



# Town of Groton, Connecticut

45 Fort Hill Road  
Groton, CT 06340-4394  
Town Clerk 860-441-6640  
Town Manager  
860-441-6630

## 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, May 3, 2016

7:30 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

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#### REGULAR MEETING

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*The meeting was called to order at 7:30 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, Councilor Peruzzotti and Councilor Watson

*Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Town Clerk Betsy Moukawsher, and Office Assistant II Nathan Caron*

#### II. SALUTE TO THE FLAG

*The Salute to the Flag was led by Clint Wright.*

#### III. RECOGNITION, AWARDS & MEMORIALS

##### 2016-0096 Proclamation Recognizing Groton Emergency Communications Center

Read

*The Proclamation was read by Councilor Morton.*

##### 2016-0097 Proclamation Recognizing Earth Day

Read

*The Proclamation was read by Councilor Peruzzotti*

##### 2016-0107 Proclamation Recognizing National Arbor Day

Read

*The Proclamation was read by Councilor Nault.*

##### 2016-0108 Proclamation Celebrating Groton Little League Opening Day

Read

*The Proclamation was read by Councilor de la Cruz.*

#### IV. RECEIPT OF CITIZENS' PETITIONS, COMMENTS AND CONCERNS

*Clint Wright, 25 Westview Avenue, introduced himself as the Vice Chairman of Noank School Public Gardens Task Force. He stated that organization is recovering from the resignation of its Chairman. He noted that there are a total of 24 garden plots, and that there are two plots are reserved for scholarship plots. This will be awarded to individuals who do not have the funds to purchase a plot. He stated that there is a little over \$800 available in their account. He noted that the Task Force is working with a beekeeper and his apprentice. He stated that the Task Force has constructed the majority of the deer fencing and the have built various raised beds. He announced that the Task Force has received donations for pear trees and they have planted 18 evergreen trees. Mr. Wright stated that Heather Somers has been nominated to join the Task Force. He requested that the Town Council approve her appointment. He announced that the Task Force was featured in a newspaper article in the New London Day on May 2, 2016.*

*Gale Goode, 24 Fort Hill Road, stated that she was not in favor of the proposed closure of the*

entrance of Vergennes Court at Rt. 1. She stated that she did not know which neighborhood association the Town Manager was referring to at the last Town Council meeting, but according to conversations she has had with residents of Vergennes Court, they receive no mention of this closure at any meeting. She noted that the excessive speed of the traffic on Rt. 1 is a safety concern. She stated that speed was a contributing factor to the fatality that occurred in the crosswalk at the entrance of Vergennes Court. She noted the frequency of ambulance and emergency traffic on Vergennes Court, She believes that any obstruction or barrier constructed there would need to be replaced frequently due to snow plowing. She concluded her statements by noting that there is a large outcry against cutting off Vergennes Court from the residents who live there. She stated that it is important to take into consideration the opinions of the residents of Vergennes Court before beginning the project.

**V. RESPONSES TO CITIZENS' PETITIONS, COMMENTS AND CONCERNS**

*Councilor Nault stated that Mr. Wright should give his information regarding the two scholarship garden plots to Groton Human Services.*

**VI. CONSENT CALENDAR**

**a. Approval of Minutes**

**2016-0112 Approval of Minutes (Town Council)**

**RESOLUTION ACCEPTING TOWN COUNCIL MINUTES**

RESOLVED, that the minutes of the Town Council meetings of March 29, 2016, April 5, 2016, April 25, 2016, and April 27, 2016 are hereby accepted and approved.

