



# 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 Natalie B. Billing, Representatives Jean-Claude Ambroise, Joe Baril, Nancy E. Barnhart, Alicia Bauer, Nancy E. Beckwith, Joyce F. Bergeson, Laurie Kim Briggs, Genevieve Cerf, Michael Collins, Warren T. Cooper, Nancy S. Driscoll, Syma Ebbin, June Evered, Peter Fairbank, Melissa M. Finlayson, Irene B. Garagliano, Robert Garcia, Patrice Granatosky, Dolores Harrell, Wendy L. Hellekson, Lynn Crockett Hubbard, James Loughlin, Lisa M. Luck, Jackie Massett, Carole McCarthy, Richard Metayer, Betsy Moukawsher, Scott Newsome, Deborah Peruzzotti, Kevin Power, Betty A. Prochaska, Don Pratt, Jack Sebastian, Jennifer Smuts, Eleanor Steere, Joan Steinfeld, Irma Streeter, Mark Svencer, and Cheryl Tilney**

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Wednesday, November 12, 2008

7:30 PM

Senior Center

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#### Regular Meeting

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#### A. ROLL CALL

*Moderator Natalie Billing called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m.*

*28 members were present, and a quorum was declared.*

*The Moderator reported that Reps. Briggs, Evered and Tilney called to say they are unable to attend this meeting and that Rep. Baril will be late.*

*Moderator Billing thanked the members for the donations to the Groton Food Locker that were collected this evening.*

Members Present: Moderator Billing, Rep. Barnhart, Rep. Bauer, Rep. Beckwith, Rep. Cerf, Rep. Collins, Rep. Driscoll, Rep. Ebbin, Rep. Fairbank, Rep. Garagliano, Rep. Granatosky, Rep. Harrell, Rep. Hellekson, Rep. Hubbard, Rep. Loughlin, Rep. Luck, Rep. Massett, Rep. McCarthy, Rep. Moukawsher, Rep. Peruzzotti, Rep. Power, Rep. Pratt, Rep. Prochaska, Rep. Sebastian, Rep. Smuts, Rep. Steinfeld, Rep. Streeter and Rep. Svencer

Members Absent: Rep. Ambroise, Rep. Baril, Rep. Bergeson, Rep. Briggs, Rep. Cooper, Rep. Evered, Rep. Finlayson, Rep. Garcia, Rep. Metayer, Rep. Newsome, Rep. Steere and Rep. Tilney

*Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Deputy Town Clerk Janet Downs, 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 OCTOBER 8, 2008

*A motion that the minutes be adopted was made by Rep. Fairbank, seconded by Rep. Svencer.*

*The vote to adopt the minutes carried 23 in favor, 5 abstentions. (Abstaining: Reps. Bauer, Cerf, Hellekson, Massett and Smuts).*

#### D. CITIZENS' PETITIONS

*None.*

#### E. RECEPTION OF COMMUNICATIONS

*Moderator Billing announced that Rep. Bartnik has resigned, leaving a vacancy in District 7. She mentioned that a copy of the "Ordinance on Property Tax Relief for Homeowners Age Sixty-Five or Over or Permanently and Totally Disabled" was mailed to members for information only. She stated that the members may address questions to the Town Manager. She explained that the Town Council still needs to hold a public hearing, approve the ordinance and refer it to the RTM Finance Committee. She clarified that a Motion to Veto is the only appropriate action for this ordinance.*

#### F. REPORT OF THE TOWN MANAGER:

**1. Financial report**

*Mr. Oefinger reported that the Unreserved & Undesignated & Unaudited Fund balance as of July 1, 2008 is approximately \$11.0 million; the General Contingency balance is \$350,000; the Capital Reserve balance is \$1,665,663. He noted that the increase in the Capital Reserve Fund is due to interest, that an additional \$10,000 was received in the settlement of the Police Department building repairs, and that the Esker Point Shelter project has been eliminated.*

**2. Monthly briefing**

*The Town Manager reported on the recent Bond Sale and rating results. He announced that the Town achieved a "strong" rating from Standard and Poor. He stated that this was a notable achievement and that the Town should be very proud.*

