



Town of Groton, Connecticut

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

Meeting Minutes

Representative Town Meeting

Moderator Scott L. Newsome, Representatives Karin Adams, Robert Bailey, Jeanne Baker, Joe Baril, Alicia T. Bauer, Rafael Burgos, Jr., Clarence Casper, Bobbi Jo Cini, Christine Conley, Lynn Crockett Hubbard, Susan Dean-Shinbrot, Luanne E. DeMatto, Jim Evans, Thomas A. Frickman, Bob Garcia, Nancy Gilly, Matthew G. Longino, Jim Loughlin, Emily Maher, Brandon Marley, Jackie Massett, Lisa McCabe, Bruce A. McDermott, Roscoe L. Merritt, Jim Nault, Kathy Neugent, Lian Obrey, Juliette M. Parker, Richard J. Pasqualini, Jr., Carolann Quinn, Dutcha Slieker-Hersant, Joan Steinfeld, Irma J. Streeter, James L. Streeter, Archie Swindell, Patricia Wagner, Lori A. Watrous, Gary Welles, Ivy R. Williams, and Jonathan Wilson.

Wednesday, January 13, 2016

7:30 PM

Groton Senior Center

Regular Meeting

Moderator Scott Newsome called the meeting to order at 7:38 pm.

A. ROLL CALL

Members Present: Moderator Newsome, Rep. Adams, Rep. Bailey, Rep. Baril, Rep. Bauer, Rep. Burgos, Jr., Rep. Casper, Rep. Cini, Rep. Conley, Rep. Deane-Shinbrot, Rep. DeMatto, Rep. Evans, Rep. Frickman, Rep. Garcia, Rep. Gilly, Rep. Longino, Rep. Loughlin, Rep. Maher, Rep. Massett, Rep. McCabe, Rep. Merritt, Rep. Nault, Rep. Neugent, Rep. Obrey, Rep. Quinn, Rep. Steinfeld, Rep. Streeter, Rep. Streeter, Rep. Swindell, Rep. Wagner, Rep. Watrous, Rep. Welles, Rep. Williams and Rep. Wilson
Members Absent: Rep. Baker, Rep. Hubbard, Rep. Marley, Rep. McDermott, Rep. Parker and Rep. Pasqualini Jr.

He stated that 34 members were present and a quorum was declared.

Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Director of Planning and Development Services Jonathan Reiner, Development Manager Paige Bronk, Town Mayor Bruce Flax, Town Councilor Bonnie Nault, State Representative John F. Scott IV, Town Clerk Betsy Moukawsher and Office Assistant II Michael Thorpe.

B. MOMENT OF SILENCE AND SALUTE TO THE FLAG

The members observed a moment of silence followed by the Salute to the Flag.

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF DECEMBER 9, 2015

A motion to approve the minutes was made by Rep. Baril, seconded by Rep. Merritt and so voted unanimously.

D. CITIZENS' PETITIONS

Kathy Vanner, 26 Shannon Lane, stated there was no need for more retail businesses to be built on the William Seely School property. She asked Groton officials to give the property back to the community. She suggested building a community pool or a movie theater on the property.

Joel Vanner, 26 Shannon Lane, suggested updating existing strip malls. He stated that building a new strip mall in a residential area makes no sense.

David Vanner, 26 Shannon Lane, stated that there was no need for another strip mall and there would be traffic concerns if the plan was approved. He suggested that the William Seely School property be used by the Town.

Luke Varanko, 17 Senkow Drive, cited negative consumer growth in the Town of Groton and he stated that the housing market was flat. He requested that the school property be used to benefit

the community.

Maxine Varanko, 17 Senkow Drive, objected to the process of the sale of the school property. The homeowners and landowners were left out of the decision. She mentioned a similar situation in Clinton, Connecticut, where the town engaged the citizens. She urged the Town of Groton to proceed slowly with the decision to sell the William Seely School for commercial use and to broaden their options for the use of it.

