



Town of Groton, Connecticut

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Meeting Minutes - Draft

Town Council

Mayor Bruce S. Flax, Councilor Dean G. Antipas, Councilor Diane Barber, Councilor Greg Grim, Councilor Rich Moravsik, Councilor Karen F. Morton, Councilor Bonnie Nault, Councilor Deb Peruzzotti, and Councilor Harry A. Watson

Tuesday, March 21, 2017

7:30 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

SPECIAL MEETING

Mayor Flax call the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

I. ROLL CALL

Members Present: Mayor Flax, Councilor Antipas, Councilor Barber, Councilor Grim, Councilor Morton, Councilor Nault, Councilor Peruzzotti and Councilor Moravsik
Members Absent: Councilor Watson

Also in attendance were Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Town Attorney Michael Carey, OPDS Director Jon Reiner, Town Clerk Betsy Moukawsher, City of Groton Mayor Marion Galbraith, Deputy Mayor Keith Hedrick, City Councilor Jill Rusk, City Councilor Lawrence Gerrish, City Councilor Sheffield, and City Councilor Conrad Heede.

II. NEW BUSINESS

Joint Public Hearing with City Council on:

- 2017-0065 Adoption of Connecticut City and Town Development Act for the Purposes of the Branford Manor Rehabilitation Project**
- 2017-0066 Declaration of Branford Manor Property a "Development Property" Under the Connecticut City and Town Development Act**
- 2017-0067 Authorization of Tax Incentive Agreement Under the Connecticut City and Town Development Act**

Mayor Flax opened the Public Hearing at 7:35 p.m. and asked that the Town Clerk read the call to the Public Hearing. Town Clerk Betsy Moukawsher read the call as it was printed in The Day newspaper on March 13, 2017.

City of Groton Mayor Marian Galbraith announced that City Councilors Jill Rusk, Lawrence Gerrish, Stephen Sheffield, Conrad Heede, and Deputy Mayor Keith Hedrick were present and she read the call to the Public Hearing.

David Pearson, Branford Manor Preservation Limited Partnership, presented the proposed project in detail.

Citizens' Petitions:

Christina Rotharmel, 155 Mather Avenue, stated that she and her son are residents of Branford Manor. She listed a number of current discrepancies and needed repairs to her unit. She stated that many residents are apprehensive to have someone new take over the management. In response to Ms. Rotharmel, Mr. Pearson stated that a new management team would be put in place and that there would be a seven member team for custodial work and repairs..

Norma Coreas, 188 Branford Avenue, stated that this would be the second experience of improvement to the complex. She expressed her desire to remain living in her unit and how much she enjoys living in the Town of Groton. She stated her concern that she would not have a place to

live if it were not for Branford Manor. She stated that it is important to maintain the property and that things that are broken should be fixed before the problem gets worse.

Councilor Nault asked about the laundry facilities, and in response, Mr. Pearson stated that he appreciated the citizens who spoke and assured them that his company is in the business of upgrading and maintaining properties. He stated that the current owner of the property owns the laundry equipment. He stated that the equipment is staying, but that the space will be renovated and the machines will be upgraded when needed for the residents' use.

Councilor Barber thanked Mr. Pearson for attending. She asked who was responsible to ensure that his company will complete all of the proposed work. Mr. Pearson stated that they were accountable under the tax agreement with the Town and the City of Groton to ensure the renovations are completed in a timely manner. He stated that the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority is supplying the low-income housing tax credits and that they will have an extended regulatory agreement in place at the closing. The agreement has assurances that the property remains affordable and that the renovations are completed. He stated that this is how the tax credits are determined. He stated that the tax credits are used to finance the project. The Authority will be conducting inspections during the renovations. He stated that their lender is Freddie Mac through Wells Fargo. He stated that the lenders have construction monitors that frequent the project site at least every month to ensure that the work is being completed and that the quality is maintained to the set standards. He stated that the lenders require capital needs assessments every five years to ensure that there are adequate reserves. He stated that his company will sell the tax credits to a tax credit investor who will be their partner in this program for the next fifteen to thirty years. The investors have a vested interest in making sure that the renovations are completed as promised and agreed upon and that the property continues to be well maintained. Mr. Pearson noted that HUD conducts inspections on a scheduled basis. He stated that with affordable housing programs, there are at least five or more groups looking at the process to ensure completion and maintenance.

Mayor Galbraith asked about the list of improvements to be made within the \$18.5 million project and in response, Mr. Pearson stated that any change order to the agreement must have approval by the lenders and the Town and City of Groton.

In response to Councilor Moravsik, Mr. Pearson stated that within his company they have a construction management team who will act as the liaison with the architect and the general contractor. Buchanan Architect is based out of New Haven. Councilor Moravsik stated his questions again, and in response, Mr. Pearson stated that they are in the process of contracting with the ETC Company to conduct the residents' in-place renovation project. ETC will sub-contract with the various trades groups needed to complete the project. He stated that the new management team took over the duties one month ago. He stated that the current on-site staff has not changed because they are managing for the current owner. The management team will be increased as needed after the sale is complete.

In response to City Councilor Gerrish, Mr. Pearson stated that the current general maintenance crew will be evaluated and supplements to the staff will be made. He stated that they will continue to contract for snow plowing and trash pickup.

In response to Councilor Antipas, Mr. Pearson stated that if a resident has a complaint, there is a chain of command that ends with him.

In response to City Mayor Galbraith, Mr. Pearson stated that the lender, Freddie Mac, requires that they have the ability to replace the management company. He stated that Wells Fargo is their limited partner, and that they require the ability to replace the management company. He stated that, yes, they would need to have approval by the municipality to replace the management

company.

In response to Mayor Flax, Mr. Pearson explained that residents are given instructions and a series of correspondences with dates of when the work will begin, starting thirty days in advance and continuing right up to two days before the work begins. Residents are given bins to safely hold their households items during the renovation process. Mr. Pearson stated that management inspects the completion of each project and that residents are often present during this process.

In response to City Councilor Gerrish, Mr. Pearson stated that they are prepared for residents that may refuse access to their unit. He stated that they would not involve the police unless there was a clear reason.

In response to City Mayor Galbraith, Mr. Pearson stated that regardless of the \$100,000 set aside to complete the site improvements to include extending the Birch Plain Creek Trail, taking care of the bus shelter, bike rack, etc., they are obligated to complete the agreement regardless of the cost.

Rashaad Carter, 132 Thames Street, stated that he had attended a meeting at St. John Church where one of the tenants brought up the problem of the perceived bad image of Branford Manor. He encourages residents of the Town to look at the Town as a whole. He also stated that people are more inclined to care for something that is in good condition. He stated that what helps Branford Manor helps the entire Town because we are one Groton.

III. ADJOURNMENT

City Councilor Rusk made a motion to adjourn, and so taken at 8:43 p.m.

Attest:

*Betsy Moukawsher
Town Clerk
Clerk of the Council*