



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 Joe Baril, Tom Barnhart, Lori Bartinik, Alicia Bauer, Genevieve Cerf, Michael Collins, Syma Ebbin, June Evered, Peter Fairbank, Robert Garcia, Patrice Granatosky, Dolores Harrell, Debra Jenkins, Carole McCarthy, Kevin McMahon, Richard Metayer, David Miner, Deborah Monteiro, James Moulding, Scott Newsome, Nora Patterson, Deborah Peruzzotti, Robert Post, Kevin Power, Don Pratt, Mary-Ellen Schefers, Eleanor Scussel, Jack Sebastian, Jennifer Smuts, Eleanor Steere, Fritz Stein, Joan Steinfeld, Irma Streeter, Mark Svencer, Patti Thunberg, Cheryl Tilney, Kevin Trejo, Tom Vivirito, Robert Walker Sr, and John Wheeler.

Wednesday, April 11, 2007

7:30 PM

Senior Center

Regular Meeting

A. ROLL CALL

*Moderator Natalie Billing called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m.
29 members were present, and a quorum was declared.*

Members Present: Moderator Billing, Rep. Baril, Rep. Bartinik, Rep. Collins, Rep. Ebbin, Rep. Evered, Rep. Fairbank, Rep. Granatosky, Rep. Harrell, Rep. McCarthy, Rep. Metayer, Rep. Miner, Rep. Monteiro, Rep. Moulding, Rep. Newsome, Rep. Patterson, Rep. Peruzzotti, Rep. Power, Rep. Sebastian, Rep. Smuts, Rep. Stein, Rep. Steinfeld, Rep. Streeter, Rep. Svencer, Rep. Thunberg, Rep. Trejo, Rep. Vivirito, Rep. Walker, Sr. and Rep. Wheeler, Jr.

Members Absent: Rep. Barnhart, Rep. Bauer, Rep. Cerf, Rep. Garcia, Rep. Jenkins, Rep. McMahon, Rep. Post, Rep. Pratt, Rep. Schefers, Rep. Scussel, Rep. Steere and Rep. Tilney

Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Assistant to the Town Manager Lee Vincent, Public Works Director Gary Schneider, Manager of Planning Services Matthew Davis, Superintendent of Schools Dr. James Mitchell, School Business Manager Hugh Hunter, Board of Education Chairperson Beverly Washington, Board Member Brian Shirvell, Town Clerk Barbara Tarbox, and Office Assistant Elga Concepcion.

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. Kevin Power.

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF MARCH 14, 2007

A motion that the minutes be adopted was made by Rep. Smuts, seconded by Rep. Miner. Rep. Ebbin, Rep. Steinfeld and Moderator Billing requested amendments to the minutes. The vote to accept the minutes as amended carried 28 in favor, 1 abstention. (Abstaining: Rep. Walker)

D. CITIZENS' PETITIONS

Veronique Lamarque, 126 High Street, Mystic, is requesting that the RTM assist in getting answers to questions regarding the following: construction status of the new schools, measures that are being taken to resolve issues, the reasons for delaying the completion of Northeast Academy, the current timeline proposed by the construction company, the construction company's guarantee of completion, who has the power to pressure the construction company to complete the schools on time, the postponement of the school year to allow for completion of construction, the construction contract, the costs associated with heating the old versus the new schools, additional fuel costs related to the alternative busing plan, the possibility of school buses traveling on the interstate, the Town's reluctance to apply for a permit for portables at Noank Elementary School.

E. RECEPTION OF COMMUNICATIONS

The Moderator informed the members that Rep. Scussel is on vacation and that Rep. Walker will

not be able to attend the opening meeting of the RTM Budget session on May 2. Reps. Cerf and Pratt notified the Moderator that they would not be able to attend tonight's meeting. Rep. Tilney is not able to attend due to medical reasons. Rep. Plunket from District 5 resigned due to health reasons. The Moderator welcomed June Evered who was elected by a District Five Caucus held prior to this meeting to fill the vacancy created by Rep. Plunket's resignation.

2007-0077

Adoption of Mystic River Homes Tax Abatement Ordinance

This matter was Referred to the RTM Finance Committee, due back on May 9, 2007. The motion carried.

The Moderator stated that the RTM does not need to approve the ordinance if members agree with it but they do have the power to veto.

The majority of members received emails from a resident regarding the Board of Education's (BOE) budget, the phase-in of property taxes, and the petition supporting this phase-in. RTM members received the schedule of RTM committee meetings for April 2007. The Moderator requested that copies of all communications be placed in a folder at the back of the room for viewing. She reminded viewers of the Fitch High School Addition and Renovation Ceremony on April 12 and the Spring Fling Ball benefiting the Groton Tercentennial Legacy Playground on April 21. Rep. Moulding added that the benefit will also include a silent auction.

1. Budget Discussion

The Moderator stated that the Town Manager, Superintendent of Schools Dr. James Mitchell and BOE Chairperson Beverly Washington were asked to attend tonight's meeting to hold a general discussion about the budget. This is an opportunity for members to raise questions and make comments regarding the budget.