*The Manager reminded members that the holiday distribution of baskets from the Human Services Department will be taking place on November 21 and December 19, 2008 and that volunteers are needed. He reported that the sewer projects are proceeding and verified that the close-out of the school projects is continuing.*

*In response to Rep. Sebastian's questions concerning the Retirement Fund, the Town Manager reported that a Retirement Board meeting is scheduled for November 13. He stated that he will provide an update at the December meeting. He noted that the Town has been conservative in its allocations and has been over-funded in the past. He expects that the Town Retirement Fund will feel the impact from the current economic situation, but believes that the Town is well ahead of other local communities in its financial management of retirement funding.*

*In response to Rep. Cerf, the Manager noted that he can provide a list of the Retirement Fund investments. He stated that it does not invest in hedge funds.*

*In response to Rep. Ebbin, Mr. Oefinger reviewed the bond sale and rating results in greater detail than was reported in the Town Manager News. He reiterated that he is comfortable with the choices made by the Town.*

*The Town Manager responded to Rep. Sebastian, announcing that the public hearing on the Ordinance for Property Tax Relief is scheduled for December 2, 2008. He clarified that taxpayers would be deferring only the amount greater than their current taxes.*

*Rep. Cerf expressed the opinion that this Ordinance will assist a small group of residents and that she does not expect a large number of applicants.*

*The Town Manager believes that the proposed Ordinance is well thought out. He emphasized that the Town would be loaning money to residents only on the increase from their current tax payment at a reduced interest rate. The Ordinance has restrictions on the amount of tax relief both each year and cumulatively.*

**G. LIAISON REPORTS****1. Thames Street Revitalization Committee - Rep. Luck**

*Rep. Luck reported that the committee voted to keep the current two way traffic pattern along Thames Street. She mentioned that drainage improvements and road maintenance are being discussed. She stated that the improvements would assist area businesses to capitalize on the increase in cruise ship tourism that is being promoted in New London Harbor.*

**2. Public Relations - Rep. Luck**

*Rep. Luck requested that members interested in participating in the December 6, 2008 Holiday Lights Parade contact her. She has arranged for a truck; members may also walk.*

*Moderator Billing announced that vacancies exist for liaisons to the Town Council/Board of Education/RTM Committee and the Joint Town Council/City Council Committee. She asked*

*interested members to contact her.*

## H. COMMITTEE REPORTS

### 1. FINANCE

#### a. Chairman's notes on the business of the Town - Chairman Granatosky

##### 2008-0245 FY2009 Budget Concerns

FY2009 BUDGET CONCERNS

**Discussed**

*Chairman Granatosky reported that the meeting scheduled for November 6, 2008 was cancelled and could not be rescheduled prior to this meeting. She stated the committee's report will be given at the December RTM meeting.*

### 2. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT & SERVICES

#### a. Chairman's notes on the business of the Town - Chairman Peruzzotti

*Chairman Peruzzotti read the minutes of the meeting held on November 12, 2008. (Minutes are attached.)*

*Motion to approve the minutes was made by Rep. Peruzzotti, seconded by Rep. Power and so voted unanimously.*

##### 2008-0215 Acceptance of Open Space at Neal Subdivision

RESOLUTION ACCEPTING OPEN SPACE AT NEAL SUBDIVISION IN MYSTIC

WHEREAS, the Town of Groton has been offered a parcel of open space consisting of 1,890 square feet at the northeast corner of the Neal Subdivision, which fronts at 119 New London Road, Mystic, and

WHEREAS, that parcel of open space directly adjoins a substantial parcel of open space that was previously acquired and dedicated from the Wolfbrook Subdivision east of Noank Ledyard Road and Daniel Brown Drive, and

WHEREAS, the Groton Planning Commission recommended acceptance of this open space at its meeting of August 12, 2008, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Town of Groton accepts the open space identified herein.

