



Town of Groton, Connecticut

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

Meeting Minutes - **Draft**

Representative Town Meeting

Moderator Jean-Claude Ambroise, Representatives Karin Adams, Scott W. Aument, Sr., Joseph Baril, Nancy E. Barnhart, Alicia Bauer, Genevieve Cerf, Susan Chase-Hildebrand, Michael Collins, Christine Conley, Susan Deane-Shinbrot, Luanne E. DeMatto, Nancy Driscoll, Dave Ferreira, Neal Gardner, Nancy E. Gilly, Patrice Granatosky, Lorraine M. Greubel, Karen Hatcher, Keith L. Hedrick, Conrad F. Heede, Lynn Crockett Hubbard, Rosanne E. Kotowski, Jim Loughlin, Jackie Massett, Bruce A. McDermott, Roscoe Merritt, Scott Newsome, Richard J. Pasqualini, Jr., Pam Ryley, Jack Sebastian, Dana S. Semeraro, Richard Semeraro, Joan Steinfeld, Irma Streeter, Mark Svencer, Archie C. Swindell, Lori A. Watrous, Amanda L. Whewell and Ivy R. Williams

Wednesday, March 13, 2013

7:30 PM

Groton Senior Center

REGULAR MEETING

A. ROLL CALL

Moderator Jean-Claude Ambroise called the meeting to order at 7:33 p.m.

31 members were present, and a quorum was declared. (Rep. Williams arrived later during the meeting.)

The Moderator reported that Reps. Barnhart, Chase-Hildebrand, Hedrick, Ryley and Svencer notified the Town Clerk of their absence.

Members Present: Moderator Ambroise, Rep. Adams, Rep. Aument, Rep. Baril, Rep. Bauer, Rep. Collins, Rep. Conley, Rep. Deane-Shinbrot, Rep. DeMatto, Rep. Driscoll, Rep. Ferreira, Rep. Gardner, Rep. Gilly, Rep. Granatosky, Rep. Greubel, Rep. Hatcher, Rep. Heede, Rep. Hubbard, Rep. Kotowski, Rep. Loughlin, Rep. Massett, Rep. McDermott, Rep. Merritt, Rep. Pasqualini Jr., Rep. D. Semeraro, Rep. Sebastian, Rep. R. Semeraro, Rep. Steinfeld, Rep. Swindell, Rep. Watrous and Rep. Williams

Members Absent: Rep. Barnhart, Rep. Cerf, Rep. Chase-Hildebrand, Rep. Hedrick, Rep. Newsome, Rep. Ryley, Rep. Streeter, Rep. Svencer and Rep. Whewell

Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Town Clerk Betsy Moukawsher and Assistant Town Clerk Sally Whitney.

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 FEBRUARY 13, 2013

A motion that the minutes be approved was made by Rep. Adams, seconded by Rep. Baril.

The vote to approve the minutes carried 27 in favor, 3 abstentions. (Abstaining: Reps. Gilly, Hatcher and Watrous).

D. CITIZENS' PETITIONS

None.

E. RECEPTION OF COMMUNICATIONS

Moderator Ambroise mentioned that members should have received the Moderator's letter and the Town Council Budget Review Calendar. He noted that the list of accounts assigned to RTM committees will be forthcoming and encouraged members to attend or watch the Town Council Budget Session pertaining to the accounts assigned to their committee.

The Moderator reported that he attended the Town Trails Task Force Committee meeting. He asked for a volunteer to serve as the RTM liaison to this committee.

Rep. McDermott volunteered to serve in this capacity.

2013-0073

Adoption of an Ordinance Changing and Redefining the Voting Districts

This matter was Referred to the RTM Rules & Procedures Committee, due back on April 10, 2013.

F. REPORT OF THE TOWN MANAGER

1. Financial report

Mr. Oefinger reported that the Fund Balance as of February 28, 2013 is approximately \$9.3 million; the General Contingency balance is \$275,608; the Capital Reserve balance is \$1,274,085.

2. Monthly briefing

The Town Manager highlighted various items from the Town Manager's News.

G. REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

No report.

H. LIAISON REPORTS

Town Council/City Council/Board of Education/RTM -Rep. Watrous

Rep. Watrous summarized the items discussed at the meetings held on February 6 and March 6, 2013.

