



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

Representatives Jeffrey Armstrong, Joseph Baril, Lori Bartinik, Genevieve Cerf, Wayne Chiapperini, Michael Collins, Joseph delaCruz, Luanne DeMatto, Debra Dickey, Susan Dowling, Shirley Dunbar-Rose, George Edwards Jr, Suzanne Elliot, Norbert Fay, Robert Garcia, Patrice Granatosky, Dolores Harrell, Barbara Hoelck, Gordon Lange, David Miner, Nancy Mitchell, Deborah Monteiro, Matt Morton, Scott Newsome, Nora Patterson, Darcy Peruzzotti, Kevin Power, Don Pratt, Rita Schmidt,, Jennifer Smuts, Eleanor Steere, Fritz Stein, Joan Steinfeld, Irma Streeter, Mark Svencer, George Swift, Patricia Thunberg, Tom Vivirito, Robert Walker Sr, John Waller and Elizabeth Weil.

Monday, May 3, 2004

7:30 PM

Senior Center

ANNUAL BUDGET MEETING

A. ROLL CALL

Moderator Shirley Dunbar-Rose called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. 32 members were present, and a quorum was declared

Members Present: Rep. Armstrong, Rep. Baril, Rep. Bartinik, Rep. Cerf, Rep. Chiapperini, Rep. Collins, Rep. Dickey, Rep. Dowling, Rep. Dunbar-Rose, Rep. Elliot, Rep. Granatosky, Rep. Harrell, Rep. Lange, Rep. Miner, Rep. Mitchell, Rep. Monteiro, Rep. M. Morton, Rep. Patterson, Rep. Peruzzotti, Rep. Power, Rep. Pratt, Rep. Schmidt, Rep. Steere, Rep. Stein, Rep. Steinfeld, Rep. Streeter, Rep. Svencer, Rep. Swift, Rep. Thunberg, Rep. Vivirito, Rep. Walker, Sr. and Rep. Weil

Members Absent: Rep. delaCruz, Rep. DeMatto, Rep. Edwards, Jr., Rep. Fay, Rep. Garcia, Rep. Hoelck, Rep. Newsome, Rep. Smuts and Rep. Waller, II

Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Assistant to the Town Manager Lee Vincent, Mayor Harry Watson, Councilors Skrmetti, Kolnaski, and O'Beirne, Administrative Services Director Doug Ackerman, Finance Director Sal Pandolfo, Superintendent of Schools Dr. James Mitchell, Superintendent of School Buildings and Grounds Wes Greenleaf, Assistant Superintendent for Administrative Services Sally Keating, School Business Manager Hugh Hunter, Board of Education members Marcia Greenhalgh, Robert Peruzzotti, and Beverly Washington, Town Clerk Barbara Tarbox, 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. Lange.

C. CALL OF THE MEETING

*TOWN OF GROTON
ANNUAL BUDGET MEETING*

Notice is hereby given that the Town Council of the Town of Groton, pursuant to Section 8.4.3 of the Groton Town Charter, has determined that the ANNUAL BUDGET MEETING OF THE REPRESENTATIVE TOWN MEETING will be held at the GROTON SENIOR CENTER, Newtown Road (Route #117), Groton, Connecticut, on Monday, May 3, 2004 at 7:30 p.m. for the consideration of the 2004-2005 Annual Budget.

*Dated at Groton, Connecticut
this 13th day of April, 2004.*

*Barbara Tarbox, MMC
Town Clerk*

(Above notice was published in The Day on April 13, 2004.)

Moderator Shirley Dunbar-Rose read the notice.

D. CITIZENS' PETITIONS

Moderator Dunbar-Rose announced there would be a three-minute time limit for citizens to speak.

Jack Sebastian, 4 East Shore Avenue, advocates cutting spending sufficiently. He gave his opinion on how to do this. He does not want any reduction to the Town's Reserve fund.

Julie Maisch, 42 Circle Avenue, expressed her thanks to the RTM for all their hard work and service all year long. She asked that the request of \$3,000 for Eastern Connecticut Symphony Regional Concert be funded.

Rosemarie Althuis, 4 Appletree Lane Mystic, spoke in favor of funding the Eastern Connecticut Symphony Regional Concert. She said she supports the Education Budget request and feels it is in the best interest of the Town to fully fund it.

Sidney Van Zandt, 3 Front Street, voiced her support for the budget line item for \$25,000 for Land Acquisition Fund. It will protect, conserve and preserve our natural resources. She explained the theory of how this will save money in the future for the taxpayers.

Jim Young, 27 Clipper Court, Mystic, stated our current mill rate is reasonable compared to some towns. He feels the mill rate increase is not from wasteful spending and will amount to about \$25.00 per household. He asked that the RTM restore the Education funds cut by the Council, maintain the Community Policing and the Drug Task Force at current levels, and not close the Library on Sundays. He emphasized that he does not want any further reductions by the RTM.

Terry Eames, 41 Pine Island Road, agrees with many of the speakers that have already spoken tonight. He feels the community is supportive of the current budget and is willing to pay for Education in light of passing the School Referendum. He asked the RTM to restore the cuts made by the Council to the Education Budget.

Kevin Trejo, 536 Shennecossett Road, believes the Superintendent of Schools spends the funds wisely. He stated the Town needs more economic development to help shift the tax burden off residential taxpayers.

Chuck Nado, 380 High Street, voiced his concern about the cuts to the Education Budget and library closing on Sundays. The schools have already sacrificed enough by the layoffs last year, closing of Seely School, cutting the Gifted and Talented program and no funding for summer school. He feels Groton needs to concentrate on economic development to help shoulder the burden of taxes and reduce residential development that drives up the cost of services provided by the Town.

Priscilla Pratt, 75 Pearl Street, Noank, advocates funding \$25,000 for the Land Acquisition Fund. The funding would also provide seed money to apply for grants. She feels that saving open space saves on taxes.

Beth Tillman, 925 River Road, Mystic, thanked the RTM for their diligence and service. She supports funding the Eastern CT Symphony Regional Concert. She is in favor of open space land acquisition. It is very important to maintain our remaining green space for our local air quality and conservation of the natural resources.

Lea Graner Kennedy, 18 Charles Street, Mystic, appreciates the RTM listening to the citizens. She

feels an increase of approximately \$25.00 per household is minuscule if it allows the education budget to be fully funded. She does not want to see further staff layoffs or closing of schools. She would like to see summer school funding restored along with the Gifted and Talented program. She expressed her displeasure over the closing of the library on Sundays. She wants no more cuts and wants the Council reductions restored.

E. COMMUNICATIONS

The Moderator reported that Reps. Edwards, Garcia, DeMatto, and Waller had called to report their absence. Copies of the refreshment schedule were distributed prior to the meeting. Handouts from Ledge Light Health District and Groton Artwaves are available on a table in the rear of the hall.

A motion to adjourn to 7:00 p.m., Wednesday, May 5, 2004 was made by Rep. Lange seconded by Rep. Walker and so voted unanimously.

At 8:16 p.m., adjournment was taken to 7:00 p.m., Wednesday May 5, 2004.

Budget Session - Wednesday May 5, 2004

The meeting was called to order at 7:10 p.m. by Moderator Dunbar-Rose.

29 members were present at roll call and a quorum was declared. (Reps. Walker and Armstrong arrived later.)

Members Present: Rep. Armstrong, Rep. Baril, Rep. Bartinik, Rep. Cerf, Rep. Chiapperini, Rep. Collins, Rep. delaCruz, Rep. Dickey, Rep. Dunbar-Rose, Rep. Edwards, Jr., Rep. Elliot, Rep. Garcia, Rep. Harrell, Rep. Hoelck, Rep. Miner, Rep. Mitchell, Rep. Monteiro, Rep. Newsome, Rep. Power, Rep. Pratt, Rep. Schmidt, Rep. Steere, Rep. Stein, Rep. Steinfeld, Rep. Streeter, Rep. Svencer, Rep. Swift, Rep. Thunberg, Rep. Vivirito, Rep. Walker, Sr. and Rep. Weil

Members Absent: Rep. DeMatto, Rep. Dowling, Rep. Fay, Rep. Granatosky, Rep. Lange, Rep. M. Morton, Rep. Patterson, Rep. Peruzzotti, Rep. Smuts and Rep. Waller, II

Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Assistant to the Town Manager Lee Vincent, Finance Director Sal Pandolfo, Administrative Services Director Doug Ackerman, Public Works Director Gary Schneider, Assistant Public Works Director Carl Almqvist, Senior Center Supervisor Mary Jo Riley, Town Clerk Barbara Tarbox, Deputy Town Clerk Janet Downs, Assistant Town Clerk Sally Whitney.