Refer to RTM

**A motion was made by Rep. Peruzzotti, seconded by Rep. Hubbard, that this matter be Adopted for November 12, 2008.**

*Members discussed access, location, current ownership and the size of the parcel to be accepted as open space.*

*In response to Rep. Cerf, the Town Manager explained the policy of the Planning Commission to promote and accept open space that abuts existing open space areas and noted that Pequot Woods would be expanded by this parcel. He stated that the Town is trying to avoid many small, scattered areas of open space.*

**The motion carried unanimously**

### 3. EDUCATION

#### a. Chairman's notes on the business of the Town - Chairman Fairbank

*No meeting, no report.*

### 4. RECREATION

#### a. Chairman's notes on the business of the Town - Chairman Power

*No meeting, no report.*

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

*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 Evered**

*No meeting, no report.*

**I. OTHER BUSINESS****2008-0240 2009 RTM Meeting Schedule****RESOLUTION ADOPTING 2009 RTM MEETING SCHEDULE**

WHEREAS, Freedom of Information Act requires filing a calendar-year schedule of regular meetings with the Town Clerk, and  
WHEREAS, the Representative Town Meeting is changing its meeting location from the Senior Center to the Town Hall Annex, and its meeting date from the second Wednesday to the third Wednesday of each month, now therefore be it  
RESOLVED, that the Representative Town Meeting hereby approves the meeting schedule for 2009 as follows:

Wednesday, January 21, 2009  
Wednesday, February 18, 2009  
Wednesday, March 18, 2009  
Wednesday, April 15, 2009  
Wednesday, May 20, 2009  
Wednesday, June 17, 2009  
Wednesday, July 15, 2009  
Wednesday, August 19, 2009  
Wednesday, September 16, 2009  
Wednesday, October 21, 2009  
Wednesday, November 18, 2009  
Wednesday, December 16, 2009 and  
Wednesday, January 20, 2010

and be it further

RESOLVED that the meeting scheduled for December 10, 2008 is now changed to December 17, 2008 at 7:30pm, and that all regular meetings in 2009 are scheduled for 7:30pm.

**A motion was made by Rep. Sebastian, seconded by Rep. Moukawsher, that this matter be Adopted.**

*Moderator Billing stated that the proposed resolution would change the location to the Town Hall Annex and change the meeting night to the third Wednesday of the month due to the Senior Center renovations. She mentioned that caucuses would start at 6:45. She announced that another option was distributed to all members present. This option would allow the RTM to continue to meet on the second Wednesday, but would rotate the location to various schools for the next two years. She noted that neither option addresses the annual RTM budget sessions and that additional expenses would be incurred for set-up of rooms and video equipment with the alternative option.*

*MOTION TO AMEND to retain the second Wednesday of the month and rotate the locations at various schools as outlined in an email from the School Superintendent to the Town Manager was made by Rep. Granatosky, seconded Rep. Luck.*

*Rep. Garagliano opposes the amendment because she feels that rotating the location would be confusing to the members and the public.*

*Rep. Smuts supports the main motion. She questioned why one school location could not be used for the entire time during the renovations.*

*The Moderator believes that the Superintendent of Schools provided what school spaces are available.*

*Rep. Beckwith will not support the amendment. She feels it is unwarranted to incur additional expenses when the Annex is available.*

*Rep. Luck feels that one location for meetings is preferable. However, she feels that rotating locations throughout the Town would provide closer access for more residents and allow the schools to be seen and utilized. She will support the amendment.*

*Rep. Hellekson stated she can not support either motion. She feels there will be space issues at the Annex and that rotating the meeting location will be confusing to everyone.*

*MOTION TO AMEND to investigate whether the RTM would be able to meet at the City Municipal Building on the second Wednesday of the month was made by Rep. Bauer, seconded by Rep. Streeter. While this possibility is being pursued, the December meeting could be held on December 17, 2008 at the Town Hall Annex.*

*Rep. Smuts expressed her dissatisfaction with the Town for not planning further ahead for the RTM relocation when the project has been approved for a year.*

*Rep. Steinfeld will support the original motion. She feels that since the RTM is a Town body, it should meet in a Town building. She commented that the decision should be made tonight and not postponed until the December meeting.*

*In response to members, the Town Manager reported that staff has reviewed the spaces at the Annex and that space should not be a problem. Two rooms are available to accommodate party caucuses. He mentioned that caucuses may need to be scheduled for 6:45 p.m. to allow time for final set-up prior to the regular meeting.*

*MOTION TO MOVE THE QUESTION was made by Rep. Massett, seconded by Rep. Hubbard.*