I. COMMITTEE REPORTS

1. FINANCE - Chairman Granatosky

No meeting, no report.

2. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT & SERVICES - Chairman Ferreira

No meeting, no report.

3. EDUCATION - Chairman Hedrick

No meeting, no report.

4. RECREATION - Chairman Streeter

No meeting, no report.

5. PUBLIC SAFETY - Chairman Pasqualini

No meeting, no report.

6. PUBLIC WORKS - Chairman Collins

No meeting, no report.

7. RULES & PROCEDURES - Chairman Massett

Chairman Massett read the minutes of the meeting held on March 13, 2013. (Minutes are attached to the permanent record.)

(Rep. Williams arrived during the chairman's report.)

Motion to approve the minutes was made by Rep. Massett, seconded by Rep. Baril. In response to Rep. Swindell, Chairman Massett read the current RTM Rule 8.5.2 - Decorum in Debate for the record. The vote to approve the minutes carried unanimously.

2013-0054 Decorum in debate/Time limit on consideration of new items

DECORUM IN DEBATE/TIME LIMIT ON CONSIDERATION OF NEW ITEMS

This matter was No action taken.

J. BUDGET DISCUSSIONS

Rep. Aument provided information from the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report noting the decline in Town revenue for the last two years. He mentioned that the Town's Grand List has

decreased \$167 million in the last two years and that the budget increased for the last two years. He stated the budget went up \$2.5 million last year. He feels that this is an unacceptable trend. He believes the RTM committees should scrutinize the budget to identify essential services and find reductions in every department before the annual budget meeting. He challenged his colleagues to do their part during the committees' review of the budget.

A MOTION to request the Town Manager to give guidance to the RTM in order to develop a budget with no mill rate increase was made by Rep. Sebastian, seconded by Rep. Gardner.

Rep. Sebastian stated that the budget and taxes continually increase and that numerous taxpayers have spoken to him about preventing an increase in taxes. He noted that the budget should be developed so that it does not cause an increase in the mill rate.

Members discussed the fact that it is too late for the Manager to develop another budget. The Town Manager's proposed budget was completed and sent to the printer on March 8, 2013. Other items mentioned were the decline in State and Federal revenues and the desirability of having a list identifying what services would be impacted by a \$4 million budget reduction.

The Town Manager stated that he could provide the RTM with the dollar amount required to reduce his proposed budget to achieve a no mill rate increase, but he noted that the RTM would need to decide what would be eliminated. He noted that he does not control the Board of Education budget and reviewed the minimum funding requirements for BOE. He mentioned that reductions are no longer achievable through increased efficiency and that reductions will result in the elimination of programs and services that the community no longer wants to fund. He feels it would require a \$4 to \$5 million dollar reduction to achieve a no mill rate increase budget. He cited examples such as reducing police and fire protection and eliminating funding to the City to achieve a reduction of this magnitude.

Members mentioned the procedure that was undertaken by the BOE to reduce its proposed budget to a minimal increase this year. Comments were made about duplicate departments and services provided by the City, Groton Long Point and the Navy. Several members mentioned consolidation and regionalization of services and how this might be initiated.

Also discussed was the fact that all political subdivisions and political parties need to work together to achieve financial stability and reduce the tax burden on the community.

The vote on the Motion to request the Town Manager to give guidance to the RTM in order to develop a budget with no mill rate increase carried 18 in favor, 13 opposed (Opposed: Reps. Bauer, Collins, Driscoll, Granatosky, Greubel, Loughlin, Merritt, Pasqualini, D. Semeraro, Steinfeld, Watrous, Williams, Ambroise).

K. OTHER BUSINESS

Rep. Granatosky called the members' attention to a constituent's concern about the elimination of bus transportation to magnet schools.

Several members commented that the elimination of bus transportation refers to magnet schools located outside of Groton. It was noted that transportation to Vo-Ag and Tech schools is a State requirement.

Moderator Ambroise stated that he will contact the Board of Education to obtain clarification on this subject.

Town Clerk Moukawsher announced that members will be contacted when budget materials are available to be picked up in the Town Clerk's office.

L. ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn at 8:48 p.m. was made by Rep. Pasqualini, seconded by Rep. Aument and so voted unanimously.

Attest:

*Betsy Moukawsher, Town Clerk
Clerk of the RTM*

Sally A. Whitney, Assistant Town Clerk