COMMUNICATIONS

Moderator Shirley Dunbar-Rose announced that the regular RTM meeting scheduled for May 12, 2004 at 7:30 p.m. has been cancelled and that the budget session originally scheduled to follow that meeting will begin at 7:00 p.m.

She reported that Reps. Dematto and Granatosky will be absent and that Rep. Walker will be arriving late. She welcomed Rep. Edwards back from an extended illness. She announced that it was Rep. Bartinik's birthday this evening and a vase of flowers from her husband, Councilor Peter Bartinik was given to her.

The Moderator referred items 2004-0013 Abandonment of a Portion of Cedar Lane to the RTM Public Works Committee and 2004-0149 FYE 2004 Fourth Quarter Transfers to the RTM Finance Committee.

2004-0013 Abandonment of a Portion of Cedar Lane

RESOLUTION FOR THE ABANDONMENT OF A PORTION OF CEDAR LANE

WHEREAS, a recorded property map showing Cedar Lane in Noank includes a designated right-of-way which has never been used and is situated beyond the present end of the usable portion of the lane and within the apparent and presumed property of a resident, and

WHEREAS, there has never been a Town plan to use that portion of the indicated right-of-way for Cedar Lane, and there is no foreseeable purpose or intention for the Town of Groton to build

or use any extension of Cedar Lane, and

WHEREAS, the indication of a Town right-of-way in official land records unfairly impedes the sale or encumbrance of the residential property involved, and

WHEREAS, the Groton Planning Commission on February 23, 2004, sent a report in favor of the abandonment of the Town's interest of a 727 square foot portion of Cedar Lane, and

WHEREAS, the Town of Groton has no deeded interest or title in the said right-of-way, and consequently holds no asset or value in the said right-of-way, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that upon the approval or concurrence of the Representative Town Meeting, the Town Manager may execute a quit claim deed in favor of the owners at 40 Cedar Lane to relinquish any and all claim or ownership by the Town of Groton in a right-of-way of 727 square feet, more or less.

Refer to RTM

This matter was Referred to the RTM Public Works Committee, due back on June 9, 2004. The motion carried.

2004-0149

FYE 2004 Fourth Quarter Transfers

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING FYE 2004 FOURTH QUARTER TRANSFERS

WHEREAS, Section 8.9.5 of the Town Charter provides that upon the request of the Town Manager, in the last three months of the fiscal year, the Council may transfer any unencumbered appropriations from one department to another, and

WHEREAS, Section 8.9.7 of the Town Charter provides for expenditures to be made from the Contingency account, subject to adoption by the Representative Town Meeting, and

WHEREAS, the General Contingency was appropriated at \$400,000 for the current fiscal year, and the following expenditures totalling \$184,500 will leave a Contingency balance of \$215,500, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the following fund transfers shall be made:

- 1) to Legislative Policy \$10,000
- 2) to Voter Registration \$8,500
- 3) to Legal Services \$36,000
- 4) to Police Department/Patrol and Criminal Investigation \$85,000
- 5) to Public Works/Snow and Ice Control \$45,000

for a total of \$184,500.

This matter was Referred to the RTM Finance Committee, due back on June 9, 2004. The motion carried.

The Town Manager distributed copies on the legal opinion from the Town Attorney in regard to Groton Long Point Association and addressed comments to the RTM.

Town Manager Oefinger announced the State Budget was approved and is awaiting the Governor's approval. He was pleased with the extension of the State Real Estate Conveyance Tax at .5% for distressed towns, for which Groton qualifies.

F. COMMITTEE REPORTS

Public Works Committee

Chairman Michael Collins read the minutes from the meetings held on April 19 and April 21, 2004. (Minutes are on file.)

A motion to approve the minutes was made by Rep. Schmidt, seconded by Rep. Monteiro and so voted unanimously.

Account 1035 - Public Works

Motion for \$6,275,211 as approved by committee was made by Rep. Collins, seconded by Rep. Steinfeld.

Public Works Director Gary Schneider explained transfers and consolidations between cost centers. He answered several questions from the members about fleet maintenance, Mouse Island pump out costs and policy, and the removal costs and procedure for mobile homes at the transfer station. He addressed the impact of 0% increase budget and the effects it will have on preventive maintenance versus fixing items only when they break.

(Rep. Armstrong arrived 7:26 p.m. and Rep. Walker arrived at 7:40 p.m.)

The Town Manager gave an explanation of the consolidation of all departments' benefit costs into one account.

The vote on \$6,275,211 was unanimously in favor.

Account 2020 - Sewer Fund

Motion for \$4,559,580 as approved by committee was made by Rep. Collins, seconded by Rep. Thunberg and so voted unanimously.

Account 2030 Solid Waste Fund

Motion for \$3,248,536 as approved by committee was made by Rep. Collins, seconded by Rep. Walker and so voted unanimously.

Account 6040 - Fleet Reserve

Motion for \$1,631,782 as approved by committee was made by Rep. Collins, seconded by Rep. Harrell and so voted unanimously.

Capital Item - Pavement Management Program Implementation

Motion for \$192,000 as approved by committee was made by Rep. Collins, seconded by Rep. Walker.

Mr. Schneider explained that this item funds resurfacing of roads on a scheduled basis.

The vote on \$192,000 was unanimously in favor.

Capital Item - Rt. 1- Claude Chester/Vergennes Court

Motion for \$15,000 as approved by committee was made by Rep. Collins, seconded by Rep. Swift.

Mr. Schneider explained the location and work needed for this project.

The vote on \$15,000 was unanimously in favor.

Capital Item - Retaining Wall Replacement, Military Highway

Motion for \$210,000 as approved by committee was made by Rep. Collins, seconded by Rep. Harrell.

Mr. Oefinger answered questions about the State LoCIP funding.

The vote on \$210,000 was unanimously in favor.

Capital Item - New Sidewalk Construction - Rt. 184/Rt 12/Kings Highway

Motion for \$30,000 as approved by committee was made by Rep. Collins, seconded by Rep. Walker.

Town Manager Oefinger provided details about this project in response to members' concerns. He explained that the State of Connecticut does not provide sidewalk connections from existing local to State highway locations. The Town did attempt to have the State provide them when the

*new bridge construction was done in this location.
The vote on \$30,000 was unanimously in favor.*

Capital Item - Fire Alarm/Sprinkler Installation Various Buildings

Motion for \$190,000 as approved by committee was made by Rep. Collins, seconded by Rep. Pratt and so voted unanimously.

Capital Item - Senior Center/Library

Motion for \$45,000 as approved by committee was made by Rep. Collins, seconded by Rep. Walker and so voted unanimously.

Capital Item - Police Station

Motion for \$75,000 as approved by committee was made by Rep. Collins, seconded by Rep. Harrell.

Gary Schneider explained that this expenditure is for the replacement of an essential air conditioning system at the police station.

The vote on \$75,000 was unanimously in favor.

Capital Item - Human Services Building Repairs/Renovations

Motion for \$45,000 as approved by committee was made by Rep. Collins, seconded by Rep. Cerf and so voted unanimously.

Capital Item - Town Hall

Motion for \$25,000 as approved by committee was made by Rep. Collins, seconded by Rep. Schmidt.

The Town Manager stated that electrical distribution needs to be completed in Town Hall since it is outdated due to the age of the building and advances in technology.

Rep. Pratt voiced concerns that projects are identified by the town professional staff but are not funded and would like a list of previous and current CIP projects to track actions taken by the Council. The Town Manager explained the process of identifying CIP projects, and making cost adjustments in order to meet code requirements then funding is approved over a three to four year time frame before the total funding is available.

Mr. Oefinger mentioned that this account is funded by LoCIP.

The vote on \$25,000 was unanimously in favor.

Moderator Dunbar-Rose called for a recess of 15 minutes at 8:25 p.m.

The meeting was reconvened at 8:43 p.m. with 31 members still present.

Capital Item - Police Station-Air Filtration

Motion of \$175,000 as approved by committee was made by Rep. Collins, seconded by Rep. Pratt.

Gary Schneider answered concerns as to the necessity and use of this system to the police station.

The Town Manager stated this project will not happen unless we receive the anticipated grant money.

The vote on \$175,000 was unanimously in favor.

Capital Item - WPCF Sewer Line Infrastructure Repairs

Motion for \$137,000 as approved by committee was made by Rep. Collins, seconded by Rep.

Thunberg and so voted unanimously.

Capital Item - Mechanical/Electrical Equipment Replacement

Motion for \$157,000 as approved by committee was made by Rep. Collins, seconded by Rep.

Swift.

Gary Schneider explained the funds come from user fees.

The vote on \$157,000 was unanimously in favor.