Patricia Judson, 7 Senkow Ave, expressed her concerns for the suggested use of the William Seely School. She talked about her experience with eminent domain in the area. She stated her concern with increased noise in addition to the current traffic on I-95 and Route 12. She noted that within 10 plaza areas on Route 12, from the intersections of Walker Hill Road to Buddington Road, there were a total of 30 empty storefronts and 13 empty single properties marketed as for sale or for lease. She continued to say that more stores and shopping plazas are not needed. She stated that we need to reuse and remarket what we already have. She quoted an article from the Day Newspaper, stating that the Town Council initiated a study by a New York consulting firm which reported, if you redevelop these older areas you could improve the economics of the Town, which would in turn boost the number of residence moving into or remaining in Groton. She also expressed her concerns about increased traffic, noise levels, high intensity lighting and property values if the RTM approves this sale. She asked the Town to protect the rights of residential property owners.

Gretchen Chipperini, 87 Phoenix Drive, stated that the sale of the William Seely School along with her 6 acres of commercially zoned property to Kincora Development could potentially put Groton on the map. She believes that this development would attract consumers and replace the antiquated shopping plazas of today. She pointed to a diagram of her property next to the William Seely School property and informed the RTM she was in discussion with the potential developers. She also announced that if this sale is approved, the developers should be required to install noise and light barriers and have certain traffic restrictions or she would not sell.

Thomas Potter, 154 Walker Hill Road, stated his opinions regarding the sale of the William Seely School property. He voiced his concern about the quality of life. He stated that he had a meeting with Mark Mancuso from Kincora Development to discuss concerns such as noise, lighting abatement, primary and emergency vehicular access to property. He stated that the major concern is focused on where a prospective developer would plan to put primary access for a commercial development. He spoke of a petition with 77 signatures that was presented to the Town Council on December 15th. It stated that the petitioners requested written assurances that primary access for any commercial development of the school property be on Route 12. He added that the precedent must be set now, because sometime in the future the Town will again be facing another possible school closing.

Elizabeth Potter St. Louis, 15 Crown Knoll Court, spoke against any commercial development of the William Seely School property. She stated that many people, including her parents, have resided in that neighborhood for decades and that it would not be fair to displace them at this time in their lives.

Joan Chambers, 130 Walker Hill Road, stated her family has lived on Walker Hill for close to 90 years. She hopes to pass down her home to her children and grandchildren. She commented that the Kincora Development project would lower property values and added that the elderly were being taxed out of their homes.

Lyn Potter, Ron St. Louis, Lindsay Potter, Geoffrey Wood and Warren Seabury recanted their prerogative to speak under Citizens Petitions.

E. RECEPTION OF COMMUNICATIONS

Reps. Baker, Hubbard, McDermott, Parker and Pasqualini notified the Town Clerk that they were unable to attend the meeting.

Moderator Newsome welcomed Dutcha Sliker-Hersant, the newest member of the RTM representing the 6th District.

The moderator reminded the RTM Education Committee of a joint meeting of the Groton Town Council and Board of Education on January 19th at 6PM in Community Room 1 at the Town Hall Annex. Immediately following at 7PM, there will be a Board of Education budget meeting in Community Room 3.

F. REPORT OF THE TOWN MANAGER

1. Financial report

Mr. Oefinger reported that the Fund Balance as of December 31, 2015 was approximately \$9.1 million. The General Contingency amount for FYE 2016 was appropriated at \$550,000 and no transfers are pending approval. He stated that the Capital Reserve Fund balance as of December 31, 2015 was estimated to be \$986,951. He stated that all figures are unaudited.

2. Monthly briefing

Mr. Oefinger highlighted items from the Town Managers News, including the Neighborhood Assistance Act, Town employees participation in the 2016 United Way Campaign, the Human Services Holiday Distributions and the celebration of Benedict Arnold's 275th Birthday.

