



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 Kevin Power, Representatives Jean-Claude Ambroise, Joe Baril, Nancy E. Barnhart, Peter J. Bartinik, Jr., Alicia Bauer, Nancy E. Beckwith, Michael Collins, Nancy M. Congdon, Warren T. Cooper, Syma Ebbin, Peter Fairbank, Nancy E. Gilly, Patrice Granatosky, Dolores Harrell, Keith L. Hedrick, Damon Q. Helme, Lynn Crockett Hubbard, Michael Dean Johnson, Rosanne E. Kotowski, Elizabeth Luck, Jackie Massett, Carole McCarthy, Karen F. Morton, Scott Newsome, Dana C. Parfitt, Richard J. Pasqualini, Jr., Kristen L. Powers, Don Pratt, Betty A. Prochaska, Sandry Ramos-Morales, John F. Scott IV, Jack Sebastian, Dana S. Semeraro, Jennifer Smuts, Joan Steinfeld, Irma Streeter, Mark Svencer, Archie C. Swindell, Thomas W. Vivirito, and Robert A. Warn

Wednesday, January 20, 2010

7:30 PM

Town Hall Annex-Community Room 1

Regular Meeting

A. ROLL CALL

Moderator Kevin Power called the meeting to order at 7:32 p.m.

28 members were present, and a quorum was declared.

The Moderator reported that Reps. Bartinik, Bauer, Hedrick, Johnson, Scott, Sebastian and Streeter called to say they are unable to attend this meeting.

Members Present: Moderator Power, Rep. Ambroise, Rep. Baril, Rep. Beckwith, Rep. Congdon, Rep. Ebbin, Rep. Gilly, Rep. Granatosky, Rep. Harrell, Rep. Helme, Rep. Hubbard, Rep. Kotowski, Rep. Luck, Rep. Massett, Rep. McCarthy, Rep. Morton, Rep. Parfitt, Rep. Pasqualini Jr., Rep. Powers, Rep. Pratt, Rep. Prochaska, Rep. Ramos-Morales, Rep. Semeraro, Rep. Smuts, Rep. Steinfeld, Rep. Svencer, Rep. Swindell and Rep. Warn

Members Absent: Rep. Barnhart, Rep. Bartinik, Jr., Rep. Bauer, Rep. Collins, Rep. Cooper, Rep. Fairbank, Rep. Hedrick, Rep. Johnson, Rep. Newsome, Rep. Scott, Rep. Sebastian, Rep. Streeter and Rep. Vivirito

Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Finance Director Sal Pandolfo, Administrative Services Director Doug Ackerman, Manager Information Technology Brian Hancock, 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 led by Rep. Baril.

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF DECEMBER 16, 2009

A motion that the minutes be adopted was made by Rep. Pratt, seconded by Rep. Smuts and so voted unanimously.

D. CITIZENS' PETITIONS

None.

E. RECEPTION OF COMMUNICATIONS

Moderator Power presented a plaque to former RTM Moderator Natalie Billing in appreciation for her service to the RTM.

He announced at a 5th District caucus held before this meeting, that members elected Sandry Ramos-Morales to fill the vacancy created by Rep. Tilney's resignation.

The Moderator reported that Rep. Sebastian has requested that members be informed that comments that appeared in several area newspapers in connection with a memo he distributed at the December meeting were in fact not made by him and that he would not make such comments.

The Moderator noted that there are vacancies for liaisons to the Town Council and the joint Town Council/Board of Education/RTM Liaison Committee. He requested that volunteers contact him after the meeting if they are interested in serving as a liaison.

2009-0282 Supplemental Appropriation for Handicap Ramp at Spicer House

This matter was Referred to the RTM Public Works Committee, due back on February 17, 2010.

F. REPORT OF THE TOWN MANAGER:**1. Financial report**

Town Manager Oefinger reported that the Unreserved & Undesignated Fund balance as of December 31, 2009 is approximately \$11.1 million; the General Contingency balance is \$350,000; the Capital Reserve balance is \$1,537,945. The Manager noted that the fund balance increase is attributable to interest and would be impacted if the RTM approves the supplemental appropriation of \$240,500 that is on the agenda for this meeting.