Town Manager Oefinger distributed a reconciliation of the budget deliberations that the Town Council has undertaken. He reviewed the changes that were made in the General Fund and Capital Improvement Program. The State's budget numbers will provide the Town with \$200,000 additional net funding but reduce general Town government aid by \$500,000. It is important that the State has its budget completed on or about June. Mr. Oefinger stated that another large source of funding is federal impact aid and the Town will receive over \$1.9 million for this year. He reported that the COW voted in favor of the proposed three year phase-in of property taxes on April 10 and this would change the mill rate. One's property assessment, not the amount of tax increase will be phased in over the next three years.

BOE Chairperson Beverly Washington thanked the RTM for inviting representatives of the BOE to tonight's meeting. She provided an overview of their budget book. Ms. Washington noted that their newest Board Member, Brian Shirvell, and Business Manager Hugh Hunter were also in attendance.

Dr. James Mitchell discussed the Board of Education's budget process.

Ms. Washington clarified that buses will not be traveling on Interstate 95.

Responding to Rep. Patterson's request for a chart/graph representing minority and non-minority students' scores over the last few years, Dr. Mitchell confirmed that he would provide this information.

Responding to Rep. Moulding's request for information on how Dr. Mitchell is saving taxpayers' money, Dr. Mitchell stated that he would provide specific steps which have been taken by the BOE to save the Town money and confirm them in writing. Dr. Mitchell cited the BOE's recent decision to close two more schools after setting their budget for a savings of over \$1 million. Chairperson Washington added that the BOE saved the Town money by increasing class size and doing well with contract negotiations.

Responding to Rep. Trejo's question regarding the BOE not having a CIP account for the Technology Department, Dr. Mitchell confirmed that historically, conferences between the BOE and the Town Manager had led to Technology funding coming out of the Operational Budget. If CIP is a route that the BOE can take because it works for the Town, than they will discuss this matter in connection with their next request.

Responding to Rep. Newsome's questions regarding portable classrooms at Noank Elementary School, Dr. Mitchell responded that there are issues such as reduced playground space, additional traffic and a lack of bathrooms. The cost of six portables is over \$200,000 and the minimum rental time is one year.

Chairperson Washington stated that the BOE is trying to move away from utilizing portables as there is a safety issue when students walk to the main building for bathroom breaks without supervision.

Rep. Smuts yielded the floor to Veronique Lamarque. Ms. Lamarque asked how it was possible that S.B. Butler School is operating with portables and that the students are not supervised when walking to the restrooms. She feels that a goal would be to pressure the building contractor to complete the schools on time.

Responding to Ms. Lamarque's question regarding the Town issuing a permit for portables at Noank Elementary School, Mr. Oefinger stated that this is governed by Noank zoning regulations, unlike S.B. Butler which is governed by Town zoning regulations.

Rep. Smuts stated that she and Rep. Miner attended the last Permanent School Building Committee meeting and she encouraged residents to attend the next meeting on April 19. School Construction Project Manager Rick Norris will be available after the meeting to answer questions.

Responding to Rep. Ebbin's inquiry about utilizing the windows manufactured for the Catherine Kolnaski School for Northeast Academy, the Town Manager stated that the production of these specialized windows had been halted and more would need to be manufactured.

Responding to Rep. Granatosky's comments regarding who is responsible for the shortage of windows, the Town Manager stated that there is nothing to be gained from "pointing the finger". There were several individuals who reviewed the plans but did not notice an issue with the windows.

Rep. Smuts left the room at 8:40 p.m.

Chairman Washington reiterated that the Board of Education is moving away from the portable classroom due to safety issues. There is no supervision of the students as they move from the portables to the main school building.

Dr. Mitchell and Chairperson Washington left at 8:45 p.m.

F. REPORT OF THE TOWN MANAGER:

1. Financial report

Mr. Vincent reported that the Unreserved & Undesignated Fund balance as of July 1, 2006 is approximately \$9.2 million; the General Contingency was appropriated at \$350,000. The Town Council and RTM approved a transfer of \$25,000 for preliminary design work on the animal shelter. The current balance is \$325,000. The Capital Reserve Fund balance as of February 28, 2007 is at \$2,947,527 which is an increase from the previous report as a result of interest income.

2. Monthly briefing

Town Manager Oefinger reminded viewers that the Spring Fling is on April 21st and tickets are

still available through the Parks and Recreation Department. The Town Council is proceeding with the following items: enacting a three year phase-in of property taxes, expanding the Groton Senior Center, building a new animal shelter and upgrading the Water Pollution Control Facility. There was a joint meeting of the Town Council and BOE on March 26 to report that the two new schools will not be opened on time due to inaccurate window specifications.

Responding to Rep. Trejo's inquiry regarding the resurfacing schedule of Thomas Road, Director of Public Works Gary Schneider confirmed that it is not included on the project list this year.

Responding to Rep. Collins' request for the window specifications, Mr. Oefinger and Mr. Schneider stated that certain coastal communities are required to have windows which can withstand 120 mph winds and wind-blown debris.

Rep. Streeter left at 9:00 p.m.