Capital Items - Facility Repairs

Motion for \$500,000 as approved by committee was made by Rep. Collins, seconded by Rep.

Schmidt.

Gary Schneider informed the members the repairs are for the Water Pollution Control Facility at Gary Court and this is also funded by user fees.

The vote for \$500,000 was unanimously in favor.

Capital Items - Roof Replacements

Motion for \$30,000 as approved by committee was made by Rep. Collins, seconded by Rep. Monteiro.

Gary stated this is for roof replacment at the Goss Cove pump station.

The vote for \$30,000 was unanimously in favor.

Capital Items - Homeland Security Renovations

Motion for \$55,000 as approved by committee was made by Rep. Collins, seconded by Rep. Walker.

Several members expressed concerns about the need for increased security in our community.

Gary Schneider explained the locations where security would be updated to match the systems installed at the Town Hall Annex and the Police Station. The Town Manager stated some locks have never been replaced and keys from former employees are unaccounted for. He explained how the new security system is programmable for specific location, date and time access for each employee's needs.

Town Clerk Barbara Tarbox related facts on particular incidents of breaks in security when she has been working late and was possibly the only person in the Town Hall.

The vote on \$55,000 carried 30 in favor, 1 opposed. (Opposed: Rep. Steere.)

A motion to adjourn to 7:00 p.m. Thursday, May 6, 2004 was made by Rep. Steinfeld, seconded by Rep. Miner and so voted unanimously.

At 8:55 p.m. adjournment was taken to 7p.m., Thursday, May 6, 2004.

Budget Session - Thursday May 6, 2004

Moderator Shirley Dunbar-Rose called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

27 members were present at roll call, and a quorum was declared. (Reps. Granatosky, Swift and Walker arrived late.)

Members Present: Rep. Armstrong, Rep. Baril, Rep. Bartnik, Rep. Cerf, Rep. Chiapperini, Rep. Collins, Rep. delaCruz, Rep. DeMatto, Rep. Dickey, Rep. Dunbar-Rose, Rep. Garcia, Rep. Granatosky, Rep. Harrell, Rep. Hoelck, Rep. Lange, Rep. Miner, Rep. Mitchell, Rep. Monteiro, Rep. Patterson, Rep. Power, Rep. Pratt, Rep. Stein, Rep. Steinfeld, Rep. Streeter, Rep. Svencer, Rep. Swift, Rep. Thunberg, Rep. Vivirito, Rep. Walker, Sr. and Rep. Weil

Members Absent: Rep. Dowling, Rep. Edwards, Jr., Rep. Elliot, Rep. Fay, Rep. M. Morton, Rep. Newsome, Rep. Peruzzotti, Rep. Schmidt, Rep. Smuts, Rep. Steere and Rep. Waller, II

Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Assistant to the Town Manager Lee Vincent, Planning & Development Director Mike Murphy, Economic/Community Development Specialist Barbara Strother, Human Services Director Marge Fondulas, Ledge Light Health District Director Sam Crowley, Mary Lenzini of the Visiting Nurse Association, Manager of Inspection Services Kevin Quinn, Town Clerk Barbara Tarbox and Assistant Town Clerk Sally Whitney.

Moderator Dunbar-Rose reported that Reps. Elliot, Schmidt and Steere had called in their absences for tonight's meeting.

Health & Social Services Committee

Chairman DeMatto read the minutes of the meeting held on April 29, 2004. (Minutes are on file.)

A motion to approve the minutes was made by Rep. Walker, seconded by Rep. Miner and so voted unanimously.

Account -1051 Human Services

Motion for \$767,504 as approved by committee was made by Rep. DeMatto, seconded by Rep. Steinfeld.

(Rep. Collins arrived at this point in the meeting.)

Director Fondulas responded to questions from members concerning the scholarship program, the duties of the financial assistant, and noted that future reductions or maintaining a 0% budget increase would result in major staff reductions, less counseling and a longer wait for services. The Town Manager explained in detail why the financial assistant position is essential to this department and not incorporated in the Finance Dept.

The vote on \$767,504 was unanimously in favor.

Account - 7320 Human Services Assistance Fund

Motion for \$21,000 as approved by committee was made by Rep. DeMatto, seconded Rep. Walker and so voted unanimously in favor.

Account - 10540 Outside Agencies - Ledge Light

Motion for \$291,064 as approved by committee was made by Rep. DeMatto, seconded by Rep. Patterson and so voted unanimously in favor.

Account -10541 Outside Agencies - VNA

Motion for \$848,659 as approved by committee was made by Rep. DeMatto, seconded by Rep. Pratt and so voted unanimously in favor.

Account - 10545 Outside Agencies - Social

Motion for \$64,500 as approved by committee was made by Rep. DeMatto, seconded by Rep. Walker and so voted unanimously in favor.

Account - 10546 Outside Agencies - Cultural

Motion for \$7,000 as approved by committee was made by Rep. DeMatto, seconded by Rep. Mitchell.

Mr. Vincent, in response to questions, explained the breakdown of support for the agencies in this account.

The vote on \$7,000 was unanimously in favor.

(Patrice Granatosky arrived at this point in the meeting.)

Moderator Dunbar-Rose called for a recess at 7:30 p.m. and reconvened the meeting at 7:40 p.m.

Community and Economic Development Committee

Chairman Debra Dickey read the portion of the minutes of the meeting held April 22, 2004 that dealt with Account # 1046 Planning and Development Services and CIP 8D Economic Assistance Fund. Rep. Power moved to accept the minutes, seconded by Rep. DeMatto and the motion was carried unanimously.

Account - 1046 Planning and Development Services

Motion for \$1,119,790 as approved by committee was made by Rep. Dickey, seconded by Rep. Collins.

Director Mike Murphy explained the decrease in salary expenditures estimated for the current year and changes that will affect next year's budget. This decrease was realized by three current vacant positions, reductions, and revision of positions from hourly to salary. This has resulted in a reduction of overtime, elimination of any extra coverage for vacations and administrative leaves, and reduction of the contingency funds for projects that would need consultants for special engineering services. He stated this was necessary to meet the 0% budget increase.

The Town Manager explained that excess budget funds are returned to the General Fund and are applied to the calculation of the mill rate. He stated that some funds are encumbered for studies that have been approved or are incomplete and noted that this process is allowed. The Town Manager and Mr. Murphy addressed concerns about residential development that increases demand for Town and educational services.

Rep. Steinfeld disclosed her husband is a member of the Planning Commission. Economic/Community Development Specialist Barbara Strother briefed the members on the status of current economic development projects in downtown Groton. She is currently performing the duties of both the Economic Development Specialist & Community Development Specialist since the consolidation of these divisions. Mr. Murphy stated personnel within the department are reassigned as needed to assist Ms. Strother. He stated the department is in the process of updating the Strategic Economic Development Plan.

The Town Manager stated the plan is essential for long-term future economic development that would help stabilize the tax base. It is also needed to clarify the direction that the community wants to take for development. He stated that development of the business park along I-95 would help with the Town's bond rating, allow for early pay-off of the school construction projects, and prevent the town from becoming a bedroom community.

Mr. Oefinger stated that the impact of privatization of military housing is not reflected in this year's budget and he does not have any information at this time.

(Rep. Swift arrived at this point in the meeting.)

Rep. Collins made a motion to move the question, seconded by Rep. Miner and so voted unanimously in favor.

The vote on \$1,119,790 was unanimously in favor.

Capital Item - Economic Assistance Fund

Motion for \$50,000 as approved by committee was made by Rep. Dickey, seconded by Rep DeMatto.

Motion to Amend to \$0 was made by Rep. Granatosky, seconded by Rep. Harrell.

Rep. Granatosky stated her opinion on why this account should be zero. She felt that use of the funds in this account would bypass the RTM's authority to approve all appropriations over \$2,000.

Reps. Monteiro, Pratt and Power voiced their disagreement and that they would not support the amended figure. The amount of \$50,000 is minuscule compared to millions for other accounts. They felt it is very important as an enticement for the Town's future economic development. They believe that this fund has not been mismanaged, and that it is a contingency fund which may never be spent.

The Town Manager explained this is intended to be a growing fund to assist in attracting economic development. The fund is an essential tool for assisting new development. He stated it is often used for off-site capital improvements such as traffic lights, widening roads, or sidewalks for a project.

Rep. Dickey stated the Town needs the tools to stay competitive in attracting business development to the community. This will help stabilize real estate property taxes.

The vote on the amendment of -0- was defeated 1 in favor, 29 opposed. (In Favor: Rep. Granatosky)

The vote on \$50,000 was carried 29 in favor, 1 opposed. (Opposed: Rep. Granatosky.)

