list of topics will be generated with public input, and potential solutions to problems should be informed by other towns and how they conduct business.

Commissioner Peruzzotti stated that she would like to see what issues are important to the people.

Chairperson Hauber noted that the Commission should look at the Charter and determine which areas need to be addressed to solve problems.

Commissioner Frink stated that he supports looking at the Charter and analyzing how problems could be addressed.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Marley, seconded by Commissioner Dauphinais. The motion carried unanimously. Chairperson Hauber adjourned the meeting at 8:03 p.m.