Responding to Rep. Ebbin, the Public Works Director confirmed that the newer building codes were not in place at the time permits were applied for concerning Claude Chester School's windows.

G. LIAISON REPORTS

1. Town Council - Rep. Monteiro

Rep. Monteiro reported on the business at the Town Council meetings of March 20 and April 10. These meetings included discussions regarding the pay plan, terms/conditions of employment and job descriptions of non-union employees. Updates were provided on the school building project and window issues. Resolutions adopted include: Mystic River Homes Tax Abatement Ordinance, the establishment of the School Design (Phase II) Committee and a committee to report on providing utilities to the Flanders Road industrial area. She reported on business at the Committee of the Whole meetings of March 27 and April 10. These meetings provided updates on the following projects: Water Pollution Control Facility expansion, Fort Hill sewer upgrade, construction of school buildings and Groton Senior Center expansion. Discussions included the establishment of Property Tax Relief and Charter Revision Committees, and the three year phase-in of property taxes.

2. Economic Development Commission - Rep. Cerf

No report.

3. Town Council/Board of Education/RTM Liaison Committee - Rep. Patterson

No report.

4. Permanent School Building Committee - Rep. Miner

Rep. Miner reviewed the process by which the Permanent School Building Committee minutes are posted on the Town's website.

5. P.B.F.D. Consolidation Review Committee - Reps. Baril & Steinfeld

No report.

6. Shellfish Task Force - Rep. Ebbin

Rep. Ebbin reported on the meeting of March 26 at which time Steve Mansfield reported on the findings of the South Road dye study and the recent Groton Utilities Drinking Water Oversight Committee. Also discussed was the EPA CARE grant that the Ledge Light Health District is planning to submit. Ed Martin discussed water sampling between rainfalls, the process of water purification and the development of the Drinking Water Quality Management Plan. Sidney VanZandt noted the availability of CIP funds to study the ponds on the King property and availability of the "mutt mitt" and receptacles for disposal of dog waste.

H. COMMITTEE REPORTS

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

No meeting, no report.

2. COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**a. Chairman's notes on the business of the Town - Chairman Vivirito**

*Chairman Vivirito read the minutes of the meeting held on April 10, 2007. (Minutes are attached.)
A motion to accept the minutes was made by Rep. Vivirito, seconded by Rep. Walker and so voted
unanimously.*

2006-0236 Acceptance of Open Space at East Farm Subdivision**RESOLUTION ACCEPTING OPEN SPACE AT EAST FARM SUBDIVISION**

WHEREAS, the East Farm Subdivision, adjacent to Noank Road, was approved January 11, 2005,
and

WHEREAS, the Groton Planning Commission, on August 8, 2006, recommended acceptance of a
parcel of open space consisting of approximately 1.94 acres, and

WHEREAS, this open space consists in large part of attractive wetlands that are highly desirable
for preservation, and

WHEREAS, the open space parcel will be marked with signs as part of the Town's Coastal Public
Access lands, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Town of Groton accepts the parcel of open space designated on the officially
approved plans of East Farm Subdivision, and that this matter be referred to the Representative
Town Meeting.

A motion was made by Rep. Vivirito, seconded by Rep. Wheeler, Jr., that this matter be Adopted.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Votes: In Favor: 27 - Moderator Billing, Rep. Baril, Rep. Bartinik, Rep. Collins, Rep. Ebbin, Rep. Evered, Rep.
Fairbank, Rep. Granatosky, Rep. Harrell, Rep. McCarthy, Rep. Metayer, Rep. Miner, Rep. Monteiro, Rep.
Moulding, Rep. Newsome, Rep. Patterson, Rep. Peruzzotti, Rep. Power, Rep. Sebastian, Rep. Stein, Rep.
Steinford, Rep. Svencer, Rep. Thunberg, Rep. Trejo, Rep. Vivirito, Rep. Walker, Sr. and Rep. Wheeler, Jr.
Non-voting: 2 - Rep. Smuts and Rep. Streeter

3. EDUCATION**a. Chairman's notes on the business of the Town - Chairman Patterson**

*Chairman Patterson read the minutes of the April 4 meeting. The meeting was only for
informational purposes and a vote was not taken on the budget amount. (Minutes are attached.)*

4. HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES**a. Chairman's notes on the business of the Town - Chairman Wheeler**

*Chairman Wheeler stated that there was a meeting on April 9. He will present the minutes at the
RTM's Annual Budget meeting.*

5. RECREATION**a. Chairman's notes on the business of the Town- Chairman Power**

No meeting, no report.

6. PUBLIC SAFETY**a. Chairman's notes on the business of the Town - Chairman Pratt**

No meeting, no report.

7. PUBLIC WORKS

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

No meeting, no report.

8. RULES & PROCEDURES

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

No meeting, no report.

I. OTHER BUSINESS

None.

J. ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn at 9:20 p.m. was made by Rep. Walker, seconded by Rep. Fairbank and so voted unanimously.

Attest:

*Barbara Tarbox, Town Clerk
Clerk of the RTM*

Elga Concepcion, Office Assistant