Moderator Dunbar-Rose asked the members if it would be acceptable to revise the budget schedule to include more accounts at each meeting. All members were in favor of this. She requested the floor leaders, the Town Clerk and the Town Manager to stay and revise the schedule immediately after adjournment.

Rep. Steinfeld made a motion to adjourn to Monday, May 10, 2004 at 7:00 p.m. seconded by Rep. Garcia and so voted unanimously.

At 8:45 p.m., adjournment was taken to Monday, May 10, 2004.

Budget Session - Monday May 10, 2004

Moderator Shirley Dunbar-Rose called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. 29 members were present at roll call and a quorum was declared. (Reps. Bartinik, Collins, DelaCruz, Edwards, and Steere arrived later.)

Members Present: Rep. Baril, Rep. Bartinik, Rep. Cerf, Rep. Chiapperini, Rep. Collins, Rep. delaCruz, Rep. DeMatto, Rep. Dickey, Rep. Dowling, Rep. Dunbar-Rose, Rep. Edwards, Jr., Rep. Garcia, Rep. Granatosky, Rep. Harrell, Rep. Hoelck, Rep. Lange, Rep. Miner, Rep. Mitchell, Rep. Monteiro, Rep. Newsome, Rep. Patterson, Rep. Power, Rep. Pratt, Rep. Schmidt, Rep. Steere, Rep. Stein, Rep. Steinfeld, Rep. Streeter, Rep. Svencer, Rep. Swift, Rep. Thunberg, Rep. Vivirito, Rep. Walker, Sr. and Rep. Weil
Members Absent: Rep. Armstrong, Rep. Elliot, Rep. Fay, Rep. M. Morton, Rep. Peruzzotti, Rep. Smuts and Rep. Waller, II

Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Assistant to the Town Manager Lee Vincent, Manager Human Resources/Organization Development Gary Lehrman, Administration Services Director Doug Ackerman, Finance Director Sal Pandolfo, Treasurer Cindy Landry, Purchasing Agent John Piacenza, Assessor John Philip, Assistant to Director of Administrative Services Joyce Sauchuk, Manager of Information Technology Lori Parker, Manager of Emergency Communications Joe Sastre, Groton City Mayor Dennis Popp, City Finance Director Tony Timpano, City Police Chief Bruno Giuliani, Groton Long Point Association President Ed Bogdan, Town Clerk Barbara Tarbox and Assistant Town Clerk Sally Whitney.

The Moderator reported that Reps. Elliot and Waller would be absent. She read a letter from Literacy Volunteers of Eastern Connecticut thanking the RTM for their approval of funding at the May 6, 2004 meeting. (Rep. Steere arrived at this point in the meeting.)

Finance Committee

Chairman Rita Schmidt read portions of the minutes of the meetings held on April 14, 26, and 28, 2004. (Minutes are on file.)

A motion to approve the minutes was made by Rep. De Matto, seconded by Rep. Baril and so voted unanimously. (Rep. Collins arrived at this point in the meeting.)

Account 10901 - City of Groton - Highway

Motion for \$1,639,290 as approved by committee was made by Rep. Schmidt, seconded by Rep. DeMatto and so voted unanimously.

Account 10900 - City of Groton - Police

Motion for \$1,899,200 as approved by committee was made by Rep. Schmidt, seconded by Rep. Walker and so voted unanimously.

Account 1092 - School Crossing Guards

Motion for \$129,777 as approved by committee was made by Rep. Schmidt, seconded by Rep. Swift and so voted unanimously.

Account 10910 - Groton Long Point -Police

Motion for \$172,000 as approved by committee was made by Rep. Schmidt, seconded by Rep. DeMatto.

A motion to amend to -0- was made by Rep. Chiapperini, seconded by Rep. Monteiro. Rep. Chiapperini feels consolidation of subdivision services needs to be done to save taxpayer money. He questioned the fairness of the community supporting a police force for a specific subdivision, and whether there is a specific need for policing an individual subdivision in the town.

Ed Bogdan, President of the Groton Long Point Association, explained the historical funding of the GLP Police Force. It is equivalent to the amount the town would expend for providing patrol services to that area of town. He stated that residents of GLP pay for some of their additional services.

A discussion ensued with comments from Reps. Dematto, Monteiro, Newsome, and Granatosky opposing the amendment. Several of the Representatives voiced opinions about the current status of Groton Long Point as a borough, subdivision, fire district or condominium homeowners' association and questioned what land is public or private, as this debate currently is ongoing with the Town Administration. They stated that this is not the time for consolidation discussion nor cutting funding until a final legal decision is made about Groton Long Point's status. Rep. Walker asked about beach access, and whether the community can attend fireworks displays. Mr. Bogdan explained about riparian rights for residents and for the Association in relation to property located at Groton Long Point. He stated the beaches are private according to the land deeds. He stated he believes that the rights granted in the deeds are similar to a case at Crescent Beach in Niantic. He also stated that walk-ins are welcome for the fireworks but that roads are closed for public safety.

Rep. Stein asked about reciprocation of fire and police aid to other districts.

Mr. Bogdan replied they assist as requested.

(Reps. Bartnik and Edwards arrived during the discussion.)

The vote on the Amendment of -0- failed. 1 in favor, 32 opposed. (In Favor: Rep. Chiapperini.)

The vote on \$172,000 carried 32 in favor, 1 opposed. (Opposed: Rep. Chiapperini.)

Account 10911- Groton Long Point - Highway

Motion for \$176,200 as approved by committee was made by Rep. Schmidt, seconded by Rep. DeMatto.

Rep. Chiapperini made a motion to amend the account to zero, there was no second.

The vote on \$176,200 carried 32 in favor, 1 opposed. (Opposed: Rep. Chiapperini.)

Account 1092 - Fire Districts - PILOT

Motion for \$246,012 as approved by committee was made by Rep. Schmidt, seconded by Rep. DeMatto and so voted unanimously.

Account 1006 - Legal Services

Motion for \$345,000 as approved by committee was made by Rep. Schmidt, seconded by Rep. Collins and so voted unanimously.

Account 1010 - Executive Management

Motion for \$375,013 as approved by committee was made by Rep. Schmidt, seconded by Rep. Walker and so voted unanimously.

Account 1013 - Finance Administration

Motion for \$1,238,206 as approved by committee was made by Rep. Schmidt, seconded by Rep. Pratt.

The vote on \$1,238,206 carried 32 in favor, 1 abstention. (Abstaining: Rep. Miner)

Account 2120 - Revaluation Fund

Motion for \$118,000 as approved by committee was made by Rep. Schmidt, seconded by Rep. Walker and so voted unanimously.

Account 1014 - Administrative Services

Motion for \$2,546,620 as approved by committee was made by Rep. Schmidt, seconded by Rep. Pratt and so voted unanimously.

Capital Project - Information Technology Acquisition

Motion for \$69,000 as approved by committee was made by Rep. Schmidt, seconded by Rep. Monteiro and so voted unanimously.

Capital Project - Information Technology Recovery

Motion for \$91,000 as approved by committee was made by Rep. Schmidt, seconded by Rep. DeMatto and so voted unanimously.

Capital Project - Mobile Data Terminals for Police, Fire & EMS

Motion for \$525,000 as approved by committee was made by Rep. Schmidt, seconded by Rep. Miner.

Rep. Steinfeld noted that the funding for this account is from State and Federal Grants.

The vote on the motion for \$525,000 carried unanimously.

Capital Project - Radio Base Replacement

Motion for \$18,000 as approved by committee was made by Rep. Schmidt, seconded by Rep. Pratt and so voted unanimously.

Moderator Dunbar-Rose called for a 15 minute recess at 7:50 p.m.

The meeting reconvened at 8:10 p.m.

(Rep. Delacruz arrived during the recess.)

Account 1070 - Insurance & Claims

Motion for \$541,916 as approved by committee was made by Rep. Schmidt, seconded by Rep. Walker and so voted unanimously.

Account 1071 - Self Funded Plans

Motion for \$3,785,964 as approved by committee was made by Rep. Schmidt, seconded by Rep. Granatosky and so voted unanimously.

Account 6050 - Computer Replacement Fund

Motion for \$78,900 as approved by committee was made by Rep. Schmidt, seconded by Rep. DeMatto and so voted unanimously.

Rep. Schmidt thanked the Town Manager for presenting a zero percent increase budget, and Mr. Oefinger received a round of applause from the RTM members.

Motion to adjourn to 7:00 p.m. Wednesday, May 12, 2004 was made by Rep. Steinfeld, seconded by Rep. Garcia and so voted unanimously.

At 8:15 p.m. adjournment was taken to 7:00 p.m. Wednesday, May 12, 2004.