2. Monthly briefing

The Town Manager announced that the new Senior Center is scheduled for a "soft opening" around March 1, 2010. He mentioned that a ribbon cutting ceremony is being planned for March 27, 2010, followed by a week of special events and a grand opening dinner dance on April 1, 2010.

The Manager reported on the distribution of food and gift baskets by Human Services and the expenditures to date for snow removal. He mentioned that 109 employees are contributing \$23,088.30 to the United Way 2010 campaign and that half of the 700 teachers in Groton are contributing a total of \$27,000.

The Manager provided information on the importance of the 2010 U.S. Census to begin April 1, 2010. He stressed that accuracy is imperative to the Town since future sources of revenue are based on formulas using the numbers from the census. He noted that errors in the last census caused the Town to lose out on certain monies.

G. LIAISON REPORTS

No reports.

H. COMMITTEE REPORTS**1. FINANCE****a. Chairman's notes on the business of the Town - Chairman Bartinik**

Rep. Smuts read the minutes of the meeting held on January 20, 2010. (Minutes are attached.) Motion to approve the minutes was made by Rep. Beckwith, seconded by Rep. Baril and so voted unanimously.

2009-0273 Information Technology Recovery Plan - Supplemental Appropriation**RESOLUTION APPROPRIATING FUNDS FOR INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY DISASTER RECOVERY PROJECT**

WHEREAS, \$91,000 was appropriated in a FYE 2005 Capital Improvement Project for the purchase of servers and attendant software installation as a key component of the Town's Information Technology Disaster Recovery Project, and

WHEREAS, this purchase was not completed by June 30, 2009, and

WHEREAS, \$73,966.84 of funds previously appropriated for this project expired on June 30, 2009 and reverted to the Capital Reserve fund balance, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that \$74,000 is re-appropriated from the Capital Reserve fund balance for the Information Technology Disaster Recovery Project as an FYE 2010 Capital Reserve Project, for the purchase of servers and software as part of the Town's overall Information Technology Disaster Recovery plan.

Refer to RTM.

A motion was made by Rep. Smuts, seconded by Rep. Baril, that this matter be Adopted.

In response to Rep. Ebbin, Rep. Smuts explained that the \$74,000 is the amount that was not expended from the original appropriation of \$91,000 in FYE 2005 and that the appropriation expired in June, 2009.

In response to Rep. Warn, the Town Manager noted that the financial guidelines adopted by the Town Council allow money to be set aside in CIP for three years and that the project must be initiated and completed within five years. The Manager verified that it is rare for a CIP project to expire once work is initiated.

Administrative Services Director Doug Ackerman explained the reasons for the delays and the changes to the project once it was started.

Rep. Warn feels strongly that the funds for the project should be re-appropriated in the next budget cycle. He feels the Town is trying to push action by the RTM circumventing the regular budget process.

In response to Rep. Pratt, Mr. Ackerman confirmed that \$74,000 is enough to complete and cover the costs of the project. He noted that it is greatly improving the Town's technology, eliminating 23 servers and is a very functional solution.

Mr. Ackerman answered Rep. Swindell's question, stating that leasing server space was not considered because the Town is very different from large corporations that utilize that option.

The Town Manager responded to Rep. Pasqualini, explaining that the Town initiates approximately 15-20 CIP projects per year. He noted that 1 out of 50 CIP projects may expire and need to have funds re-appropriated. He reported that delays were not intentional, but that once work was initiated, many technological changes were forthcoming that staff felt would be advantageous and this changed how the project proceeded.

In response to Rep. Warn, the Town Manager stated that the Council action on this item was in September, 2009, and that it was referred to the RTM at their next meeting which was November 18, 2009 after the election. The referral was assigned a January 20, 2010 return date due to the election and assignment of new RTM committees. The Town Manager explained that if the funds are not re-appropriated this evening, the CIP project will not be fully implemented until October or November, 2010. He noted that the CIP project would have to be added to the FYE 2011 budget, expending additional staff time to create, solicit and award new bids and incurring additional costs to complete the project. He noted that the current proposal is ready to be acted on tomorrow to complete the project.

