



# Town of Groton, Connecticut

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Town Clerk 860-441-6640  
Town Manager  
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## Meeting Minutes

### Town Council

**Mayor Bruce Flax, Councilors Dean G. Antipas, Diane Barber, Joe de la Cruz, Greg Grim, Karen F. Morton, Bonnie Nault, Deb Peruzzotti, and Harry A. Watson**

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Tuesday, March 29, 2016

7:00 PM

Groton Senior Center

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#### FYE 2017 BUDGET PUBLIC HEARING SPECIAL MEETING

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*The meeting was called to order at 7:01 p.m. by Mayor Flax.*

#### I. ROLL CALL

Members Present: Mayor Flax, Councilor Antipas, Councilor Barber, Councilor de la Cruz, Councilor Grim, Councilor Morton, Councilor Nault and Councilor Watson

Members Absent: Councilor Peruzzotti

*Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Superintendent of Schools Michael Graner, Groton City Mayor Marian Galbraith, Board of Education members, RTM members, Town staff, Town Clerk Betsy Moukawsher, and Office Assistant II Nathan Caron.*

#### II. SALUTE TO THE FLAG

*The Salute to the Flag was led by Ron Helbig.*

#### III. INTRODUCTION OF ELECTED OFFICIALS

*Mayor Flax introduced and recognized elected officials, Superintendent of Schools Michael Graner, and Board of Education Chairperson Watson.*

#### IV. READING OF PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

*The notice of the Public Hearing, pursuant to a resolution passed by the Town Council, was read by Groton Town Clerk Betsy Moukawsher.*

#### V. BUDGET PRESENTATIONS

##### a. Town Manager

*Town Manager Mark Oefinger reviewed the proposed budget for the Town of Groton FYE 2017. He stated that proposed expenditures for the Town's FYE 2017 budget have decreased. He noted that revenues for the Town have decreased, which has resulted in an overall proposed increase in next year's budget. He noted the proposed budget for the Town results in a 1.73 mills, or 8.3 percent increase, over the current fiscal year. He emphasized that the budget is a negative-service budget. He reviewed funding that the Town provides to outside agencies and various sources of revenue for the Town. He noted that decreases in revenue have resulted in a fund balance decrease of 4.8 million dollars. He stated that there are reductions in the grand list, reduced available funding from the general fund, and a reduction in Town expenditures for proposed FYE 2017 compared to FYE 2016. He explained fiscal indicators for the Town of Groton compared to other municipalities in Connecticut. Town Manager Oefinger concluded his statements by stating the Town has made significant cuts to the budgets over the years, which have resulted in deferred maintenance. He emphasized there may be a need to redefine services offered to the public while making efforts to grow the grand list for the Town of Groton. He encouraged citizens to keep in mind the current budget situation reflects a lack of revenue, but if reductions are made, he hopes the reductions will not be regretted in a few years.*

##### b. Chairperson Watson

*Chairperson Watson outlined the Groton Board of Education's budget. She reviewed the Budget Planning Schedule that the Groton Board of Education, and education support staff, used when creating the proposed budget for FYE 2017. Chairperson Watson outlined the goals of the Groton*

*School Budget: expand school choice; enhance the international Baccalaureate Program; upgrade instructional technology; maximize grant opportunities; revise curriculum and support teacher training; implement next generation Science standards.*

**c. Superintendent of Schools**

*Dr. Graner noted that the proposed budget for FYE 2017 reflects a zero-percent increase from the adopted FYE 2016 Education budget. He noted that 406 students take advantage of school choice in neighboring communities, and the total cost for that program is 2.4 million dollars. He noted that Magnet School tuition, contractual increases, and an increase in non-certified staff are accounts in which the budget is increasing in next year's proposed budget. He outlined a list of reductions and savings for the Education budget, which included a health insurance surplus reserve. He noted that the reductions, savings, and surplus funds for FYE 2016 have resulted in a zero-percent increase for Education budget FYE 2017. He reviewed the various sources of funding, including grants, for the Groton Public Schools. He announced one of the elementary schools won the Blue Ribbon Award for the State of Connecticut. Dr. Graner concluded his remarks by summarizing the nine areas of funding that make-up the proposed Groton Education budget.*

**VI. OPENING OF PUBLIC HEARING**

*Mayor Flax invited the public to address the Town Council. He asked that each person state his or her name and address for the record.*

*Daniel Tompkins, 30 South Prospect Street, City of Groton stated that he supports the proposed budget. He encouraged the Town Council to deliberate fairly in the event the budgets are not adopted. He stated that he wants the Town Council to stop holding the City of Groton hostage. He urged the Groton Town Council to respect the citizens of the Town.*

*Todd Brown, 25 Crescent Street, stated that Groton's financial problems mirror those of other communities around the country. He mentioned that spending should reflect earnings. He stated that there cannot be a tax increase this year, and he encouraged the Groton Town Council to cut services fairly across the board.*

*Elizabeth Duarte, 54 Cottage Street, stated she loves the services in the City of Groton, and the Groton Town Council should look at the City Police Department and City Highway Department carefully and fairly. She stated that additional funding sources should be looked at. She noted that she would be willing to pay more taxes to preserve services and quality of life.*

*Jody Katz, 57 Murphy's Drive, spoke on behalf of the Groton Public Library system. She stated that she does not want cuts to the library services. She encouraged the Groton Town Council to empathize with the residents who take advantage of library services.*

