



Town of Groton, Connecticut

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Meeting Minutes

Town Council

Mayor Harry A. Watson, Councilors Kathryn M. Brown-Tracy, Bruce S. Flax, Catherine Kolnaski, Deborah B. Monteiro, Frank O'Beirne, Jr., Rita M. Schmidt, Paulann H. Sheets, and James L. Streeter

Tuesday, April 7, 2009

7:30 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

REGULAR MEETING

I. ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m. by Mayor Harry Watson.

Members Present: Mayor Watson, Councilor Brown-Tracy, Councilor Flax, Councilor Kolnaski, Councilor Monteiro, Councilor Schmidt, Councilor Sheets and Councilor Streeter

Members Absent: Councilor O'Beirne, Jr.

Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Assistant to the Town Manager Lee Vincent, Town Clerk Barbara Tarbox, and Office Assistant Lori Watrous.

II. SALUTE TO THE FLAG

The Salute to the Flag was led by Councilor Flax.

III. RECOGNITION, AWARDS & MEMORIALS

None.

Recess for Public Hearings on:

Mayor Watson called a recess for the Public Hearing at 7:32 p.m.

2009-0065 Disposition of Colonel Ledyard School Property

Heard at Public Hearing

Mayor Dennis Popp, 41 Cottage Street, representing the City of Groton, stated that the City has expressed interest in the Colonel Ledyard School property on many occasions. He remarked that the City needs expansion space and has even considered utilizing 200 square feet of the Municipal Building auditorium, and stated that the City of Groton is still interested in acquiring this property for future expansion.

Paul Bates, 47 Church Street, questioned procedure. He was under the impression that when a new school is occupied and the old school is turned over to the Town, a committee is established to explore the possibilities for the disposition of the old school.

The Town Manager stated that neighborhood task forces were not discussed for either the Colonel Ledyard or Eastern Point School. However, he acknowledged that there have been discussions of setting up neighborhood task forces to investigate possibilities for the disposition of Groton Heights and Noank Schools, but noted that no meetings have occurred for either of these task forces as their memberships have not been fully determined.

Mr. Bates continued by stating his pleasure that the City is being considered for reuse of this property; and, more importantly, that it is a lease. He was upset in the past when the Town gave a water tower to the City. Mr. Bates believes that if the property where the water tower is located is ever sold, the proceeds should go to the Town of Groton.

Mark Oefinger read the affirmative response to the CGS 8-24 referral made to the Planning Commission regarding the lease of the Colonel Ledyard School to the City of Groton, which stated that the Planning Commission would also endorse a sale of the property. The Town Manager

stated that an appraisal of the Colonel Ledyard School property was performed and the appraised value is \$774,000.

There being no further comments, Mayor Watson closed the Public Hearing at 7:40 p.m.

Mayor Watson called a recess for the second Public Hearing at 7:41 p.m.

2009-0034

Disposition of Eastern Point School Property

Heard at Public Hearing

Doreen Marvin, 9 Brown Street, Norwich, Director of Development of LEARN gave a presentation about the program including their search for a site for the Marine Science Magnet School. She went on to discuss curricula and community partnerships with Project Oceanology and Mystic Seaport. Ms. Marvin stated that environmental stewardship and giving back to the community are essentials within the curriculum.

Bruce Kellogg, JCJ Architecture, showed aerial views of both the Eastern Point School and the Spicer Tree Farm properties. He then showed conceptual drawings for the building structure, floor plans, and an artist's rendering of the completed project.

Ken Biega, O&G Industries, Inc., outlined an aggressive schedule including site approval, demolition, construction beginning October 01, 2009, and the completion of the building in May 2011. If all goes according to schedule, the school would be ready for use in September 2011.

Mayor Dennis Popp, 41 Cottage Street, on behalf of the City of Groton, stated that there are legislative efforts being made to help project LEARN obtain the Spicer property, which he believes is their preferred site out of the two. Regardless of which site they choose, Mayor Popp would like to see some designated slots for Groton students.

William C. Spicer III, 49 Noble Avenue, Noank, stated that in a discussion of what to do with the Spicer Tree Farm, Town Manager Oefinger stated that LEARN was looking for a site for a Marine Science Magnet High School. Subsequently, Mr. Spicer contacted project LEARN with a proposal. He also donated some shellfish beds to LEARN, stating that the best way to learn is by immersion. Mr. Spicer feels that Eastern Point School, coupled with the Spicer Tree Farm, will make a superb facility and will provide children with the best marine experience.

