



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 Karin Adams, Jean-Claude Ambroise, Joe Baril, Nancy E. Barnhart, Alicia Bauer, Nancy E. Beckwith, Laurie Kim Briggs, Genevieve Cerf, Michael Collins, Warren T. Cooper, Nancy S. Driscoll, Syma Ebbin, June Evered, Peter Fairbank, Jonathon Foisy, 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, Cheryl Tilney and Robert A. Warn

Wednesday, November 18, 2009

7:30 PM

Town Hall Annex-Community Room 1

Regular Meeting

A. ROLL CALL

*Deputy Town Clerk Janet Downs called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.
27 members were present and a quorum was declared.*

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

Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Assistant to the Town Manager Lee Vincent, Planning & Development Director Mike Murphy, Deputy Town Clerk Janet Downs, and Assistant Town Clerk Sally Whitney.

B. Election of Moderator Pro Tempore

Deputy Town Clerk Janet Downs opened the floor for nominations to elect a Moderator Pro Tempore.

Rep. Power was nominated by Rep. Granatosky.

There being no further nominations, the Deputy Town Clerk declared nominations closed.

The vote for Rep. Power as Moderator Pro Tempore was unanimous.

C. 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. Garagliano.

D. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF AUGUST 19, 2009

*A motion that the minutes be adopted was made by Rep. Baril, seconded by Rep. Driscoll.
The vote on approving the minutes carried 26 in favor, 1 abstention. (Abstaining: Rep. Peruzzotti).*

E. CITIZENS' PETITIONS

None.

F. RECEPTION OF COMMUNICATIONS

Moderator Pro Tem Power stated that all members received a copy of the email from Dave

Holdridge concerning the Bluff Point to Preston Trail Master Plan presentation.

The Moderator Pro Tem reported that Reps. Beckwith, Billing, Evered, Hubbard and Streeter called to say they are unable to attend this meeting. He mentioned that a memo from Rep. Billing was distributed to those present.

2009-0273 Information Technology Recovery Plan - Supplemental Appropriation

This matter was Referred to the RTM Finance Committee, due back on January 20, 2010.

2009-0276 Supplemental Appropriation to the Other Post Employment Benefits (OPEB) Trust Fund

This matter was Referred to the RTM Finance Committee, due back on January 20, 2010.

G. REPORT OF THE TOWN MANAGER:

1. Financial report

Mr. Vincent reported that the Unreserved & Undesignated Fund balance as of July 1, 2009 is approximately \$11.3 million; the General Contingency balance is \$350,000; the Capital Reserve balance is \$1,601,887.

Mr. Vincent stated that the increase of \$560,997 to the Capital Reserve Fund is attributable to capital projects that were completed without expending the full appropriation, projects that lapsed after their five year authorization, and interest earned.

2. Monthly briefing

Town Manager Oefinger mentioned the voter turnout percentages by district for the recent Town election. He reported on the bond rating and sale of notes. He mentioned that the Town's bond rating was completed prior to the recent announcement by Pfizer that it will be closing its New London facility.

The Manager announced that a public presentation on proposed changes to Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) flood maps is scheduled for November 30, 2009 at 6:30 p.m. at the Town Hall Annex. Mr. Oefinger mentioned that homeowners who may be affected by the proposed changes should receive a letter from the Planning Department.

The Town Manager reported on the impact to the Town's budget from the actions of the State Legislature. He mentioned that a detailed memo prepared by the Finance Director is enclosed in the Town Manager's News and asked members to review it.

The Manager reported that the holiday basket distributions by Social Services are scheduled for November 20 and December 18, 2009.

He reported on the progress of the Senior Center and Fort Hill Sewer Projects.

The Town Manager announced that lease negotiations with LEARN for the Eastern Point School property have been completed. This will utilize two-thirds of the property. He stated that an easement has been granted for a geothermal system that will be located on the remaining portion of land which is used as community ball field. He noted that LEARN will replace the ball field after the geothermal system has been installed as part of the project's expense.

In response to Rep. Granatosky, Planning & Development Director Mike Murphy stated that 1800-2000 letters are expected to be sent to homeowners that may be affected by the proposed FEMA changes. He noted that 500 letters have already been sent and the remaining letters should be mailed soon.