The Town Manager verified Rep. Massett's statements that the money is appropriated for the CIP project and that only a certain amount has been spent, with the balance remaining in the Capital Reserve Fund. He explained that only the authorization has expired, and that the approval of the CIP project would need to be repeated in the next budget cycle if not approved this evening.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Votes: In Favor: 24 - Moderator Power, Rep. Baril, Rep. Beckwith, Rep. Congdon, Rep. Ebbin, Rep. Gilly, Rep. Granatosky, Rep. Harrell, Rep. Helme, Rep. Hubbard, Rep. Luck, Rep. Massett, Rep. McCarthy, Rep. Morton, Rep. Parfitt, Rep. Pasqualini Jr., Rep. Powers, Rep. Pratt, Rep. Prochaska, Rep. Ramos-Morales, Rep. Semeraro, Rep. Smuts, Rep. Steinfeld and Rep. Svencer
Opposed: 4 - Rep. Ambroise, Rep. Kotowski, Rep. Swindell and Rep. Warn

2009-0276

Supplemental Appropriation to the Other Post Employment Benefits (OPEB) Trust Fund

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING A SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATION TO THE OTHER POST EMPLOYMENT BENEFITS (OPEB) TRUST FUND

WHEREAS, in June 2004 the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) issued Statement #45 entitled "Accounting and Financial Reporting by Employers for Postemployment

Benefits other than Pensions", and

WHEREAS, the Town has an OPEB Liability that it has been funding since fiscal year 2005, and

WHEREAS, in FYE 2008 it developed a five year plan to fund the "net budget impact" of the annual required contribution, and

WHEREAS, in FYE 2010 due to the uncertainty of the State revenues, it did not increase its OPEB contribution but anticipated increasing the last two years of the five year plan to make up for that omission, and

WHEREAS, now that the shortfall in FYE 2010 State revenues is known and can be absorbed by the FYE 2009 available fund balance applied, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that \$240,500 is appropriated from the General Fund's unreserved, undesignated fund balance for the FYE 2010 OPEB contribution to account #10713- OPEB Liability.

Refer to RTM.

A motion was made by Rep. Smuts, seconded by Rep. Warn, that this matter be Adopted.

In response to Rep. Warn, the Town Manager explained the reasons for requesting the additional appropriation now that the State budget and revenues are known. He stressed that it is very important for the Town to follow the financial plan for contributions to the OPEB Trust Fund. He noted that not following the financial plan may impact bond ratings. In October the bond agencies raised the issue that the Town had failed to make the projected contribution as planned to become fully funded within five years.

Rep. Warn will not support this item. He feels that due to the current economic situation, the additional appropriation should be in the next budget cycle.

Rep. Smuts will support the additional appropriation. She believes it is best for the Town if the money is invested sooner into the OPEB Trust Fund to achieve the five year goal and higher interest. She feels it is very important to maintain the Town's bond ratings and that it is part of the RTM's budgetary role throughout the year to decide on such issues.

Rep. Ambrose agrees with Rep. Smuts. He strongly feels the Town should be consistent and follow the financial plan in place and that it is essential to contribute now rather than later.

Rep. Granatosky will support this item. She agrees with Rep. Smuts. She believes the Town should seize the opportunity to earn higher interest in the OPEB Trust Fund and meet its obligations to its employees. She hopes that the Town will not cut back its projected contribution of \$1.2 million in FYE 2011 budget. She feels it is very important and benefits everyone to stay on track with the financial plan.

