



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

Wednesday, December 17, 2008

7:30 PM

Town Hall Annex-Community Room 1

Special Meeting

A. ROLL CALL

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

26 members were present, and a quorum was declared. (Rep. Cerf arrived at 7:46 p.m.)

The Moderator reported that Reps. Granatosky, Newsome, Power, Sebastian and Svencer called to say they are unable to attend this meeting.

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

Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Assistant to the Town Manager Lee Vincent, 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. Cooper.

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 12, 2008

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

D. CITIZENS' PETITIONS

None.

E. RECEPTION OF COMMUNICATIONS

Moderator Billing stated that members received copies of the 2009 RTM meeting schedule and the minutes of the Ad Hoc Budget Committee meetings. She announced that the Council Committee of the Whole did not pass the Ordinance on Property Tax Relief; therefore it will not be referred to the RTM. The Moderator reported that the District 7 caucus is postponed until January 15, 2009. She invited members to attend a Holiday Social at Par Four Restaurant immediately following the meeting.

F. REPORT OF THE TOWN MANAGER:

1. Financial report

Mr. Vincent reported that the Unreserved & Undesignated Fund balance as of July 1, 2008 is approximately \$11.0 million; the General Contingency balance is \$350,000; the Capital Reserve

balance is \$1,725,829.

Mr. Vincent stated that the Senior Center is closed and the relocation of the center to the former Noank School is in progress. He confirmed that all activities will be resumed at the temporary location on December 29, 2008.

2. Monthly briefing

The Town Manager provided a brief summary of the "ready to go" Town projects that would be eligible for any Federal or State economic stimulus package that may become available. He reported on the foreclosure statistics as provided by the Town Clerk's office.

The Manager congratulated the Finance Director and his staff for receiving the Distinguished Budget Award from the Government Finance Officers Association for the FYE 2009 Budget. He noted that the Town is receiving this award for the fifteenth consecutive year, and that only fourteen Connecticut municipalities achieved it this year.

He proudly announced that Town employees increased contributions to the United Way campaign by five percent over last year despite the current economic downturn and that contributions amounted to almost \$25,000.

The Manager mentioned that he is closely monitoring the State Legislature for impacts to the budget. He reported on the Governor's proposal concerning the State's current fiscal year deficit. Town Manager Oefinger wished everyone a happy holiday season.

In response to Rep. Cerf, the Manager explained the efforts that the Town has made to achieve 100% participation for the Fort Hill Homes sewer lateral replacement project. He noted that individuals who have not granted easements to the Town may have to replace the laterals at their own expense at a later date rather than through this Town project.

Mr. Vincent stated that the impact from the few laterals that are not replaced will be minimal. Relining the main sanitary sewers and completing 414 lateral replacements will significantly reduce contamination in the storm water sewers and thus reduce the pollution of the Poquonnock River and shellfish beds.

In regard to the "Central Hall" project, the Manager expressed frustration with the lack of progress. He noted that the project has been redesigned, all permits were in hand at the time of the purchase, site plans have been approved several times and variances granted. He noted that it is possible that the current economy is having an impact; he will provide an update next month. In regard to the Library Street property, the Manager reported that he has engaged the Town Attorney to proceed with legal action.

In response to Rep. Collins, the Manager noted that he is communicating with the Subase commander to include the pier project as a "ready to go" item with the Southeastern Connecticut Enterprise Region. He agreed with Rep. Collins that Southeastern Connecticut must be ready for the next round of BRAC closures. He stated that the Subase closure would impact the entire region.

In response to Rep. Cooper, the Town Manager reported that he does not have information on "green projects" for wind to energy generation at Fitch High School. He stated that the Council recently established a Task Force on Climate Change and Sustainable Community. The Manager confirmed that he would mention this idea of "green projects" to the new School Superintendent. The Moderator suggested that Rep. Cooper and she should confer on this item.

G. LIAISON REPORTS

None.