**This Matter was Adopted on the Consent Calendar.**

**b. Administrative Items**

**2016-0098 Special Trust Fund Contributions**

**RESOLUTION ACCEPTING CONTRIBUTIONS TO SPECIAL TRUST FUNDS**

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

Anonymous - \$100.00 - Library Miscellaneous

Anne-Marie Quagliaroli - \$20.00 - Groton Utilities Energy Assistance Program

Groton Utilities Matching Funds - \$122.50 - Groton Utilities Energy Assistance Program

Robert Zuliani -\$100.00 - Library Renovations

Gervacio Senador Eigo Jr. - \$5.00 - Library Renovations

B.P.O. Elks Lodge No. 2163 - \$500.00 - Social Services Discretionary

Lee Vincent - \$50.00 - Social Services Discretionary

Carl Sommer for Mystic Photography Group - \$25.00 - Libray Miscellaneous

Elizabeth Hogan - \$250.00 - Library Renovations

Anonymous - \$20.00 - Library Miscellaneous

**This Matter was Adopted on the Consent Calendar.**

**c. Deletions from the Town Council Referral List**

**2014-0312 School Facilities Initiative Update**

**This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - No further action on the Consent Calendar.**

**2015-0298 Establishment of a Charter Revision Commission**

**This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.**

**2016-0103 October 2016 Revaluation - Update**

**This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - No further action on the Consent Calendar.**

**2016-0021 Proposed Adjustments to Retiree Pension Benefits**

**This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.**

**2016-0068 Disposition of Town Owned Property Acquired through Tax Foreclosure**

This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.

**2016-0105 FYE 2016 Fourth Quarter Transfers**

This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.

**Passed The Consent Calendar**

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

The motion carried unanimously

**VII. COMMUNICATIONS & REPORTS (Other than Committee Reports)**

**a. Town Councilors**

*Councilor Watson stated that he attended the change of command for the Nautilus Submarine on Tuesday, April 12, 2016 at 1:00 p.m. He noted that he attended the 35-year celebration of the Groton Emergency Communications Center on April 13, 2016. He announced that he attended the meet-and-greet for the Economic Development Commissions of the City and Town of Groton on April 14, 2016 at the Par 4 Restaurant. He stated that he attended the Arbor Day celebration at Northeast Academy on April 29, 2016. He stated that Town Manager Oefinger, Councilor Nault, and he met with a representative from U.S.Senator Murphy's office in April regarding information from their Washington D.C. trip.*

*Councilor Grim stated that he attended the Committee of the Whole budget meetings.*

*Councilor Nault stated that she attended the Southeastern Connecticut Enterprise Region (seCTer) meeting on economic development at the Groton VFW Hall on April 11, 2016. She announced that she attended the Nautilus Submarine change of command on April 12, 2016. She noted that she also attended the meet and greet with the City and Town Economic of Development event on April 14, 2016. She stated that she went to the Coast Guard Academy for a Sub. Century planning meeting on April 15, 2016 and attended a regimental review. She stated that she went to the Arbor Day tree planting ceremony at Northeast Academy and an art reception the UConn Avery Point Gallery on April 29, 2016.*

*Councilor de la Cruz stated that he attended the Police Ball. He announced that the School Initiatives Task Force has finished their work and that there will be no more meetings. He announced that he attended the Groton Little League opening day ceremony at Washington Park, and he praised Coach Dennis Long. He announced that approximately one-hundred pounds of prescription drugs were collected at the recent prescription drug drive. He concluded his statements by noting that in the past two weeks there were three drug overdoses that resulted in two deaths in the local area.*

*Councilor Peruzzotti stated that she attended the Earth Day celebration at Avery Point. She read an e-mail she received from the Interim Campus Director at Avery Point regarding the closing of the Alexey von Schlippe Gallery; the letter addressed the future uses of the Gallery space.*

*Councilor Barber stated that she attended the art reception at Avery Point on Friday, April 29, 2016. She announced that she attended a ribbon cutting ceremony at Anytime Fitness. She stated that she attended the Coogan Farm Twine Cutting ceremony.*

*Councilor Morton stated that she attended the Arbor Day tree planing event at Northeast Academy. She noted that she attended the Anniversary celebration of the 9-11 Center and the Police Ball.*

*Councilor Antipas stated that the Boating Advisory Board met on Thursday, April 28, 2016, and a topic of discussion was the possible re-use of Spicer House.*

Mayor Flax stated that he had a couple of meetings with the Parks and Recreation Department for Groton Week. He noted that he attended the City and Town Economic Development Commissions' meet-and-greet event at Par Four on April 14, 2016. He stated that he met with Town Manager Mark Oefinger. He noted that he attended the RTM Annual Budget Meeting on April 28, 2016; the Arbor Day celebration at Northeast Academy on April 29, 2016; and Groton Little League Opening Day at Wasington Park on April 30, 2016.

