



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, Lori Bartinik, 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, February 13, 2008

7:30 PM

Senior Center

A. ROLL CALL

Moderator Natalie Billing called the meeting to order at 7:38 p.m.

27 members were present and a quorum was declared.

(Rep. Steinfeld arrived at 7:55 p.m..)

The Moderator reported that Reps. Barnhart, Briggs, Driscoll, Garagliano, McCarthy, Prochaska and Sebastian called to say they are unable to attend this meeting. Rep. Steinfeld will be arriving late as she is attending the Joint Town Council/Board of Education/RTM Liaison Committee meeting.

Members Present: Moderator Billing, Rep. Ambroise, Rep. Baril, Rep. Bauer, Rep. Beckwith, Rep. Cerf, Rep. Collins, Rep. Ebbin, Rep. Evered, Rep. Fairbank, Rep. Garcia, Rep. Granatosky, Rep. Harrell, Rep. Hellekson, Rep. Loughlin, Rep. Luck, Rep. Massett, Rep. Metayer, Rep. Moukawsher, Rep. Peruzzotti, Rep. Power, Rep. Pratt, Rep. Smuts, Rep. Steinfeld, Rep. Streeter, Rep. Svencer and Rep. Tilney

Members Absent: Rep. Barnhart, Rep. Bartinik, Rep. Bergeson, Rep. Briggs, Rep. Cooper, Rep. Driscoll, Rep. Finlayson, Rep. Garagliano, Rep. Hubbard, Rep. McCarthy, Rep. Newsome, Rep. Prochaska, Rep. Sebastian and Rep. Steere

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

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF DECEMBER 12, 2007

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

D. CITIZENS' PETITIONS

None.

E. RECEPTION OF COMMUNICATIONS

Moderator Billing announced that the RTM has been invited to participate in the Fifth Annual Mystic Irish Parade to be held on March 30, 2008 at 1:00 p.m. She informed members that the Parks and Recreation Department is offering an orientation program in May or June that will include touring some of their facilities. Those interested need to sign-up. She noted that members received basic information concerning the Connecticut Freedom of Information Act in the February packet and should familiarize themselves with it.

2007-0140 Town Property at Buddington/Old Buddington Roads

TOWN PROPERTY AT BUDDINGTON/OLD BUDDINGTON ROADS

This matter was Referred to the RTM Community Development & Services Committee, due back on March 12, 2008. The motion carried.

2008-0038 Acceptance of Leonard Drive

This matter was Referred to the RTM Public Works Committee, due back on March 12, 2008. The motion carried.

2008-0016 Reallocation of CIP Funds - Police Station Renovations

REALLOCATION OF CIP FUNDS - POLICE STATION RENOVATIONS

This matter was Referred to the RTM Finance Committee, due back on March 12, 2008. The motion carried.

2008-0051 Review of Tax Abatements and Incentives for Businesses

REVIEW OF TAX ABATEMENTS AND INCENTIVES FOR BUSINESSES

This matter was Referred to the RTM Finance Committee. The motion carried.

Moderator Billing mentioned that Rep. Moukawsher has requested a referral to the RTM Finance Committee to review tax abatements and incentives granted to Town businesses. Rep. Moukawsher has questions about the process and has asked for a report to the full RTM.

F. REPORT OF THE TOWN MANAGER:**1. Financial report**

Mr. Vincent reported that the Unreserved & Undesignated Fund balance as of July 1, 2007 is approximately \$9.6 million; the General Contingency balance is \$350,000 and no funds have been transferred; the Capital Reserve balance is \$2,272,950.

2. Monthly briefing

The Town Manager reported that the two new elementary schools have opened and that the dedication ceremonies were well attended. He noted that the new academic wing at Fitch High School will open on February 25, 2008.

The Manager provided extensive updates on the Water Pollution Control Facility Upgrade and the Fort Hill Homes Sanitary Sewer Rehabilitation Project.

The Manager announced that negotiations are taking place to host the Senior PGA tournament for the next three years at Shennecossett Golf Course and that a new major sponsor is expected to be announced in April.

The Manager noted that the Mystic Bridge Rehabilitation Project Phase II is scheduled to begin in fall 2009 and be completed in spring 2012. He mentioned that the work will not be constant and that the bulk of the work will be scheduled during winter months.

Mr. Oefinger stated that the Town Council will be meeting with local legislators next Tuesday, February 19, 2008 to discuss a list of various items that affect the Town.

In response to Rep. Cerf, the Town Manager stated that alternative energy sources will be investigated and discussed by the Phase II School Design Committee. He noted that the committee is not at that level of discussion yet. He mentioned that the committee is currently evaluating what should be done next and deciding which schools should be rehabilitated or replaced with new construction to maximize future savings for the Town.

Rep. Ebbin stated that she feels that the Phase I School Design Committee lacked information about alternative energy sources for analysis of savings that could be captured over a decade by the Town if incorporated in new construction. She informed everyone of the State of Connecticut Green Initiative for building, including solar panels and geothermal heating/cooling systems. She feels strongly that these should be considered in any additional new school construction.

In response to Rep. Loughlin, the Manager explained that CL&P has a program that provided a contribution toward the costs for the advanced energy-efficient lighting and equipment that was installed at Northeast Academy. He explained that the \$41,674.71 was deposited into the Northeast Academy construction account. He noted that Groton Utilities does not have a similar

program, and for this reason no contribution was received for the Catherine Kolnaski School which is located within the area serviced by Groton Utilities.

The Manager mentioned that he will provide an informal budget summary and explain the process of developing the budget under Other Business later in this meeting.