The Town Manager responded to Rep. Granatosky's question regarding a supplemental appropriation to the Board of Education (BOE) for the money that was returned to the Town by the BOE. He stated that the process would be similar to the process followed by the two supplemental appropriations that were referred to the Finance Committee earlier in this meeting.

In response to Rep. Sebastian, the Town Manager stated that a project manager was hired for the Senior Center project and that he reports to Public Works.

H. LIAISON REPORTS

SHELLFISH TASK FORCE - Rep. Ebbin

Rep. Ebbin reported on items discussed at the October 19, 2009 meeting. She noted that a new generator was installed at the Water Pollution Control Facility that provides 100% backup to the existing generator so that the treatment facility can continue operating in the event of losing external power.

Concern was raised about geese that are grazing on the Groton Water Utility property. This problem could affect the Poquonnock River which was seeded with 30,000 clams by the Shellfish Commission. A letter will be drafted to the Mayor. A second concern was mentioned in regard to the number of residences in Tanglewood that are not hooked up to the Town sewer system and whether an ordinance could mandate property owners to have sewer connections where sewers are available. Mr. Vincent reported that a presentation to the Town Council is needed to get a referral for such an ordinance.

Rep. Ebbin reported that the Town and State completed negotiations that will allow Mumford Cove to complete dredging within a six week period during December and early January. State Funds will be utilized to reimburse the Mumford Cove Association.

Discussion took place on a recent proposal by Ledge Light Health District to initiate a permitting program for septic systems in their jurisdiction. The District is seeking support from the Shellfish Task force.

I. COMMITTEE REPORTS

1. FINANCE

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

No meeting, no report.

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 18, 2009. (Minutes are attached.)

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

2009-0264 Adoption of Property Maintenance Code Ordinance Amendment

ADOPTION OF AN ORDINANCE AMENDING ORDINANCE NO. 264 ADOPTING THE INTERNATIONAL PROPERTY MAINTENANCE CODE 2000 FOR THE FORT HILL HOMES NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION ZONE

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF GROTON: Section 9-254 shall be amended as follows:

- Section 111.2. Delete existing and change to:

111.2 Membership of Board The members of the Building Code Board of Appeals shall serve as the Board of Appeals for the purpose of this ordinance.

- Section 111.2.1, 111.2.2, 111.2.4 and 111.2.5 Delete.

- Section 111.6. Delete existing and change to:

111.6 Board Decision The board shall modify or reverse the decision of the code official only by a concurring vote of a majority of the total number of members present and voting.

- Section 111.6.1. Delete the existing and change to:

111.6.1 Records and Copies The decision of the board shall be written or stated in the minutes of the board. Written notice of the decision shall be furnished to the appellant and the code official.

- Section 111.7. Delete

Refer to RTM

Not Vetoed

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.

J. OTHER BUSINESS

2009-0249 2010 RTM Meeting Schedule

RESOLUTION APPROVING 2010 RTM MEETING SCHEDULE

WHEREAS, Freedom of Information Statutes require filing a calendar-year schedule of meetings with the Town Clerk, and

WHEREAS, the Representative Town Meeting has met regularly on the third Wednesday of each month, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Representative Town Meeting hereby approves the meeting schedule for 2010 as follows:

Wednesday, January 20, 2010
Wednesday, February 17, 2010
Wednesday, March 17, 2010
Wednesday, April 21, 2010
Wednesday, May 19, 2010
Wednesday, June 16, 2010
Wednesday, July 21, 2010
Wednesday, August 18, 2010
Wednesday, September 15, 2010
Wednesday, October 20, 2010
Wednesday, November 17, 2010
Wednesday, December 15, 2010 and
Wednesday, January 19, 2011

All meetings will be held at 7:30 p.m. in Community Room 1 at the Town Hall Annex, 134 Groton Long Point Road, Groton, Connecticut.

A motion was made by Rep. Steinfeld, seconded by Rep. Fairbank, that this matter be Adopted.