**b. Clerk of the Representative Town Meeting**

Town Clerk Betsy Moukawsher stated that the RTM is holding a series of budget sessions. She noted that the RTM must be finished with its budget meetings by midnight on May 25, 2016. She announced that the RTM will have a regular meeting on May 11, 2016 at 7:30 p.m. at the Groton Senior Center.

**c. Clerk of the Council**

Town Clerk Betsy Moukawsher stated that she had spoken again with Alice Foley regarding town property being encroached upon by abutting residents on Park Place in Mystic. She noted that Alice Foley had spoken with Zoning officials of the Town of Groton, and she had been asked to bring the matter before the Town Council.

Councilor Nault stated that it might be good to have something located at this spot on Park Place to symbolize the large shipyard that was once there.

In response to Mayor Flax's question, Town Clerk Betsy Moukawsher stated that when an individual raises issues in the Town Clerk's office, he or she is referred to the appropriate Town department.

Town Manager Oefinger stated that this was the first he'd heard of this issue and that his office would reach out to Alice Foley.

**d. Town Manager**

Town Manager Mark Oefinger reported that the RTM budget sessions are ongoing. He noted that there have been two sessions of City of Groton Highway arbitration. He announced that there will be a lecture on May 4, 2016 at 7:00 p.m. entitled Surviving BRAC. He stated that the Juvenile Review Board celebrated its ten year anniversary, and it averages about forty cases per year. He noted that Groton will take part in the Connecticut Trails Day by offering a hike at the Copp property on June 4, 2016 at 9:30 a.m. Town Manager Oefinger announced that Ledgelight Heath Director Stephen Mansfield will be at the May 10, 2016 Committee of the Whole meeting to give the Town Council a preliminary briefing on the Community Health Assessment report. He announced that there is a developer interested in purchasing Branford Manor. The Town Manager concluded his statements by noting items on next week's Committee of the Whole agenda will include a School Facilities Ordinance; Historic Documents Preservation Grant; a Port Security Grant; the draft 2016 Plan of Conservation and Development. Town Manager Mark Oefinger stated that if Evergreen Trees were planted at the Community Gardens, it may be difficult to cut the grass around them.

**VIII. COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**a. Community Relations -**

No meeting, no report.

**b. Finance -**

No meeting, no report.

**c. Personnel & Appointments - Chairman Watson**

Councilor Watson stated there will be a report and minutes of the May 3, 2016 Personnel and Appointments Committee at the next Town Council meeting.

*Councilor de la Cruz stated that the Planning and Zoning Commission people that were at the meeting to be interviewed, spoke favorably about hiring the consultants for rewriting the Zoning Regulations.*

*Councilor Watson stated there is a need for people to serve on the Town's land use-commissions. He noted that interested people could contact the Town Clerk's office for an application.*

**d. Rules -**

*No meeting, no report.*

**e. Public Safety -**

*No meeting, no report.*

**f. Committee of the Whole - Mayor Flax**

*Mayor Flax stated that there was a Committee of the Whole Special Meeting last week and the Committee reviewed a number of items including the Charter Revision Commission.*

**IX. NEW BUSINESS**

**2015-0298 Establishment of a Charter Revision Commission**

RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF A CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION

RESOLVED, pursuant to the provisions of Connecticut General Statutes Sections 7-188 through 7-191, that a Charter Revision Commission is hereby created, whose membership shall consist of 11 electors of the Town, not more than one-third of whom may hold any public office in the Town, and not more than a bare majority of whom shall be members of any one political party, and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, that such Commission shall make its report including any proposed revision of or amendments to the existing Charter to the Town Council not later than 16 months from the date of this resolution.