G. LIAISON REPORTS

1. Town Council - Rep. Peruzzotti

Rep. Peruzzotti reported that the Council recently received a tax deferral program recommendation for property tax relief from a citizens committee that was formed to evaluate and suggest a program based on the Town's and citizens' needs. The Town Council is considering this proposal and is open to other options that may be presented.

The Committee of the Whole had a presentation by Pfizer concerning the Co-Generation Project that addressed concerns about noise levels and safety.

She mentioned that a pre-budget hearing was held on February 6, 2008 and that the budget public hearing is scheduled for March 31, 2008.

2. Shellfish Task Force - Rep. Ebbin

Rep. Ebbin reported that the Shellfish Commission has continued its propagation efforts for hard clams and steamer clams and has begun planting oyster seeds in Mumford Cove and the Poquonnock River.

She noted that there have been some communication problems between the State, the Shellfish Commission and Ledge Light Health District concerning the timeliness of reporting a high rainfall event that results in the necessary closure of the Town's shellfish beds.

3. Charter Revision Commission - Rep. Cerf

Rep. Cerf reported on the progress that has been made by the commission. She mentioned that the sections of the charter that have been reviewed are: Incorporation & Powers, Elections, Officers & Electors, Town Council, Board of Education, Representative Town Meeting, Town Manager, Boards & Commissions and Town Clerk. She noted that a few minor changes were made in the Town Manager section. She stated that the next meeting is February 25, and that the section entitled Finance & Budget is being started. A preliminary discussion about budget referendum is slated and she encouraged people to email or come to the meeting to express their opinion.

4. Thames Street Revitalization Committee - Rep. Luck

Rep. Luck reported that Milone and McBroom is the firm that is working on developing the master plan for this project. One of the options that is being investigated is making Thames Street one way.

H. COMMITTEE REPORTS

1. FINANCE

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

No meeting, no report.

2. COMMUNITY 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

Rep. Fairbank reported that four members of the committee attended the Board of Education's budget review meetings. He stated that a 2008-2009 Adjusted Superintendent's Budget summary with his notations will be attached to the minutes.

Rep. Steinfeld noted that the BOE had a 3.96% increase rather than 4% as reported by The Day.

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**

Republican Floor Leader Kevin Power requested a caucus at 8:17 p.m. The meeting was reconvened at 8:21 p.m.

a. **Chairman's notes on the business of the Town**

2007-0268 **Rules for Twenty-Sixth RTM**

RESOLUTION ADOPTING RULES FOR THE TWENTY-SIXTH REPRESENTATIVE TOWN MEETING

BE IT RESOLVED, that the rules of the Twenty-Sixth Representative Town Meeting as recommended by the Temporary Rules and Procedures Committee are hereby adopted.

A motion was made by Rep. Power, seconded by Rep. Streeter, that this matter be Adopted.

MOTION TO AMEND section 6.1 Standing Committees, to replace the proposed title Community Services Committee with Community Development & Services Committee was made by Rep. Cerf and was seconded.

Rep. Cerf explained that she feels it is important to retain some connection with Economic Development within the standing committees.

VOTE on Motion to Amend passed 25 in favor, 1 opposed, 1 abstention. (Opposed: Rep. Granatosky. Abstaining: Rep. Loughlin).

MOTION TO AMEND section 6.4.4 to insert the phrase "appointed by the newly elected Moderator" in the first sentence was made by Rep. Power, seconded by Rep. Fairbank. Rep. Power stated that the first sentence of section 6.4.4 of the proposed rules would read "A temporary Rules and Procedures Committee, appointed by the newly-elected Moderator, is responsible for drafting and recommending rules to the RTM after each municipal election." In response to Rep. Granatosky, the Moderator commented that this additional wording was recommended by the Town Clerk.

VOTE on Motion to Amend passed 26 in favor, 1 abstention. (Abstaining: Rep. Hellekson).

With no further discussion, the Moderator called for a vote on the main motion.

The motion carried unanimously

I. **OTHER BUSINESS**

(Rep. Moukawsher left at this time.)

The Town Manager provided a detailed summary of the process of developing the Town's budget. He provided the projected timeline for: finalizing the budget for printing and distribution of the hard copies of the budget, the Town Council public hearing, and the actions taken by the Council and RTM. He explained that many factors which the Town has little control over impact the budget, such as health insurance, fuel, electricity and building materials. He reviewed the many different sources of revenue such as Federal Impact Aid, State Aid, Educational Aid, Town fees and Town Clerk revenues. He commented specifically that the revenue from the Town Clerk's

office has increased for the last several years due to the increased conveyance tax. He mentioned that the State provision for the increased conveyance tax could be phased out if it is not permanently approved by the State Legislature this June. He noted that this source of revenue may decline due to the current economic market. He mentioned that the top ten taxpayers in the Town of Groton carry about one-third of the budget. He stated that the Town's bond rating companies have expressed concern about the dependence on these top ten taxpayers and that steps should be taken to grow the grand list by attracting additional businesses to reduce this dependence.

In response to Rep. Ebbin, the Manager stated that the proposed State-provided health insurance is a conceptual idea, and would not be reflected in the upcoming budget. He confirmed that the Town will investigate and monitor this situation as it develops. He feels it would not save the Town money in the long term, since mandatory participation could result in losses to the Town due to lack of control and reduced reimbursement from the State.

The Moderator mentioned to members that discussions similar to this budget overview provided by the Town Manager will be conducted at the next two regular RTM meetings. She suggested that topics or questions from members be forwarded to either the Manager or the Town Clerk's office.

J. ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn at 9:14 p.m. was made by Rep. Garcia, seconded by Rep. Fairbank and so voted unanimously.

Attest:

Barbara Tarbox, Town Clerk
Clerk of the RTM

Sally A. Whitney, Assistant Town Clerk