G. REPORT ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Director Jonathan Reiner and Development Manager Paige Bronk gave a brief power point presentation on the Town of Groton Economic & Community Development overview.

They stated that Economic Development seeks to improve the economic well-being and quality of life for a community, by creating jobs that facilitate growth and provide a stable tax base. They explained that Community Development includes public services, streets & sidewalks, housing, parks and new projects and how Economic/Community Development interface with each other. They discussed Business Development and ongoing Economic Development efforts. They discussed the findings of the recent market analysis which depicts the Town's strengths, weaknesses and opportunities. It was announced that this report is available on the Town website. The presentation ended with other Economic Development priorities which included the Airport Development Zone, tax incentives and property redevelopment ideas.

Rep. Neugent asked to direct attention to the numerous empty storefronts in downtown Mystic. She requested follow up reports at RTM monthly meetings.

Rep. Swindell stated that he looks forward to economic progress in the near future. He also suggested that the Town look into Biotech Companies to see if they would be interested in doing business in Groton.

H. REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

None.

I. LIAISON REPORTS

None.

Liaison appointments have been made as follows:

Town Council - Jim Loughlin

Town & City Council/BOE/RTM - Jackie Massett, Lori Watrous

Energy Efficiency and Conservation Committee - Clarence Casper

*Economic Development Commission - Susan Deane-Shinbrot, Lian Obrey
School Planning Task Force - Alicia Bauer, Jim Evans
2012 Plan of Conservation and Development & Municipal Coastal Program Steering Ctee - open
Golf Advisory Board - Christine Conley
Trails Coordinating Task Force - Bruce McDermott*

J. COMMITTEE REPORTS**1. FINANCE - Chairman Quinn**

Chairman Quinn read the minutes of the meeting of the Finance Committee held on January 13, 2016. (Minutes are attached to the permanent record.)

Rep. Massett asked about information that will be provided to the RTM before the vote on the sale of the William Seely School.

Rep. Wilson requested a copy of the sales and purchase agreement be available to the RTM before a vote on the sale of the William Seely School.

Chairman Quinn stated that the committee met to discuss the referral and assign information gathering tasks in preparation for the next committee meeting. All gathered information will be presented to the RTM before a vote is taken on the sale of the William Seely School.

A motion to accept the minutes was made by Rep. Wilson, seconded by Rep. Massett and so voted unanimously.

2. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT & SERVICES - Chairman Conley

No meeting, no report.

3. EDUCATION - Chairman Neugent

No meeting, no report.

4. RECREATION - Chairman Wilson

No meeting, no report.

5. PUBLIC SAFETY - Chairman McDermott

No meeting, no report.

6. PUBLIC WORKS - Chairman Dean-Shinbrot

No meeting, no report.

7. RULES & PROCEDURES - Chairman Massett

Chairman Massett read the minutes of the meeting of the Temporary Rules and Procedures Committee held on January 13, 2016. Minutes are attached to the permanent record.

A motion to accept the minutes was made by Rep. Massett, seconded by Rep. DeMatto.

Chairman Massett stated that the committee recommends that the rules of the 29th RTM remain in place until the language changes as proposed are presented to the current RTM at its February meeting for a vote.

The vote on acceptance of the minutes carried unanimously.

K. BUDGET DISCUSSIONS

None.

L. OTHER BUSINESS

Rep. DeMatto suggested that at any future power point presentations, that the information be

available in a printed copy and handed out at the meeting. She stated that it is difficult for many people in the audience to see the projection screen. She also requested that a link to the market analysis be made available on the Town website and that it be sent to all RTM members.

M. ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn at 9:05 p.m. was made by Rep. J. Streeter, seconded by Rep. Baril and so voted unanimously.

Attest:

*Betsy Moukawsher, Town Clerk
Clerk of the RTM*

Michael Thorpe, Town Clerk Office Assistant II