*Dana Parfitt, 32 Saint Paul Court, stated that a tax increase would be okay to her. She stated that she enjoys the services provided to her, especially the Groton Public Library. She noted the library has morphed into a community center, and funding taken from the Groton Public Library would be lost. She stated the Library is the hub of the community, and it positively impacts her family.*

*Barbara Winkler, 121 Riverview Avenue, reviewed the history of the Senior Center. She stated the prices of programs offered at the Senior Center have increased, and any cuts to the Seniors would be like cutting services for parents.*

*Elaine Sloan, 197 Yetter Road, Mystic, stated that she is an Ambassador at the Senior Center. She reviewed the various responsibilities of the Ambassadors.*

*Helen Rush, 72 Buddington Road, stated that she belongs to Club 55 in the Town of Groton. She*

*stated that Club 55 gives to the community by providing intergenerational opportunities and donations to the Groton Senior Center. She stated that seniors are an integral part of the community.*

*Diane Beaulieu, 250 Elm Street, spoke in favor of the Groton Public Library. She stated that there is a growing need for the services offered through the Groton Public Library. She noted the Library should be property funded and expanded.*

*Patrick McLarn, 37 Whittaker Lane, stated that when he runs out of money he makes due with what he has. He stated the Town has mismanaged money. He encouraged the Town of Groton to expand business opportunities and be fiscally responsible.*

*Todd Brady, 17 Water Street, Mystic, stated that he is concerned about the budget. He spoke in favor of economic development. He stated the zoning regulations need to be revised for the Town of Groton. He noted that it is important to grow economic development to welcome new business and expand the tax base.*

*Lian Obrey, 8 Vista Point Road, stated that the Council and RTM need to reduce the budget, and she cannot afford a tax increase. She noted it was important to look at economic development to grow the community. She spoke in favor of planning and zoning. She noted it is important to have good schools and good economic development to attract new people to Groton and create growth in the community.*

*Thomas Potter, 154 Walker Hill Road, stated that he is concerned about the funding used for an audit of zoning regulations and a study on economic development. He asked what impact the proposed tax increase would have on economic development. He stated the Town Council needs to make hard decisions and can spend what the Town earns.*

*Al Valente, 60 Haley Road, co-chairman of Groton Business Association. He spoke in favor of raising revenue for the Town of Groton. He stated he is impressed with the Office of Planning and Development. He praised the Town Council for its encouragement of economic development and new businesses. He stated that he was in favor of simplifying the zoning regulations to attract new business.*

*Rosanne Kotowski, 24 Anne Avenue, Mystic, stated that no significant reductions in expenses have occurred that would result in no tax increase. She reviewed demographic information for the Town of Groton. She asked why Groton taxpayers are funding Town employees' salaries that exceed the median income. She stated it is time to make significant reductions in Capital Improvement projects. She noted the loss of revenue from Pfizer building 118 was expected, and the Town of Groton should have planned for the loss of revenue from this building's loss and other economic factors.*

*Thomas Leary, 20 Morgan Point, stated he was disappointed in the decline in revenue. He noted that the Town Manager should return to the Town Council with a no, or two-percent, tax increase. He stated it seems the Town Council could address budget issues of the various communities within the town to create a cohesive one Groton.*

*Susan Dowling, 22 Leeward Lane, spoke in favor of the Office of Development and Planning Services' budget. She stated that she supported re-writing the zoning regulations. She spoke in support of building revenue and limiting budget cuts. She noted it is important to attract business to the community.*

*Mayor Marian Gailbraith, 771 Shennecossett Road, stated the Town and City of Groton have come to a crossroads and face challenges together. She stated the Town and City could work*

together to produce revenue and promote economic development. She reviewed historical staffing information of the City of Groton. She stated resources should be shared among all the areas of Groton. She spoke against the cuts of last year's City Highway services. She stated the Town Council cost the City residents to incur a seventeen percent increase in the FYE 2016. She stated that the Town of Groton and the City of Groton can co-exist to create a more prosperous Groton.

Patrice Granatosky, 30 North Prospect Street, stated that the Town Council services the entire Town. She stated that the Town Council will be held responsible to all citizens. She spoke against cutting services for the City of Groton. She noted that budget time is not the time for creating policy. She stated that if additional cuts are made to the City of Groton the quality of life will be reduced for City residents. She spoke in favor of fair budget cuts.

Deputy Groton City Mayor Keith Hedrick, 156 Shennecossett Parkway, stated he will work with the Town Council for the City of Groton's budget. He stated that if cuts are made to the City's budget, there should be a plan in place to make-up for the lost services. He noted the Town of Groton has a problem with revenue. He suggested the Town could sell property it owns. He stated that everything should be on the table to make-up for lost revenue. He concluded by stating the City and Town of Groton need to work together.

Bobby Harris, 191 Virgo Drive, stated that he decided to stay in Groton when he had the opportunity to leave. He noted the positive effects Youth Police Officers have on the City of Groton. He stated that he does not want to see taxes go-up, but he also does not have a problem with the amount of money the City pays to Groton without seeing the benefits of that money.

## VII. ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Flax declared the Public Hearing closed.

A motion to adjourn was made by Councilor Watson, seconded by Councilor Nault. Mayor Flax adjourned the meeting at 9:33 p.m.

Attest:

Betsy Moukawsher  
Groton Town Clerk

Nathan Caron  
Office Assistant II