Budget Session - Wednesday May 12, 2004

Moderator Shirley Dunbar-Rose called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

30 members were present at roll call and a quorum was declared. (Reps. Cerf, Elliot, and Collins arrived late.)

Members Present: Rep. Baril, Rep. Bartinik, Rep. Cerf, Rep. Chiapperini, Rep. Collins, Rep. delaCruz, Rep. DeMatto, Rep. Dickey, Rep. Dowling, Rep. Dunbar-Rose, Rep. Elliot, Rep. Garcia, Rep. Granatosky, Rep. Harrell, Rep. Hoelck, Rep. Lange, Rep. Miner, Rep. Mitchell, Rep. Monteiro, Rep. Newsome, Rep. Patterson, Rep. Power, Rep. Pratt, Rep. Schmidt, Rep. Steere, Rep. Stein, Rep. Steinfeld, Rep. Svencer, Rep. Swift, Rep. Thunberg, Rep. Vivirito, Rep. Walker, Sr. and Rep. Weil

Members Absent: Rep. Armstrong, Rep. Edwards, Jr., Rep. Fay, Rep. M. Morton, Rep. Peruzzotti, Rep. Smuts, Rep. Streeter and Rep. Waller, II

Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Assistant to Town Manager Lee Vincent, Finance Director Sal Pandolfo, Administrative Services Director Doug Ackerman, Registrars Vicki Rossman and Allen Palmer, Director of Mystic-Noank Library Joanna Case, President of Mystic-Noank Library Board of Directors Stewart Lamson, SEAT Representatives Charles Kosloskey and Joanne Jones, Chairman of Groton Public Library Board of Directors Rosemary Palmer and other board members, Groton Public Library Director Alan Benkert, President of Bill Memorial Library Board of Directors Charlotte Barnum and other board members, Bill Memorial Library Director Hali Keeler, Representatives from the Groton and Mystic River Ambulance Services, Town Clerk Barbara Tarbox, Deputy Town Clerk Janet Downs and Assistant Town

Clerk Sally Whitney.

Moderator Dunbar-Rose announced that a revised budget session schedule and the Town Manager's News were distributed tonight.

Rules & Procedures Committee

*Chairman Weil read the minutes of the April 7, 2004 meeting. (Minutes are on file.)
A motion to approve the minutes was made by Rep. Schmidt, seconded by Rep. Miner and so voted unanimously.*

Account 1003 - Voter Registration

Motion for \$103,421 as approved by committee was made by Rep. Weil, seconded by Rep. Walker and so voted unanimously.

Account 1004 - Probate

Motion for \$18,750 as approved by committee was made by Rep. Weil, seconded by Rep. Steinford and so voted unanimously.

Account 1005 - Town Clerk

Motion for \$410,437 as approved by committee was made by Rep. Weil, seconded by Rep. Walker. Rep. Stein expressed concerns about the loss of the part-time position when the volume of work and traffic in this office has increased significantly. This reduction has resulted in several closures of the office during lunch time. He feels this office should be staffed completely as it serves as the hub of the Town. He requested a review, tracking the number of closures, volume of work and overtime during the coming fiscal year, in hopes of restoring this position next year.

Rep. Steinford requested a status update on the Real Estate Conveyance Tax.

Town Clerk Barbara Tarbox explained the budget was based on the Governor's proposed figures of .36% for distressed towns and .11% for other towns. The Governor's budget was revised to continue the current figures of .50% for distressed towns which Groton qualifies and .25% for other towns. The increased conveyance tax helps the Town significantly and the Town has not suffered any decrease in sales. The Town Clerk stressed that the office does have trouble keeping up with the volume of work.

The vote on \$410,437 was unanimously in favor.

(Rep. Cerf arrived at this point in the meeting.)

Community & Economic Development Committee

Chairman Debra Dickey read a portion of the minutes of the April 22, 2004 meeting. (Minutes are on file.)

Rep. Power requested a correction noting that he assists the Bill Memorial Library, not the Mystic-Noank Library.

A motion to accept the minutes as corrected was made by Rep. DeMatto, seconded by Rep. Monteiro and so voted unanimously.

(Rep. Elliot arrived at this point in the meeting.)

Account 1001 - Legislative Policy

Motion for \$60,305 as approved by committee was made by Rep. Dickey, seconded by Rep. Garcia.

This figures restores the \$1,000 cut by the Council.

Rep. Walker asked the Town Manager to clarify the actions of the Council Committee of the Whole in regard to the Permanent School Building Committee.

The Town Manager stated that all three School Bonding projects would proceed as this is the most cost effective manner.

Rep. DeMatto asked the reason for the \$1,000 reduction by the Council.

The Manager could not recall a specific reason, but the Council was intent on reducing the budget and felt that the reduction to this account would be acceptable since there was a slight increase in the request this year.

The vote on \$60,305 was unanimously in favor.

Account 1007 - Regional Agencies

Motion for \$87,538 as approved by committee was made by Rep. Dickey, seconded by Rep. Miner and so voted unanimously.

Account 1063 - Groton Public Library

Motion for \$1,689,179 as approved by committee was made by Rep. Dickey, seconded by Rep. Cerf.

Rep. Granatosky noted there is strong community support to maintain Sunday hours at the library and she expressed regret that the RTM can't grant money to this account above the Manager's proposed figure.

Director Alan Benkert stated he has adjusted his budget to maintain Sunday hours during the academic year.

Rep. Chiapperini stated the cuts for maintaining a 0% budget increase are cutting too deep and are reducing services that the community considers important.

Rep. Elliot asked what impact the 0% budget increase has had on the library for the last several years.

Mr. Benkert cited the following sacrifices to meet the 0% increase: reduced programming for all ages, reduced information desk staffing, reduced and delayed book selection and purchases, reduced spending on databases, delayed updates on reference materials, cancellation of periodical subscriptions, longer waiting lists for popular materials, reduction in the number of part-time aides and pages, and the loss of two full-time employees.

The vote on \$1,689,179 was unanimously in favor.

Account 3310 - Connecticut Fund

Motion for \$22,724 as approved by committee was made by Rep. Dickey, seconded by Rep. Walker and so voted unanimously.

Account 10650 - Mystic-Noank Library

Motion for \$168,670 as approved by committee was made by Rep. Dickey, seconded by Rep. Harrell and so voted unanimously.

Account 10651 - Bill Memorial Library

Motion for \$10,250 as approved by committee was made by Rep. Dickey, seconded by Rep. DeMatto and so voted unanimously.

Moderator Dunbar-Rose called for a recess at 7:36 p.m. and reconvened the meeting at 7:50 p.m. (Rep. Collins came in during the recess.)

Finance Committee

Chairman Rita Schmidt read the minutes of the April 28, 2004. (Minutes are on file.)

A motion to approve the minutes was made by Rep. Garcia, seconded by Rep. Miner and so voted unanimously.

Account 10261 - Mystic River Ambulance Service

Motion for \$35,000 as approved by committee was made by Rep. Schmidt, seconded by DeMatto. Rep. Power personally commended the service which is provided by Mystic River Ambulance. He asked if they serve Stonington and receive funding from the Town of Stonington.

A representative from Mystic River Ambulance stated they do service Stonington and do request equal funding from both towns, but as of this date has not received equal funding from Stonington.

The vote on \$35,000 was unanimously in favor.

Account 10260 - Groton Ambulance

Motion for \$100,000 as approved by committee was made by Rep. Schmidt, seconded by Rep. DeMatto.

Rep. Newsome asked about evaluation of ambulance services in town and the date of the last purchase of an ambulance.

The Town Manager stated he has no report on the evaluation of ambulance services.

Reps. Walker and DelaCruz asked about staffing and number of response calls.

A Groton Ambulance representative explained the policy for the acquisition of new equipment, reimbursement and response to calls. He stated they have a total of four paid day time employees and rely heavily on volunteers to cover nights and weekends.

The vote on \$100,000 was unanimously in favor.

Account 10263 - LCL Emergency Plan Council

Motion for \$1,000 as approved by committee was made by Rep. Schmidt, seconded by Rep. DeMatto.

Rep. Newsome asked how frequently meetings are held and if this expenditure is necessary.

Mr. Vincent addressed this concern, elaborating on the planning, coordination and frequency of the meetings.

The vote on \$1,000 was unanimously in favor.

Account 2060 - Mumford Cove

Motion for \$11,345 as approved by committee was made by Rep. Schmidt, seconded by Rep. DeMatto and so voted unanimously.

Account 2070 - First Taxing District

Motion for \$960 as approved by committee was made by Rep. Schmidt, seconded by Rep. Walker and so voted unanimously.