In response to Reps. Garagliano and Collins, the Town Manager explained that he could not commit to a date when the Senior Center would be available for RTM meetings. He mentioned that

the RTM should discuss whether meetings should continue at the annex since equipment for televising the meetings is already in place. He noted that the RTM needs to decide whether members want to revert back to meeting on the second Wednesday of the month. Deputy Town Clerk Downs explained that by State statute a schedule for the 2010 RTM regular meetings needs to be approved. She mentioned that changes in location or meeting dates could be handled by staff and if necessary meetings would be posted as special meetings.

The motion carried unanimously

Rep. Tilney left 8:11 p.m prior to the budget discussion.

2009-0190

Preliminary RTM Budget Discussion

PRELIMINARY BUDGET DISCUSSION FOR RTM'S FY2011 BUDGET PROCESS

Discussed

Rep. Sebastian reviewed a spreadsheet that he prepared and provided to all members in their monthly packets. The memo addresses the grand levy over the last ten years. He noted that he based his spreadsheet on figures provided by the Finance Director. He feels that the RTM is responsible for the Grand Levy because the RTM approves the Town spending each year. He commented that the RTM is the last defense for holding the line against budget and tax increases. He stated that he has received comments from residents who are concerned about the increase in taxes each year, especially individuals on fixed incomes. He suggested that the RTM needs to discuss now what next year's budget bottom line should be at the end of the 2010 budget deliberations.

Rep. Massett stated that every year there are requests for no tax increase. She clarified that past and current Town Managers have asked the RTM to suggest what services should be reduced or eliminated. She feels the RTM needs to think about making those type of suggestions to the Manager.

Rep. Smuts agreed with Rep. Sebastian. She noted that in addition to debt service, there are other items that the RTM has no control over, such as contracts and salaries. She feels the RTM needs to have a list of items or services which are within its control to help identify the items that the public is willing to have reduced or eliminated. She cited as possible examples a reduction in the library hours, or in police response time. She feels there are many things in the budget that citizens enjoy but that it is the job of the RTM to make the difficult decisions that result in reduced or eliminated services .

Rep. Ebbin stated that she read in the newspaper about the recent BOE teacher contract negotiations that included no wage increase for 2010. She commented that since the RTM has no involvement with contract negotiations for Town employees, the Council should follow this direction with Town employee contracts. She feels it is important to be equitable with teachers and Town employees. She does not want the teachers to be the only ones penalized by the current economic situation.

Rep. Cooper agreed with Rep. Sebastian and stated for the record that he does not want an increase in the budget this year.

The Town Manager responded to Rep. Sebastian's remarks concerning the grand levy, debt service and inflation levels. He stated that many factors have influenced the budget over the last ten years. He mentioned that the phase-in of the last revaluation adversely affected many residents and benefited others, and that the decrease in revenues from outside sources has increased dependency on local property tax. These issues have a far greater influence on the increase in taxes than the growth of the budget. He feels it is essential to identify the services that are important for the Town, since traditional revenue sources are no longer keeping pace or are being eliminated. He noted that in the past he has presented a reduced or level budget, and that the

Council or RTM has added money back for services they did not want eliminated.

Rep. Peruzzotti commented that she was impressed with the reorganization and reduction to the library's budget last year. She feels that all Department Heads should be encouraged to make similar changes this year.

In response to Rep. Sebastian, the Town Manager distributed a spreadsheet comparing changes in the Consumer Price Index to changes in the adopted budget minus debt service over the past ten years. He responded to Rep. Peruzzotti that the library situation was a unique opportunity to reorganize and make changes to operations. He noted that every vacant position is scrutinized and the affected department is reviewed to see if changes, reorganization, or elimination of the position is possible. He confirmed that no job is automatically filled. He stated that he does not foresee a large number of retirements this budget year, nor does he anticipate an opportunity for reorganization similar to that at the library. He mentioned that Rep. Sebastian is suggesting a 0% tax levy budget for 2010 which would significantly affect the Town and most likely cause layoffs which most members do not support.

K. ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn at 8:38 p.m. was made by Rep. Smuts, seconded by Rep. Fairbank and so voted unanimously.

Attest:

*Barbara Tarbox, Town Clerk
Clerk of the RTM*

Sally A. Whitney, Assistant Town Clerk