Paul Bates, 47 Church Street, suggested caution regarding the disposition of school properties, as things tend to run in cycles. In the early twentieth century schools were multi-story, in the mid-twentieth century they were single story, and in the twenty-first century it is multi-level again. At some point it may be determined to go back to many small schools scattered throughout Town, and acquiring appropriate properties won't be an easy task.

Lori Hesch, 185 Morse Avenue, stated that her property abuts Eastern Point School and she strongly supports this project.

Tim Viesel, Ivoryton, representing The Sound School Regional Vocational Aquacultural Center, has been involved in both the Bridgeport and New Haven Sound School facilities. He is currently working at the New Haven school which is on the water near salt marshes. He remarked that the Spicer property is a wonderful site with different types of water, and he hopes that this project will move forward.

Beverly Herbert, 88 Branford Avenue, is concerned that Groton students will not be a part of the school. She was hoping that the Eastern Point School property would be used for a community center or for recreational purposes, perhaps with the assistance of stimulus money. Ms. Herbert would like the property to become something that would benefit the children in the neighborhood.

Mark Oefinger read the affirmative response to the CGS 8-24 referral made to the Planning Commission regarding the lease of the Eastern Point School property to LEARN, which also stated that the Planning Commission still supports the approved site plan for a Marine Science Magnet School at the Thomas Road site. The Town Manager stated that an appraisal of the Eastern Point School property was performed and the appraised value is \$947,000. The terms and conditions of the lease have not been fully negotiated, and perhaps either the upper or lower area of the property could be developed into a recreational area.

Mayor Watson asked Ms. Marvin for the number of Groton students that would attend the Marine Science Magnet School being proposed.

Doreen Marvin, Director of LEARN, stated that Groton students will be able to attend the school as would other students within the region. There will be 250 students attending the school, adding about ten students from each district per year.

There being no further comments, Mayor Watson closed the Public Hearing at 8:15 p.m.

IV. RECEIPT OF CITIZENS' PETITIONS, COMMENTS AND CONCERNS

Paul Bates, 47 Church Street, expressed his thanks to the Council, the administration, and Public Works for responding to a recent problem with excessive lighting at the Town docks.

Zell Steever, 81 Main Street, Noank, Chairman of the Task Force on Climate Change and Sustainable Community, stated that the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 has delegated \$3.27 billion dollars towards climate change and sustainable community issues. Chairman Steever stated that the Task Force recommends that a grant application be submitted for federal funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. He then read a proposed resolution, noting that there are eight areas in which Groton could benefit from this grant money.

2009-0039 Recommendations of the Task Force on Climate Change and Sustainable Community

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE TASK FORCE ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY

Councilor Sheets requested a referral to consider the Task Force on Climate Change and Sustainable Community's recommendations.

V. RESPONSES TO CITIZENS' PETITIONS, COMMENTS AND CONCERNS

None.

VI. CONSENT CALENDAR

a. Approval of Minutes

2009-0085 Approval of Minutes (Town Council)

RESOLUTION ACCEPTING TOWN COUNCIL MINUTES

RESOLVED, that the minutes of the Town Council meeting of March 17, 2009 are hereby accepted and approved.

This Matter was Adopted on the Consent Calendar.

b. Administrative Items

2009-0080 Special Trust Fund Contributions

RESOLUTION ACCEPTING CONTRIBUTIONS TO SPECIAL TRUST FUNDS

RESOLVED, that the Town Council hereby accepts contributions to the Town as follows:

Various Donors - \$77.00 - Jabez Smith House Miscellaneous

Rogers Rangers Inc. - \$500.00 - Jabez Smith House Miscellaneous

Various Donations - \$475.00 - Groton Utilities Assistance Program

Groton Utilities Matching Funds - \$324.07 - Groton Utilities Assistance Program
New England Filipino American, Inc. - \$100.00 - Library Discretionary
Mystic Rehabilitation Center - \$50.00 - Maritime Academy

This Matter was Adopted on the Consent Calendar.

Passed The Consent Calendar

A motion was made by Councilor Kolnaski, seconded by Councilor Monteiro, to adopt the Consent Calendar, including all the preceding items marked as having been adopted on the Consent Calendar.