H. COMMITTEE REPORTS

1. FINANCE

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

In the absence of Chairman Granatosky, Rep. Moukawsher read the minutes of the meeting held on December 8, 2008. (Minutes are attached.)

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

2008-0245 FY2009 Budget Concerns

FY2009 BUDGET CONCERNS

Deleted from Referral List - No further action

The Moderator stated that it is her understanding that the committee's recommendation is to allow the Manager and the Town Council to continue to handle the current fiscal year budget. The committee is satisfied with their current approach.

2. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT & SERVICES

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

No meeting, no report.

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

1. Report of Ad Hoc Budget Committee

Chairman Billing summarized the minutes of the meetings held on November 24 and December 3, 2008. (Minutes are attached.)

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

2008-0277 FY2010 RTM Budget Discussion

FY2010 RTM BUDGET DISCUSSION

Discussed

The Moderator commented that no action is necessary on the Ad Hoc Budget Committee recommendations. She noted that the committee hopes that standing committees will follow the recommendations.

In response to Rep. Pratt, the Town Manager commented that discussion in January and February is most helpful to the RTM standing committees prior to the finalization of the Manager's Budget. He acknowledged that it would allow more discussion about programs, priorities and enable

department heads to respond to RTM questions and concerns. He noted that the formulation of the budget has started. He stated that he has requested staff to establish a level service budget as a baseline as well as provide justification for a budget with a 2% increase, 0% increase, 3% reduction and 5% reduction. He feels this will identify the items necessary for elimination or reductions to achieve these scenarios. The Manager confirmed that the budget presented formally to the RTM will be the Manager's budget. He mentioned that staff proceeds through two rounds of review with him prior to the finalization of the Manager's budget. He requested a review with the Town Clerk and the Moderator of the account assignments to the standing committees.

Rep. Cerf stated it would be helpful if the Manager provided a list of items that he would recommend for reduction or elimination along with the associated cost savings. She mentioned that the Town of Stonington has asked employees to give up raises this year and suggested that the Town should consider doing the same and provide the savings figure if this were done.

In response to Rep. Loughlin, the Manager stated that the packet of information provided to all members at this meeting was the result of Council deliberations on the budget over the last several weeks. The packet includes a compilation of the Committee of the Whole budget discussion; a list of current vacant positions; justification for filling vacant positions from several departments heads; FYE 2009 revenue & expense report; a memo from the Library Director in regard to possible FY2010 budget reductions; a memo from the Police Chief providing special event cost analysis.

The Moderator suggested that the information may assist committees in January and February in a review with department heads prior to the Manager finalizing the budget.

Rep. Ebbin pointed out that the RTM Public Works Committee has identified that \$30,000 in overtime is associated with free landfill days and that during snowstorms there are 20-30 vehicles dispatched with some vehicles having two employees. She feels that savings could be realized in these two areas alone.

Rep. Harrell objects to any reduction in library hours. She feels that it is very important to struggling families during the current economic downturn to maintain Sunday hours since the library provides free access to books, newspapers, videos and computers.

In response to Rep. Cerf, the Manager stated that the Board of Education (BOE) is a month ahead in the budget process. He reported that Chairman Washington has stated that the BOE is concerned and has assured him that it will try to contain costs.

Rep. Evered provided a detailed summary of the Bluff Point to Preston Trail Committee presentation that was given to the Groton Utilities Commission. She reported that the chairperson praised the cooperative support received from local municipalities and agencies. The study is scheduled for completion in the fall of 2009. Funding for this project will be sought from the National Recreational Trail Program. The committee feels with the enormous grassroots and local municipal support that a connected trail network will be completed.

J. ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn at 8:55 p.m. was made by Rep. Steinfeld, seconded by Rep. Garcia and so voted unanimously.

Attest:

Barbara Tarbox, Town Clerk
Clerk of the RTM

Sally A. Whitney, Assistant Town Clerk