*VOTE ON MOVING THE QUESTION carried 23 in favor, 5 opposed. (Opposed: Reps. Ebbin, Loughlin, Moukawsher, Peruzzotti and Power).*

*VOTE on the Second Amendment that would postpone adopting a 2009 meeting schedule, investigate use of the City Municipal Building and set the December meeting at the Town Annex on December 17, 2008 failed 11 in favor, 17 opposed. (In Favor: Reps. Bauer, Driscoll, Ebbin, Granatosky, Harrell, Hubbard, McCarthy, Moukawsher, Peruzzotti, Power, and Streeter).*

*Discussion continued on the first amendment.*

*Rep. Garagliano reminded members that additional funds would have to be spent if this amendment carries. She will not support the expenditure of additional funds to continue to meet on the second Wednesday of the month.*

*In response to Rep. Loughlin, the Moderator explained that in consideration of Noank residents, Noank School was not presented as an option. She reminded him that the Manager had provided*

*specific reasons at the October meeting.*

*The Town Manager replied to Rep. Power that he believes the proposed school locations as suggested by the Superintendent represent what could be offered based on availability. He remarked he has a concern about William Seely School since it is utilized extensively by Parks & Recreation for numerous programs.*

*MOTION TO MOVE THE QUESTION was made by Rep. Streeter, seconded by Rep. Ebbin.*

*VOTE ON MOVING THE QUESTION carried 23 in favor, 5 opposed. (Opposed: Reps. Driscoll, Granatosky, Moukawsher, Peruzzotti and Power).*

*VOTE on the First Amendment which would rotate the meeting location and retain the second Wednesday of the month as the meeting night failed 4 in favor, 23 opposed, 1 abstention. (In Favor: Collins, Ebbin, Granatosky, Luck, Abstaining: Rep. Hellekson).*

*Rep. Power stated he will support the original motion proposed by staff.*

**The motion carried by the following vote:**

**Votes:** In Favor: 21 - Moderator Billing, Rep. Barnhart, Rep. Bauer, Rep. Beckwith, Rep. Cerf, Rep. Driscoll, Rep. Fairbank, Rep. Garagliano, Rep. Harrell, Rep. Hubbard, Rep. Loughlin, Rep. Massett, Rep. McCarthy, Rep. Power, Rep. Pratt, Rep. Prochaska, Rep. Sebastian, Rep. Smuts, Rep. Steinfeld, Rep. Streeter and Rep. Svencer  
Opposed: 6 - Rep. Collins, Rep. Ebbin, Rep. Granatosky, Rep. Luck, Rep. Moukawsher and Rep. Peruzzotti  
Abstain: 1 - Rep. Hellekson

**2008-0277**

**FY2010 RTM Budget Discussion**

**FY2010 RTM BUDGET DISCUSSION**

**Discussed**

*The Moderator mentioned that the RTM has several options to identify services that could be recommended for reduction in the FY2010 budget prior to the RTM annual budget review in May. She stated she could make a referral to a standing committee, form an ad hoc committee, or the RTM could create another process to be carried out cooperatively with the Town Council and Board of Education.*

*Rep. Massett endorses having early discussion to allow a dialogue with the Town Manager to provide input while the annual budget process is in the early development stage.*

*Rep. Sebastian agreed with Rep. Massett and recalled RTM actions and discussion that took place last March and April.*

*Citing a legal opinion from the Town Attorney to the Council, the Moderator cautioned members about providing budget guidance to the Manager that specifies a figure for the budget. She feels that the RTM should have discussions and make a list to identify services or programs that could be reduced or eliminated and provide this list to the Manager.*

*The Manager confirmed that he would appreciate specific services or programs being identified. He stated that decreases in revenues from the State and other sources, union contracts, benefits, and general COLA increases will impact the budget. He verified that in order to achieve a zero percent budget increase, the Town Operations budget must be reduced by approximately \$1.2 million. He voiced concern on reductions that he has recommended in the past to accommodate Council or RTM budget requests. He elaborated by providing as examples past proposals that eliminated Sunday Library hours and suspended vehicle repair work to outside agencies. He stated that these proposals were not well received, but that items such as these would achieve a sustainable reduction in those departments. The Manager feels that the RTM knows the budget*

well enough to provide input to his budget on what items can be reduced or eliminated. He advised members to give thought to sustainable reductions that could be in effect for several years and to make a list of those reductions.

