



Town of Groton, Connecticut

Meeting Minutes

Town Council

45 Fort Hill Road
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Town Clerk 860-441-6640
Town Manager
860-441-6630

Mayor Rita M. Schmidt, Councilors Dean Antipas, Genevieve Cerf, Joe de la Cruz, Bruce S. Flax, Bob Frink, Rich Moravsik, Deborah L. Peruzzotti and Harry A. Watson

Monday, March 30, 2015

7:00 PM

Groton Senior Center

FYE 2016 BUDGET PUBLIC HEARING SPECIAL MEETING

I. ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m. by Mayor Schmidt.

Members Present: Mayor Schmidt, Councilor Cerf, Councilor Flax, Councilor Frink, Councilor Moravsik, Councilor Watson and Councilor Antipas

Members Absent: Councilor de la Cruz and Councilor Peruzzotti

Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Superintendent of Schools Michael Graner, City Mayor Marian Galbraith, Board of Education members, City Councilors, RTM members, Town staff, Town Clerk Betsy Moukawsher, and Assistant Town Clerk Dawn Rahilly.

II. SALUTE TO THE FLAG

The Salute to the Flag was led by Margil (Hank) Steinfeld.

III. INTRODUCTION OF ELECTED OFFICIALS

Mayor Schmidt introduced and recognized elected officials and Superintendent Michael Graner introduced the Board of Education members at the request of Mayor Schmidt.

IV. READING OF PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

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

V. BUDGET PRESENTATIONS

a. Superintendent of Schools

Superintendent Michael Graner stated that the proposed Education Budget is \$77,130,239, which represents a 2.7% increase over the current budget. He attributed most of the increase to under-funding of Special Education, which includes payment to other schools for tuition reimbursement. In addition, increases are attributed to contractual obligations and fully funding para-professional services. Replacement of some aging classroom technology, to include classroom computers and smart boards, was noted as part of this budget. He stated that current class size will be maintained, as well as all curricular and extracurricular programs. There are also plans to introduce after school enrichment programs.

b. Town Manager

Town Manager Mark Oefinger gave a brief summary of the proposed FYE 2016 Town budget. The proposed budget is \$128,474,682, which represents a 4.6% increase over the current year. He summarized proposed expenditures and noted that anticipated revenues have decreased approximately 1.0%. He also explained that the Grand List has decreased approximately 2.2%, which results in a reduction of revenues by \$1,743,580. This drop is primarily due to Pfizer's decision to demolish Building 118. If that had not occurred, the decrease would have been -0.1% instead of -2.2%. The Town will be using \$4,948,000 of Fund Balance Applied, which will leave approximately \$9.9 million in Fund Balance. He stated that the Town Operation portion of the budget represents an increase of \$242,139 or 0.7% over the current budget. He encouraged the public to review the budget, either on the Town web site or from a copy of the budget. Budget books are available at the Town Clerk's office.

VI. OPENING OF PUBLIC HEARING

Mayor Schmidt invited the public to address the Town Council. She asked that each person state their name and address for the record. She emphasized that comments should be pertinent to the Town of Groton and the proposed FYE 2016 budget.

Ed Ettinger, 174 Cedar Road, Mystic, informed the Town Council that his property taxes have increased by 280% in the past 15 years, while the inflation rate during the same period has been only 40%. He suggested that increased property taxes are a contributing factor to stores closing and the decline of our industrial tax base. He offered some suggestions for reduction of the increase and urged the Town to consolidate services with the City of Groton and the Police and Fire Districts. The Town could consider turning the Senior Center over to the Y Club and downsizing Public Works.

Peter Chappell, 217 Hazelnut Hill Road, introduced himself to the Town Council as the owner of Shrink the Boat. This is the marine pump-out boat that services Groton's harbors. He thanked the Town Council for their continued support of the marine pump-out program.

Mariellen V. French, 12 Little Gull Lane, Noank, addressed the Town Council about her concerns with the loss of the \$1 million Pfizer property and a proposed \$5 million budget increase. She stated that people on fixed and lower incomes are having trouble with property tax increases. She urged the members to try to maintain social service programs that help these people.

Thomas Davoren, City of Groton Police Chief, 295 Meridian Street, Groton, introduced himself and urged the Town Council to continue their support of the City of Groton's budget request for policing.

Jim Streeter, 64 Pleasant Street, Groton, addressed the Town Council, as the Town Historian, and requested support for the renovations proposed for the Groton Public Library. He explained that the need for the renovations is to house the large collection of historic photos and other memorabilia that he has donated to the Town of Groton.

Clare Rogers, 138 Payer Lane, Mystic, urged the Town Council to support the proposed Board of Education budget. She also read a letter from Nancy and Kevin Murphy, 29 Whittle Street, Mystic, in support of the proposed Board of Education budget.

Alexander Waid, 76 Dartmouth Drive, Mystic, addressed the Town Council and Board of Education members, as the Coach for the Fitch High School Robotics Team. He outlined the successes of the team and the benefits of participation. He requested space at Fitch Middle School for the team to develop and practice with their prototypes and funding for the robotics program in this year's budget.

Rosanne Kotowski, 24 Ann Avenue, Mystic, shared suggestions for reductions to the FYE 2016 budget with the Town Council and Board of Education members. She stated that 39% of household in Groton have an income of \$50,000 or less.

Ron Yuhas, 91 South Road, Groton, commented on the suggestion that the Board of Education has been lacking educational resources. He described items that were sold as surplus in the annual Town Surplus Sale. He considered the surplus of supplies at Fitch Middle School a terrible waste. He suggested that there is a lack of planning by the Board of Education in regard to educational supplies.

Scott Aument, 127 Rogers Road, Mystic, gave a brief summary of recent budgets and reductions. He gave suggestions on how to reduce the FYE 2016 Planning and Public Works Departments proposed budgets.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Schmidt declared the public hearing closed and adjournment was taken at 8:58 p.m.

Attest:

*Betsy Moukawsher, Town Clerk
Clerk of the Council*

*Dawn Rahilly
Assistant Town Clerk*