Account 2080 - Second Taxing District

Motion for \$3,600 as approved by committee was made by Rep. Schmidt, seconded by Rep. Walker and so voted unanimously.

Account 4010 - Groton Sewer District

Motion for \$1,447,740 as approved by committee was made by Rep. Schmidt, seconded by Rep. DeMatto.

Rep. Power questioned the reduction in sewer assessment.

Finance Director Sal Pandolfo explained that some assessments are completing the 15 year billing cycle and that payment has been received in full.

The vote on \$1,447,740 was unanimously in favor.

Account 1076 - Debt Service

Motion on \$2,536,268 as approved by committee was made by Rep. Schmidt, seconded by Rep. DeMatto and so voted unanimously.

Motion to adjourn to 7:00 p.m. Thursday, May 13, 2004 was made by Rep. Steinford, seconded by Rep. DeMatto and so voted unanimously.

At 8:17 p.m. adjournment was taken to 7:00 p.m. Thursday, May 13, 2004.

Budget Session - Thursday May 13, 2004

Moderator Shirley Dunbar-Rose called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

27 members were present at roll call and a quorum was declared. (Rep. DelaCruz and Waller arrived later.)

Members Present: Rep. Baril, Rep. Bartinik, Rep. Cerf, Rep. Collins, Rep. delaCruz, Rep. Dickey, Rep. Dowling, Rep. Dunbar-Rose, Rep. Elliot, Rep. Garcia, Rep. Granatosky, Rep. Harrell, Rep. Lange, Rep. Miner, Rep. Mitchell, Rep. Monteiro, Rep. Power, Rep. Pratt, Rep. Steere, Rep. Stein, Rep. Steinfeld, Rep. Streeter, Rep. Svencer, Rep. Swift, Rep. Thunberg, Rep. Vivirito, Rep. Walker, Sr., Rep. Waller, II and Rep. Weil

Members Absent: Rep. Armstrong, Rep. Chiapperini, Rep. DeMatto, Rep. Edwards, Jr., Rep. Fay, Rep. Hoelck, Rep. M. Morton, Rep. Newsome, Rep. Patterson, Rep. Peruzzotti, Rep. Schmidt and Rep. Smuts

Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Assistant to the Town Manager Lee Vincent, Police Chief Dave Vanasse, Assistant Chief Herthel Cooper, Captain Kelly Fogg, Captain Michael Crowley, Administrative Services Director Doug Ackerman, Finance Director Sal Pandolfo, Parks & Recreation Director John Silsby, Recreation Superintendent Jerry Lokken, Senior Center Supervisor Mary Jo Riley, Parks Maintenance Supervisor Bill Beaman, Shennecossett Golf Course Superintendent Eric Morrison, Golf Professional Todd Goodhue, Senior Center Program Supervisor Carol Pratt, Town Clerk Barbara Tarbox and Assistant Town Clerk Sally Whitney.

Public Safety Committee

Chairman Tom Vivirito read the minutes of the April 7, 2004 meeting. (Minutes are on file.) A motion to approve the minutes was made by Rep. Vivirito, seconded by Rep. Walker and so voted unanimously.

Account 1024 Public Safety

Motion for \$5,725,788 as approved by committee was made by Rep. Vivirito, seconded by Rep. Walker.

Rep. Collins requested clarification of the reassignment of a Youth Officer and the removal of a patrol officer at the Fitch High School.

Chief Vanasse stated that Youth Officers work days, Monday thru Friday and this would save overtime from patrol hours. He stated the remaining three Youth Officers will have to teach more DARE courses and have increased assignments of youth cases. This reassignment was necessary to maintain a 0% budget increase.

The vote on \$5,725,788 was unanimously in favor.

Recreation Committee

Committee Member Kevin Power read the minutes of the April 20, 2004 meeting in the absence of Chairman delaCruz who will be late due to Little League coaching. (Minutes are on file.)

A motion to approve the minutes was made by Rep. Mitchell, seconded by Rep. Miner.

Rep. Cerf requested clarifications of her statements at the meeting.

Town Clerk Tarbox recommended that she submit an addendum to the minutes.

The motion to approve was unanimously in favor.

ACCOUNT 1064 - Parks & Recreation

Motion for \$2,425,033 as approved by committee was made by Rep. Power, seconded by Rep. Harrell. Rep. Power stated the committee had added \$10,000 to the total to restore field maintenance money.

Moderator Shirley Dunbar-Rose ruled the motion out of order as the figure was greater than the recommendation of either the Manager or the Council.

A motion for \$2,415,033 was made by Moderator Dunbar-Rose, seconded by Rep. Miner.

Rep. Steere expressed concern about lifetime maintenance of the cemeteries and the elimination of teen programs.

Director John Silsby explained maintenance of cemeteries will continue and the elimination of teen programs was due to lack of participation. He stated that teens do participate in some other programs that are available.

Rep. Bartinik expressed concern about the reduction of ninety slots for children participating in the summer playground program.

Mr. Silsby cited that a reduction of seasonal playground leaders resulted in the reduction of ninety

participants. This was necessary to achieve a 0% budget increase and to maintain the ratio of staff to children. He had to prioritize the programs and felt that this was one of the areas that could be reduced. He stated they have not turned away any children from this program yet. A discussion ensued about the additional \$10,000 increase by the committee that had been ruled out of order.

Town Clerk Barbara Tarbox stated that the RTM's figure on any account can't exceed the higher of the Manager's or the Council's recommendation.

Rep. Granatosky expressed regret over reductions affecting community programs and services which are the result of the mandate from the Council to the Manager and department heads to achieve a 0% budget increase. She stressed that nothing could be changed for this year but stated the RTM could speak out and be pro-active when the Council addresses the Manager with guidelines for next year's budget.

(Rep. Waller arrived at this point in the meeting.)

Rep. Lange does not want reductions in programs for elementary school children. He feels further reductions of summer programs would be detrimental to the community, forcing children out on the streets.

Rep. Cerf stated \$5,000 of the request figure was for fertilization of playgrounds.

Mr. Silsby stated the \$10,000 was eliminated under park maintenance, not programs.

Rep. Collins asked about the number of children involved in the summer program, about fees, and why it is mostly pre-school children who are affected.

John Silsby explained that the ratio of staff to pre-school children is greater, and that fees were restructured to incorporate field trip expenses.

Rep. Pratt asked if capital improvement funds could be transferred to an operating account.

The Town Manager advised it would be best not to place funds in the capital reserve fund to begin with. He explained the process of how the RTM could proceed, and feels it would be setting a precedent that would create chaos and damage the purpose of the capital reserve funds.

Democratic Floor Leader Granatosky requested a caucus at 7:45 p.m.

(Rep. Streeter left and Rep. delaCruz arrived during the caucus.)

Moderator Dunbar-Rose reconvened the meeting at 8:00 p.m.

A motion to move the question was made by Rep. Vivirito, seconded by Rep. Bartinik and so voted unanimously.

The vote on \$2,415,033 carried 24 in favor, 4 opposed. (Opposed: Reps. Cerf, Collins, Granatosky, Stein.)

The Moderator called for a recess at 8:10 p.m. The meeting was reconvened at 8:22 p.m.

Account 2010 - Golf Course Fund

Motion for \$1,100,342 as approved by committee was made by Rep. delaCruz, seconded by Rep. Garcia.

Rep. Mitchell had concerns about the fee structure for residents and non-residents.

Mr. Silsby stated a management study is underway to evaluate changes for future years.

The vote on \$1,100,342 was unanimously in favor.

Account 3260 - Community Events

Motion for \$25,000 as approved by committee was made by Rep. delaCruz, seconded by Rep. Walker.

Rep. Lange expressed concerns about whether \$25,000 would be enough money for the Tercentennial Celebration planned for 2005.

The Town Manager and Director Silsby each commented that Chairman Stoddard has taken charge with the planning, obtaining sponsors, fund-raising, self supporting events, and private contributions. The \$25,000 is a modest amount and is intended as seed money.

The vote on \$25,000 was unanimously in favor.

Capital Item - Esker Point Beach Improvement Program

Motion for \$25,000 as approved by committee was made by Rep. delaCruz, seconded by Rep. Walker and so voted unanimously.

Capital Item - Trail Improvement Program

Motion for \$65,000 as approved by committee was made by Rep. delaCruz, seconded by Rep. Miner.

A motion to amend to \$0 was made by Rep. Thunberg, seconded by Rep. Vivirito. Rep. Thunberg stated this funding is a "nice to have" but is not a necessary item during tight fiscal years.

Rep. Baril commented that he and many others use the trails daily, and they are in dire need of maintenance and improvement.

