



# 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 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, Patrice Granatosky, Dolores Harrell, Karen Hatcher, Keith L. Hedrick, Jonathan Heller, Lynn Crockett Hubbard, Michael Dean Johnson, Rosanne E. Kotowski, Jim Loughlin, Elizabeth Luck, Jackie Massett, Bruce A. McDermott, Roscoe Merritt, Constance Miller, Scott Newsome, Richard J. Pasqualini, Jr., Betty A. Prochaska, Pam Ryley, Jack Sebastian, Dana S. Semeraro, Joan Steinfeld, Irma Streeter, Mark Svencer, Archie C. Swindell, Lori A. Watrous and Ivy R. Williams**

---

Wednesday, April 11, 2012

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

*The Moderator reported that Reps. Bauer, Chase-Hildebrand, Deane-Shinbrot, Harrell, Heller, Hubbard, Laughlin, Sebastian and Svencer notified the Town Clerk of their absence.*

*Members Present: Moderator Ambroise, Rep. Adams, Rep. Aument, Rep. Baril, Rep. Barnhart, Rep. Cerf, Rep. Collins, Rep. Conley, Rep. DeMatto, Rep. Driscoll, Rep. Ferreira, Rep. Gardner, Rep. Granatosky, Rep. Hatcher, Rep. Hedrick, Rep. Johnson, Rep. Kotowski, Rep. Massett, Rep. McDermott, Rep. Merritt, Rep. Miller, Rep. Pasqualini Jr., Rep. Prochaska, Rep. Ryley, Rep. Semeraro, Rep. Steinfeld, Rep. Streeter, Rep. Swindell, Rep. Watrous and Rep. Williams*

*Members Absent: Rep. Bauer, Rep. Chase-Hildebrand, Rep. Deane-Shinbrot, Rep. Harrell, Rep. Heller, Rep. Hubbard, Rep. Loughlin, Rep. Luck, Rep. Newsome, Rep. Sebastian and Rep. Svencer*

*Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Superintendent of Schools Paul Kadri, 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. McDermott.*

#### C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF MARCH 14, 2012

*A motion that the minutes be approved was made by Rep. Massett, seconded by Rep. Barnhart.  
The vote to approve the minutes carried 29 in favor, 1 abstention. (Abstaining: Rep. Swindell.)*

#### D. CITIZENS' PETITIONS

*None.*

#### E. RECEPTION OF COMMUNICATIONS

*Moderator Ambroise announced that the RTM Annual Budget Meeting will convene on Monday, April 30 at 7:00 p.m. He stated that the meeting agenda and schedule of accounts will be mailed on Monday April 16, 2012 to members, subdivisions and outside agencies. He asked members to see the Assistant Town Clerk after the meeting for an amendment to the City of Groton FYE2013 Budget. The Moderator summarized two emails he received.*

*In response to Rep. Cerf, the Town Clerk explained the current policy regarding communications, emails and citizen petitions letters. She noted that a representative may forward and distribute information to the body on behalf of a constituent and that most members can be reached by email found in the Town Register. She noted that providing copies of all correspondence and emails*

would be costly and cumbersome. It is her intent to improve efficiency, reduce costs and move toward becoming paperless.

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

### **1. Financial report**

*Mr. Oefinger reported that the Fund Balance as of June 30, 2011 is approximately \$10.1 million; the General Contingency balance is \$150,000. The Manager noted that the Town Council and RTM recently approved a \$200,000 transfer to the Capital Reserve Fund for the Middle School Modification project; the Capital Reserve balance is \$532,281. He reported that the decrease is due to the allocation from the unassigned fund balance of \$485,800 for the Middle School Modification project and \$8,000 for the Human Services Building Radon Ventilation project.*

### **2. Monthly briefing**

*The Town Manager highlighted various items from the Town Manager's News. He announced that Groton has again received the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting. He reported that Police Sergeant Tony Garcia retired on March 30, 2012 and recognized Cindy Miffit from the Groton Public Library for receiving the 2012 Connecticut Library Association Support Staff of the Year Award.*

*In response to several questions, the Town Manager stated that the Town has not received a formal proposal from the Noank Fire District regarding the use of the vacant Noank School property. He stated that responsibility for future maintenance expenses would be negotiated by the Council. He noted that he will report back on the Noank School property appraisal that was completed several years ago. He mentioned that the Noank School Re-use Task Force was very thorough, was well attended by neighbors and the community, and received enormous public input regarding uses of the property. He reported that the final report stated that most citizens wanted the parcel to remain as public property.*

*In response to Rep. Swindell, the Manager noted that the final report from the Groton Heights School Re-use Task Force was recently presented to the Town Council. He mentioned that this task force did not have as much public input or involvement. He highlighted the conclusions and recommendations. He noted that the Town Council has not discussed this report since it was received just prior to the start of the annual budget review process. He mentioned that it would be advisable to pursue a zoning regulation change for institutional re-use of this property. Uses of the property are limited by the current zoning designation.*