Rep. Cerf suggested that the Town suspend contributions to the Fleet Reserve Account, reduce or eliminate the acquisition of new vehicles, eliminate travel and conference expenditures, reduce capital improvement contributions, and conserve fuel. She would like the emphasis on items that the Town does not need.

Rep. Pratt suggested having an early public hearing prior to the formulation of the Manager's budget to solicit input from citizens.

The Manager suggested that the Town receives a better response from the public if a list of recommendations is provided prior to a public hearing. He explained that travel, vehicles and other items he suggested last spring are on the table. He feels the Town must identify items such as reducing capability of in-house services and equipment and cutting programs to achieve a \$1.2 million reduction. He believes that budget reductions will be made in a combination of ways and must include cuts that can be sustainable for several years.

The Moderator asked the Manager if he could provide a list of ten to twenty items that he would recommend for reduction or elimination so that the RTM could discuss whether the public is willing to live without these services.

The Manager stated that he could make a list, but that he would like to receive comments from the RTM about their feelings on activities, services, events and programs that should be considered.

Discussion ensued with many suggestions from members. Some of the items mentioned were concessions from unions, reduction in personnel, freeze on hiring and filling vacant positions, increase in contributions from employees to health benefits and co-pays, conversion to a four day work week where applicable, elimination of free landfill days, reduction in maintenance at the dump, and reduction in the number of snow plows dispatched.

Rep. Steinfeld suggested that a similar dialogue be conducted with the Board of Education (BOE).

Rep. Sebastian agreed with Rep. Steinfeld. He would like to see measurable objectives for the \$70 million spent on the BOE budget. He feels that the unions should be faced with layoffs, rather than asked for concessions since it would force the unions to decide to concede or allow the layoffs.

Rep. Pratt asked if consideration had been given to consolidation of services from Public Works, Parks & Recreation and BOE.

Members Present: Moderator Billing, Rep. Barnhart, Rep. Bauer, Rep. Beckwith, Rep. Cerf, Rep. Collins, Rep. Driscoll, Rep. Ebbin, Rep. Fairbank, Rep. Garagliano, Rep. Granatosky, Rep. Harrell, Rep. Hellekson, Rep. Hubbard, Rep. Loughlin, Rep. Luck, Rep. Massett, Rep. McCarthy, Rep. Peruzzotti, Rep. Power, Rep. Pratt, Rep. Prochaska, Rep. Sebastian, Rep. Smuts, Rep. Steinfeld, Rep. Streeter and Rep. Svencer  
Members Absent: Rep. Ambrose, Rep. Baril, Rep. Bergeson, Rep. Briggs, Rep. Cooper, Rep. Evered, Rep. Finlayson, Rep. Garcia, Rep. Metayer, Rep. Moukawsher, Rep. Newsome, Rep. Steere and Rep. Tilney

Rep. Moukawsher left at 9:05 prior to the vote on forming the ad hoc committee.

2008-0284

#### **Ad Hoc Committee for FY2010 Budget Considerations**

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

The Moderator requested volunteers to serve on this committee to discuss FY2010 Budget Considerations with the Town Manager. She noted that as Moderator she will appoint members to the committee and if a quorum of the RTM volunteers, she may decide to have a meeting of the full RTM rather than a committee meeting. The following members volunteered: Reps. Bauer,

*Billing, Cerf, Ebbin, Hellekson, Hubbard, Luck, Massett, Moukawsher, Peruzzotti, Power, Pratt, and Sebastian.*

**The motion carried unanimously**

*Discussion continued on the FY2010 budget.*

*Rep. Fairbank left at 9:16 during the continued discussion of FY2010 budget.*

*(Full discussion is contained in Legislative item 2008-0277).*

**J. ADJOURNMENT**

*A motion to adjourn at 9:22 p.m. was made by Rep. Steinfeld, seconded by Rep. Barnhart and so voted unanimously.*

*Attest:*

*Barbara Tarbox, Town Clerk  
Clerk of the RTM*

*Sally A. Whitney, Assistant Town Clerk*