Rep. Collins stated that \$50,000 of this expenditure is from grants, and the net cost is only \$15,000 from the Town.

Rep. Cerf advocates preserving open spaces that provide healthy activities for the community, save the ecology, and reduce air pollution.

Rep. Vivirito stated he does support the trail program. He encouraged the department to solicit funding or sponsorships from companies and local businesses that are in favor of park systems and resident programs that benefit the entire community.

The vote on the amendment of \$0 failed 3 in favor, 25 opposed. (In favor: Reps. Vivirito, Thunberg and Steinfeld.)

The vote on \$65,000 was 27 in favor, 1 opposed. (Opposed: Rep. Thunberg.)

Capital Item - Park Improvement Program

Motion for \$15,000 as approved by committee was made by Rep. delaCruz, seconded by Rep. Dowling.

Rep. Granatosky requested the Council's rationale for their \$15,000 reduction.

The Town Manager stated that he recalls it was decided that the playground equipment at Mystic Academy could be removed and not replaced because of the lack of use at this facility.

A motion to amend to \$30,000 was made by Rep. Swift, seconded by Rep. Baril.

Rep. Swift stated he felt it was important to maintain, upgrade and repair the existing playgrounds.

Rep. Walker is in favor of the \$30,000 because of cuts last year.

Rep. Miner is in favor of maintaining community areas.

Rep. Collins requested the cost of each playscape.

Mr. Silsby stated it is approximately \$15,000. The Town currently maintains 14 play apparatus on a rotational basis. The age of this equipment does expose the town to liability in cases of failure. The Mystic Academy equipment must be removed due to age and condition and if funding is available then it can be replaced.

The vote on the amendment of \$30,000 failed 18 in favor, 10 opposed. (Opposed: Reps. Cerf, Collins, Elliot, Lange, Mitchell, Power, Steinfeld, Vivirito, Thunberg, Waller.) (This required a two-thirds vote to pass.)

The vote on \$15,000 carried unanimously.

Capital Item - Open Space Acquisition and Development

Motion for \$0 as approved by committee was made by Rep. delaCruz, seconded by Rep. Steinfeld.

Motion to Amend to \$25,000 was made by Rep. Cerf, seconded by Rep. Mitchell.

Reps. Lange, Waller, Dickey, delaCruz and Cerf are in favor of the amendment for the following reasons. It would provide seed money for obtaining grants to purchase additional land if an opportunity arises, preserve our life giving resources, maintain existing open space areas, and prevent more residential or commercial development that increases taxes by increased demands for services.

Rep. Power stated he will not support the amendment; he feels Groton already surpasses the State ratio of open space in our community.

Rep. Cerf distributed information during the recess about the effects of development and land conservation on property taxes. She suggested that the Town review the land use policy to specifically address the issue of maintaining the quality of life in our community.

The vote on \$25,000 carried 25 in favor, 3 opposed. (Opposed: Reps. Steinfeld, Power, Walker.)

Capital Item - Sutton Park Improvement Project

Motion for \$25,000 as approved by committee was made by Rep. delaCruz, seconded by Rep. Walker and so voted unanimously.

2004-0175 RTM Request for Restoration of Funds to Account 1064

RTM Request for Restoration of Funds to Account 1064 (Parks & Recreation)

This matter was Referred to the RTM Finance Committee, due back on July 14, 2004. The motion carried.

The Moderator would like the Finance Committee to meet to consider whether the RTM should present a resolution to the Town Council requesting restoration of \$10,000 to Account 1064 Parks & Recreation.

Rep. Steinfeld made a motion to adjourn to Monday, May 17, 2004 at 7:00 p.m. seconded by Rep. Walker and so voted unanimously.

At 9:00 p.m., adjournment was taken to Monday, May 17, 2004.

Budget Session - Monday May 17, 2004

Moderator Shirley Dunbar-Rose called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

30 members were present at roll call and quorum was declared. (Reps. Elliot, Steere, Cerf, Chiapperini, Edwards arrived later.)

Members Present: Rep. Baril, Rep. Bartinik, Rep. Cerf, Rep. Chiapperini, Rep. Collins, Rep. delaCruz, Rep. DeMatto, Rep. Dickey, Rep. Dunbar-Rose, Rep. Edwards, Jr., Rep. Elliot, Rep. Garcia, Rep. Granatosky, Rep. Harrell, Rep. Hoelck, Rep. Lange, Rep. Miner, Rep. Mitchell, Rep. Monteiro, Rep. Newsome, Rep. Patterson, Rep. Peruzzotti, Rep. Power, Rep. Pratt, Rep. Schmidt, Rep. Steere, Rep. Stein, Rep. Steinfeld, Rep. Streeter, Rep. Svencer, Rep. Swift, Rep. Thunberg, Rep. Vivirito, Rep. Walker, Sr. and Rep. Weil
Members Absent: Rep. Armstrong, Rep. Dowling, Rep. Fay, Rep. M. Morton, Rep. Smuts and Rep. Waller, II

Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Assistant to the Town Manager Lee Vincent, Finance Director Sal Pandolfo, Administrative Services Director Doug Ackerman, Town Councilor Mick O'Beirne, Superintendent of Schools Dr. James Mitchell, Assistant Superintendent for Administrative Services Sally Keating, School Business Manager Hugh Hunter, Superintendent of School Buildings and Grounds Wes Greenleaf, Chairman Elizabeth Gianacoplos and Board of Education members, Deputy Town Clerk Janet Downs and Assistant Town Clerk Sally Whitney.

Republican Floor Leader Tom Vivirito requested a caucus at 7:05 p.m.

(Reps. Elliot, Steere, Cerf, Chiapperini arrived during the caucus.)

The Moderator reconvened the meeting at 7:21 p.m.

Education Committee

Chairman Scott Newsome read the minutes of the May 4, 2004 meeting. (Minutes are on file.)

A motion to approve the minutes was made by Rep. Schmidt, seconded by Rep. Walker and so voted unanimously.

Account 1080 - Education

Motion for \$63,873,580 as approved by committee was made by Rep. Newsome, seconded by Rep. DeMatto.

This figure restores the \$573,580 cut by the Council.

A motion to amend to \$63,300,000 was made by Rep. Garcia, seconded by Rep. Power.

Rep. Garcia stated that the Council's reduction was not significant and that the Board of Education request is a 4.7 % increase above last year's approved budget. He feels that the Town departments followed the Council's guideline of 0% increase and such a large increase for the

Board of Education is not warranted.

Rep. Thunberg supports the amendment and Rep. Garcia's reasoning. She inquired whether early retirement incentive for teachers had been considered in order to reduce the number of teachers with the highest salaries. She suggested a "Pay for Play option" for participation in activities and sports which could include a sliding fee scale. Rep. Thunberg feels this is a viable option to save taxpayer money and instill the value of money in the children that participate, as most clubs require dues and fundraising to fund their programs.

Dr. Mitchell stated that early retirement incentive requires that a specific number of teachers be eligible for that program to be cost effective and that they do not have that number at this time. He stated the Board of Education has not embraced the "pay for play" option but may reconsider it in the future.

Rep. Schmidt stated she has received calls from taxpayers expressing concern that the reduction of programs last year was too deep and that programs were not restored this year. She feels that Groton's educational reputation must be maintained since having a quality school system is necessary to maintain property values.

Rep. Power asked for clarification regarding the additional Education Cost Sharing funds from the State.

Dr. Mitchell reported that the Board has been notified of an increase in State ECS funding and that the Town will receive additional funds amounting to \$356,000.

Rep. Lange is opposed to major reductions in the Education budget, noting that it would result in elimination of teachers, since it is salary and health benefits that are the largest expense of the Education budget.

Rep. Patterson, who stated she works for the Board of Education, will not support the Council's figure. She feels that overcrowding at Fitch High School is leading to more discipline problems; that there are not enough library techs; and that reductions for purchasing books are not acceptable.

A motion to amend to \$63,616,790 was made by Rep. Walker, seconded by Rep. Vivirito.

Rep. Walker stated that salary and health benefits were cited as the major cause of last year's budget increase; the same is true this year. He proposes this amended figure as a compromise between the Council's and the Manager's figure.

Rep. DeMatto requested clarification of the Council's reductions.

Rep. Newsome stated the Council estimated that an additional 7 teachers may retire, eliminated \$80,000 for the purchase of library books, eliminated 3 elementary teachers by increasing class sizes, eliminated a strings teacher, and removed \$72,000 from the Board's discretionary fund.

Rep. Vivirito stated he will support Rep. Walker's amendment because Town Operations has had to maintain a 0% increase for the last several years but this saving is spent by the Board of Education. He suggested that there should be more cooperation and compromise between the Board and the Town. He stated many families choose Groton because of the schools, but that taxes must be affordable.