Rep. Warn firmly believes that this item should wait till the next budget cycle and not be considered individually as a priority item. He stated that the Town needs to prioritize this item within the scope of all items that are important in next year's budget since there is only a finite amount of money available.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Votes: In Favor: 27 - Moderator Power, Rep. Ambrose, Rep. Baril, Rep. Beckwith, Rep. Congdon, Rep. Ebbin, Rep. Gilly, Rep. Granatosky, Rep. Harrell, Rep. Helme, Rep. Hubbard, Rep. Kotowski, Rep. Luck, Rep. Massett, Rep. McCarthy, Rep. Morton, Rep. Parfitt, Rep. Pasqualini Jr., Rep. Powers, Rep. Pratt, Rep. Prochaska, Rep. Ramos-Morales, Rep. Semeraro, Rep. Smuts, Rep. Steinfeld, Rep. Svencer and Rep. Swindell
Opposed: 1 - Rep. Warn

2. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT & SERVICES**a. Chairman's notes on the business of the Town - Chairman Pratt**

No meeting, no report.

3. EDUCATION**a. Chairman's notes on the business of the Town - Chairman Swindell**

No meeting, no report.

4. RECREATION**a. Chairman's notes on the business of the Town - Chairman Warn**

No meeting, no report.

5. PUBLIC SAFETY**a. Chairman's notes on the business of the Town - Chairman Parfitt**

No meeting, no report.

6. PUBLIC WORKS**a. Chairman's notes on the business of the Town - Chairman Collins**

No meeting, no report.

7. RULES & PROCEDURES**a. Chairman's notes on the business of the Town - Chairman Scott**

Temporary Rules Chairman Ambrose read the minutes of the meeting held on January 14, 2010. (Minutes are attached.)

Motion to approve the minutes was made by Rep. Ambrose, seconded by Rep. Smuts and so voted unanimously.

2010-0001 Rules for Twenty-Seventh RTM**RESOLUTION ADOPTING RULES FOR THE TWENTY-SEVENTH REPRESENTATIVE TOWN MEETING**

BE IT RESOLVED, that the rules of the Twenty-Seventh Representative Town Meeting as recommended by the Temporary Rules and Procedures Committee are hereby adopted.

Discussed

A motion was made by Rep. Ambrose, seconded by Rep. Luck that this matter be Adopted.

Rep. Beckwith requested clarification of the recommendation to remove the words "if debate is desired by any member of the RTM" in section 7.3. She feels that the proposed change may create a situation in which the Moderator would have to wait ten minutes before allowing a motion to move the question.

The Moderator stated that the committee felt it was understood that the Moderator would not accept a motion to move the question if members were desirous of continued discussion.

MOTION TO AMEND section 7.3 to re-insert the words "if debate is desired by any member of the RTM" after the word "made" was made by Rep. Beckwith and was seconded.

Rep. Steinford agrees with Rep. Beckwith that the original wording should be retained. She stated that she had expressed concern over removing the words in committee.

VOTE on Motion to Amend passed 27 in favor, 1 opposed. (Opposed: Rep. Smuts).

No vote was taken on the main motion. A vote on amending the rules will be taken at the February meeting.

I. OTHER BUSINESS

2010-0027 Possible Changes to 2010 RTM Meeting Schedule

POSSIBLE CHANGES TO 2010 RTM MEETING SCHEDULE

Referred

Rep. Beckwith requested a referral to discuss changing the location and dates of the RTM 2010 regular meeting schedule when the renovations of the Senior Center are completed. Moderator Power acknowledged that this will appear on the February agenda.

2009-0190 Preliminary RTM Budget Discussion

PRELIMINARY BUDGET DISCUSSION FOR RTM'S FY2011 BUDGET PROCESS

Discussed

Rep. Ambrose stated his concerns on the long-term situation of declining revenue sources. He reminded members of the anticipated loss of federal stimulus funds in the near future and how it will impact the budget. He feels the RTM needs to address how to sustain the budget. He suggested that members need to anticipate future budget shortfalls to avoid large increases and start making adjustments now.

J. ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn at 8:40 p.m. was made by Rep. Smuts, seconded by Rep. Gilly and so voted unanimously.

Attest:

*Betsy Moukawsher, Town Clerk
Clerk of the RTM*

Sally A. Whitney, Assistant Town Clerk