## **G. REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS**

*Mr. Kadri reported on the excellent response from emergency responders to a recent bomb threat at Fitch High School. He updated members on the status of the middle school consolidation process and school redistricting to correct racial imbalance. He reported on the wireless facilities improvements to school buildings.*

*In response to questions, Mr. Kadri explained the State approval process for school redistricting and noted the differences between the short-term plan to address racial imbalance and the long-term solution which will necessitate large scale structural changes to achieve compliance. He noted that the State has a program currently offering up to 80% reimbursement for school facilities that correct racial imbalance in a school district. He hopes that the Town is able to capture this funding. He explained the rationale behind the delay in hiring five new teachers in the elementary school system. He noted that the vacancies are a result of two retirements and 3 resignations that will be effective in June.*

## **H. LIAISON REPORTS**

### **Town Council/Board of Education/RTM/City Council**

*Rep. Watrous reported on the meeting held on April 4, 2012. The committee reviewed its draft bylaws. She stated that the purpose of the committee is to foster open communication between the*

Town Council, Board of Education, RTM and City Council. She stated that several topics were mentioned for discussion at future meetings.

### **Economic Development Commission**

Rep. DeMatto attended two committee meetings and a program sponsored by Northeast Utilities. The program emphasized the important role of the commission in pursuing revenue opportunities during difficult economic times. She reported the primary focus of the committee is development of a refined economic development web site. She noted that the Town Council increased the Economic Development advertising budget by \$10,000 to enable the department to create a comprehensive annual marketing plan for Groton. She stressed the importance of this funding since 67.6% of the Town's expenses are paid by local tax revenue. For this reason, it is critical to aggressively pursue new revenue sources.

## **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**

*No meeting, no report.*

### **9. CONSOLIDATION - Chairman Pasqualini**

*No meeting, no report.*

## **J. OTHER BUSINESS**

### **1. Budget Overview - Town Manager**

The Manager explained the process for developing the budget and the terminology and information related to the accounts by function and cost center. He reviewed the procedure for transfers within a function versus a transfer from another fund. He confirmed that he always prepares the budget with a conservative approach based on estimated revenue and that the Town Council approves the final mill rate in June which allows the latest revenue projections to be utilized. Mr. Oefinger commented on the purpose of the Capital Improvement Program (CIP). He clarified the importance of having the CIP funds grow over time to avoid the expenses incurred with bonding projects that are better achieved through the CIP. He briefly noted that the Town Council is discussing a possible road maintenance referendum at the November election. He clarified the reasons that this direction is being considered.

The Manager encouraged members to ask questions of staff or himself during committee meetings as more detailed supporting information is available to explain changes to the budget.

### **2. Budget Procedures - Town Clerk**

Town Clerk Betsy Moukawsher explained how the RTM annual budget sessions proceed as one continuous meeting. She clarified how motions and amendments are made and handled by the

body. She noted that the Moderator will mediate and determine if a motion is frivolous. She informed new members that if they would like to discuss an issue with other party members, they may ask their Floor Leader to call a recess for caucus.

Rep. Hatcher requested that the Moderator and Town Clerk investigate the possibility of providing official Town email accounts for elected representatives. She stated that her concern stems from Freedom of Information requirements and the impact on an elected individual if a problem should arise.

The Moderator noted that he and the Town Clerk will look into this issue with the Information Technology Department.

**2012-0112****RTM Committee Debate and Decorum**

RTM Committee Debate and Decorum

**This matter was Referred to the RTM Rules & Procedures Committee.**

Rep. Kotowski expressed concern regarding the procedures at the RTM Education Committee meeting held on March 14. She feels that the democratic process of debate and discussion was not handled correctly. She questioned the powers of ex-officio members of the RTM.

The Town Clerk explained the rules of a special meeting and stated that all RTM committee meetings are special meetings and that discussion, debate and votes should pertain to the item on the floor. The chairman of the meeting is responsible for ruling on a point of order.

Rep. Cerf attended the same committee meeting and supports Rep. Kotowski. Rep. Cerf felt pressured and believes that discussion was steered in the direction of getting to the vote on the appropriation. She feels that information pertaining to the expenditure was not allowed. She stated that Rep. Kotowski was prepared and had a list of questions that should have been answered. Rep. Cerf requested a referral to the RTM Rules and Procedures Committee to discuss the action of ex-officio members, the tendency to pressure members to make a decision when additional information is requested, and the impartiality of the chairperson while conducting the meeting.

The Moderator referred this to the RTM Rules and Procedures Committee with no due date. He noted that there is no requirement for a due date and that the Chairman has control over scheduling the meeting to address referrals.

**2012-0113****RTM Email Options**

Possible amendment to RTM Rules to allow for emailing of information to members

**This matter was Referred to the RTM Rules & Procedures Committee.**

Rep. Conley reported that the email testing for distribution of communications since February has been flawless. She would like to see an amendment to the RTM Rules that provides a detailed voluntary option for distributing all information to members via email.

**K. ADJOURNMENT**

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

Attest:

Betsy Moukawsher, Town Clerk  
Clerk of the RTM

Sally A. Whitney, Assistant Town Clerk