Rep. Granatosky supports the committee's recommendation which is also the Manager's figure and which would result in an increase of approximately \$20.00 per \$100,000 of property value. She requested confirmation that the ECS money is given to the Town General Fund and is not accessible to the Board of Education.

Rep. Newsome supports Rep. Walker's amendment. He feels it is an adequate increase when taken with the additional ECS funds. He stated for the record that his wife is a substitute teacher for Groton.

The Town Manager cautioned that ECS funds are estimated at this time and do go into the Town's General Fund. If the budget is approved with inclusion of these figures, the Town will be obligated to provide that money even if the State changes the final ECS figures.

Dr. Mitchell responded to several questions from Rep. DeMatto, noting that replacement of retirees are not always at the base pay level due to experience, subject, and qualification requirements for the position. The delay of book purchases due to loss of funding last year has

resulted in a 100% increase for that account to make-up for delayed book purchases. He stated that professional development is required by contract and if this item is cut, it must be funded elsewhere in the budget.

(Rep. Edwards arrived at this point in the meeting.)

Reps. Lange and Bartinik agreed that teacher-student ratio should be maintained, and that taxpayer money is best spent on education. They support the Board of Education's requested figure.

Rep. Steinfeld stated the teachers' health and salary benefits need to be in line with Town employees. The Board of Education salary raises are generous in comparison to town contracts.

Rep. Cerf stated she is upset with reductions in the arts and gifted programs and suggested that contractual benefits are the problems.

Dr. Mitchell stated that they do attempt to address these items during negotiations but that this is a national problem.

Rep. Monteiro inquired about the ranking of salaries and benefits within the state and the nation and asked whether any other benefits can be adjusted. She strongly supports education but feels more needs to be done at the bargaining table to equalize with the Town contracts.

Dr. Mitchell stated that Groton has many senior staff members; the Town is not in the top range for administration compensation nationally but does lead the State. Teacher compensation is in the top range both state and nationwide. The quality of teachers and performance by the students on mandatory testing reflects the success and quality of education in this community.

Chairman Beth Gianacoplos stated that binding arbitration is a significant factor and changes are needed at the state level. She stated the Board has been very aggressive with increasing insurance co-pays.

The vote on the amendment of \$63,616,790 was defeated 14 in favor, 21 opposed. (In favor: Reps. Newsome, Stein, Collins, Monteiro, Walker, Streeter, DeMatto, Dickey, Lange, Perozotti, Edwards, Bartinik, Power, Steinfeld.)

(A two-thirds vote is required to pass in order to restore funds above the Council's figure.)

The vote on the amendment of \$63,300,000 was defeated by roll call vote, 14 in favor, 21 opposed. (In favor: Reps. Mitchell, Pratt, Miner, Garcia, Monteiro, DeMatto, Chiapperrini, Steere, Power, Steinfeld, Cerf, Thunberg, Vivirito, Newsome.)

A motion to amend to \$63,525,000 was made by Rep. Pratt, seconded by Rep. Garcia.

The vote on the amendment of \$63,525,000 was defeated by roll call vote, 23 in favor, 12 opposed. (Opposed: Reps. Collins, delaCruz, Dickey, Elliot, Granatosky, Harrell, Hoelck, Patterson, Schmidt, Steere, Swift, Weil.)

(A two-thirds vote is required to pass in order to restore funds above the Council's figure.)

A motion to amend to \$63,530,000 was made by Rep. Power, seconded by Rep. Walker.

The Moderator clarified the process for voting and the number of amendments on the floor.

A motion to amend to \$63,873,579 was made by Rep. delaCruz, seconded by Rep. Granatosky.

The vote on the amendment of \$63,873,579 was defeated by roll call vote, 17 in favor, 18 opposed. (In favor: Reps. Baril, Bartinik, Collins, delaCruz, Edwards, Elliot, Granatosky, Harrell, Hoelck, Miner, Patterson, Schmidt, Stein, Svencer, Swift, Weil, Dunbar-Rose.)

(A two-thirds vote is required in order to restore funds above the Council's figure.)

A motion to amend to \$63,700,000 was made by Rep. Granatosky, seconded by Rep. Patterson.

Dr. Mitchell responded to questions from Reps. Chiapperrini and Vivirito stating that any reduction from their requested figure would be a hardship but the Board would accept the RTM's decision. He would make recommendations for areas of reduction but the final decision is from the Board.

Rep. delaCruz requested that no reductions be proposed for freshman sports at the High School as this will affect the remaining upper class programs in the future.

Rep. Edwards requested a Republican caucus.

The Moderator called for a recess at 8:45 p.m.

The Moderator reconvened the meeting at 9:00 p.m. with 35 members still present.

The vote on the amendment of \$63,700,000 was defeated by roll call vote, 16 in favor, 19 opposed. (In favor: Reps. Baril, Bartinik, Collins, delaCruz, Edwards, Elliot, Granatosky, Harrell, Hoelck, Patterson, Peruzzotti, Schmidt, Svencer, Swift, Weil, Dunbar-Rose.)

(A two-thirds vote is required to pass to restore funds above the Council's figure.)

The vote on the amendment of \$63,530,000 carried by roll call vote 27 in favor, 8 opposed. (Opposed: Reps. delaCruz, Granatosky, Harrell, Hoelck, Patterson, Schmidt, Swift, Weil.)

Capital Item - Fitch High School

Motion for \$252,000 as approved by committee was made by Rep. Newsome, seconded by DeMatto.

Rep. Newsome explained that the figure was reduced by committee upon the recommendation of Wes Greenleaf. Architectural services for a detailed high school renovation plan are not necessary because of passage of the school referendum.

The vote on \$252,000 was unanimously in favor.

Capital Item - Claude Chester School

Motion for \$160,000 as approved by committee was made by Rep. Newsome, seconded by Rep. Walker and so voted unanimously.

Capital Item - Eastern Point School

Motion for \$80,000 as approved by committee was made by Rep. Newsome, seconded by Rep. DeMatto.

Rep. Newsome explained the reduction was achieved due to the approval of the school referendum; two components of this account are not necessary.

The vote on \$80,000 was unanimously in favor.

Capital Item - Mary Morrison School

Motion for \$70,000 as approved by committee was made by Rep. Newsome, seconded by Rep. Walker and so voted unanimously.

Capital Item - Noank School

Motion for \$0 as approved by the committee was made by Rep. Newsome, seconded by Rep. Walker.

Rep. Newsome stated the approval of the school referendum enabled the recommendation of \$0 for this year.

The vote on \$0 was unanimously in favor.

Capital Item - Pleasant Valley School

Motion for \$160,000 as approved by committee was made by Rep. Newsome, seconded by Rep. Monteiro and so voted unanimously.

(Rep. Garcia left at this point in the meeting.)

Finance Committee

Account 1077 Contributions to Other Funds

Motion for \$419,396 as approved by committee was made by Rep. Schmidt, seconded by DeMatto and so voted unanimously.

Account 1075 Capital Reserves (contribution)

Motion for \$1,839,717 as approved by committee was made by Rep. Schmidt, seconded by Rep.

Miner.

The Town Manager, in response to Rep. Pratt, stated that this will need a 2/3 vote since it is restoring the reduction of the Council. He added that he is not aware of the rationale for the Council's reduction. Mr. Oefinger stated this is a growing contributory account which funds future capital improvements.

Rep. DeMatto stated that the committee felt the Council was being short-sighted in reducing this account.

The vote on \$1,839,717 passed 33 in favor, 1 opposed. (Opposed: Rep. Cerf)

Account 1074 - Contingency

Motion for \$400,000 as approved by committee was made by Rep. Schmidt, seconded by Rep. DeMatto.

The Town Manager explained that this account is for fourth-quarter transfers for additional funds requested by departments. He gave examples of snow plowing overtime and emergency repairs.

The vote on \$400,000 was unanimously in favor.

Account 5010 - Capital Reserve Fund

Motion for \$2,305,000 was made by Moderator Shirley Dunbar-Rose, seconded by Rep. Walker.

Finance Director Sal Pandolfo explained that this figure is calculated based on the final approved budget total for capital improvement.

The vote on \$2,305,000 was unanimously in favor.

The Moderator thanked the RTM members for their patience upon completion of her first budget session as Moderator and expressed her gratitude to the Town Clerk and Town staff for their assistance and support.

G. ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn was made by Rep. Walker, seconded by Rep. Monteiro, and so voted unanimously.

Adjournment was taken at 9:26 p.m.

Attest:

*Barbara Tarbox, Town Clerk
Clerk of the RTM*

Sally A. Whitney, Assistant Town Clerk