The motion carried unanimously

VII. COMMUNICATION REPORTS (Other than Committee Reports)

a. Town Councilors

Mayor Watson attended two forums for young ladies, one through the Noank Baptist Group Homes Volunteer Mentors and the other entitled "Striving Toward Empowered Personal Success." He received a letter from Representative Wright answering an FOI request as to whether she informed others regarding HB 5264 prior to the Public Hearing on February 28, 2009. Attached to that letter was a copy of an email sent to Pricilla Pratt of GOSA six days before the Public Hearing. The Mayor had lunch with Ledge Light Health District Director Baker Salisbury to discuss a grant application. He attended the installation of officers at Elks Club 2163, the Budget Public Hearing on March 30, 2009, and April budget meetings.

Councilor Sheets received a letter regarding excessive taxation, requesting that Groton aim for a 5% reduction in the budget.

Councilor Schmidt received the same communication and added that it mentioned a 5% decrease in the Board of Education budget as well.

Councilor Brown-Tracy received the same letter, and also received an email regarding the items that were found in the school dumpster last year. Councilor Brown-Tracy stated that she has photographs of those items that clearly show they were in good condition.

Councilor Streeter and Councilor Monteiro received the same communications as previously reported.

Councilor Kolnaski attended a Fitch High School graduation party fund raiser, two Town Council/Board of Education/RTM Liaison Committee meetings, a Permanent School Building Committee meeting, the Saint Patrick's Day Parade, and a Phase II School Design Committee meeting.

b. Clerk of the Representative Town Meeting

The RTM will meet on April 15, 2009, and on tonight's agenda is a resolution setting the Annual RTM Budget Meeting on April 29, 2009.

c. Clerk of the Council

The Town Clerk has requested a referral for a Historical Document Preservation Grant. She reminded citizens that fishing season begins April 18, 2009, and fishing licences may be obtained at the Town Clerk's office.

d. Town Manager

The Town Manager reminded citizens that all town offices will be closed on April 10, 2009. He noted that there will be a budget meeting on April 13, 2009, and on April 14, 2009, Group I and Group II will be cancelled, and there are 18 items on the agenda for the Committee of the Whole meeting. The Council will also be meeting with the Stonington Board of Selectmen on April 14, 2009.

e. Town Attorney

No report.

VIII. COMMITTEE REPORTS

a. Community & Cultural Development - Chairman Brown-Tracy

No meeting, no report.

b. Economic Development - Chairman Bond

No meeting, no report.

c. Education/Health & Social Services - Chairman Kolnaski

No meeting, no report.

d. Environment/Energy - Chairman Sheets

No meeting, no report.

e. Finance - Chairman Schmidt

No meeting, no report.

f. Personnel/Appointments/Rules - Chairman O'Beirne

No meeting, no report.

g. Public Safety - Chairman Streeter

No meeting, no report.

h. Public Works/Recreation - Chairman Monteiro

No meeting, no report.

i. Committee of the Whole - Mayor Watson

Mayor Watson remarked that the budget has been the topic of discussion at recent Committee of the Whole meetings.

IX. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

X. NEW BUSINESS

2009-0066 Annual RTM Budget Meeting

RESOLUTION SETTING RTM BUDGET MEETING DATE ON THE 2009-2010 ANNUAL TOWN BUDGET

WHEREAS, Section 9.3.1 of the Groton Town Charter requires that the Town Council determine the date for the annual budget meeting of the Representative Town Meeting, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Annual Budget Meeting of the Representative Town Meeting will be held on Wednesday, April 29, 2009 at 7:30 p.m. at the Town Hall Annex, Community Room 1, 134 Groton Long Point Road, Groton, Connecticut.

A motion was made by Mayor Watson, seconded by Councilor Schmidt, that this matter be Adopted.

The motion carried unanimously

XI. OTHER BUSINESS

2009-0093 Endorsement of a Grant Proposal by the Nature Conservancy

ENDORSEMENT OF A GRANT PROPOSAL BY THE NATURE CONSERVANCY

Councilor Sheets requested a referral to consider endorsing a grant proposal by the Nature Conservancy to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation - Long Island Sound Futures Fund 2009.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn at 8:40 p.m. was made by Councilor Schmidt, seconded by Councilor Monteiro and so voted unanimously.

Attest:

*Barbara Tarbox, Town Clerk
Clerk of the Council*

Lori Watrous, Office Assistant