**A motion was made by Councilor Barber, seconded by Councilor de la Cruz, that this matter be Adopted.**

*In response to Councilor Barber's question, Town Manager Oefinger stated that letters have been sent to the applicants of the Charter Revision Commission. He noted the Town Council wanted to meet with the members of the Commission on Tuesday, May 17, 2016.*

**The motion carried unanimously**

**2016-0021 Proposed Adjustments to Retiree Pension Benefits**

RESOLUTION APPROVING ADJUSTMENTS TO RETIREE PENSION BENEFITS

WHEREAS, the pension agreements/retirement plan for Town of Groton employees in the Non-Union Police, Police, AFSCME, GMEA, Non-Union, USWA, and GTA labor groups provide for a review of retirement benefits periodically, and

WHEREAS, the last adjustments were effective July 1, 2006 for Non-Union; July 1, 2007 for Non-Union Police, Police, and USWA; and July 1, 2008 for AFSCME, GMEA, and GTA; and

WHEREAS, the Town Council has considered information for all groups relative to the effect of a 2% increase on annual benefits, unfunded actuarial accrued liability, and Town funding cost, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Town Council approves an increase of 2% for qualified Non-Union Police retirees effective July 1, 2016.

**A motion was made by Councilor Grim, seconded by Councilor de la Cruz, that this matter be Adopted.**

*Councilor Grim read and moved the original Resolution for adoption, seconded by Councilor de la Cruz.*

*WHEREAS, the pension agreements/retirement plan for Town of Groton employees in the Non-Union Police, Police, AFSCME, GMEA, Non-Union, USWA, and GTA labor groups provide for a review of retirement benefits periodically, and*

*WHEREAS, the last adjustments were effective July 1, 2006 for Non-Union; July 1, 2007 for Non-Union Police, Police, and USWA; and July 1, 2008 for AFSCME, GMEA, and GTA; and*

*WHEREAS, the Town Council has considered information for all groups relative to the effect of a 2% increase on annual benefits, unfunded actuarial accrued liability, and Town funding cost, now therefore be it*

*RESOLVED, that the Town Council approves an increase of 2% for qualified retirees effective July 1, 2016.*

*Councilor Peruzzotti moved to amend the Resolution to only increase the annual benefits for qualified Non-Union retired Police. She stated that her rationale for the amendment was to grant the increase to the only group that submitted a written request for a increase based on cost of living increases. Councilor Watson seconded the amendment.*

*Councilor Nault stated that she thought only Matt Morton should receive the increase because he submitted the request in writing.*

*Town Clerk Betsy Moukawsher responded to Councilor Watson's question by clarifying the vote on the matter taken at the Committee of the Whole meeting was a legal vote because a simple majority of those present was all that was necessary for passage. The vote was four in favor, three opposed and one abstention.*

*Councilor de la Cruz stated that it has been at least ten years since this group has received a raise. He stated that this increase would represent about a \$425 raise after ten years for someone with a \$55,000 a year pension.*

*Councilor Morton stated that she will not participate in the discussion and will abstain from the vote because her husband is a retired Non-Union Groton Policeman.*

*Councilor Antipas clarified that five votes would be needed for this matter to pass. He noted that he would support Councilor Peruzzotti's amendment.*

*In response to Councilor Barber's question, Councilor de la Cruz stated that he calculated the average based on \$55,000 per year divided among the number of people who would receive the increase.*

*Councilor Barber stated that she agreed that Matt Morton should be the only one to receive the increase.*

*Councilor Grim questioned the legality of giving the increase to only one person.*

*Town Manager Oefinger stated that historically raises have been granted by affiliation and not on an individual basis.*

*Councilor Nault stated that she would vote in favor of the amendment if the Council could not grant the request individually.*

*The amendment passed by a vote of 7 in favor, 1 opposed (Councilor de la Cruz) and 1 abstention (Councilor Morton).*

*Mayor Flax announced that the Resolution passes as amended with a vote of 7 in favor, 1 opposed - Councilor de la Cruz, and 1 abstention - Councilor Morton.*

**The motion carried by the following vote:**

**Votes:** In Favor: 7 - Mayor Flax, Councilor Antipas, Councilor Barber, Councilor Grim, Councilor Nault, Councilor Peruzzotti and Councilor Watson

Opposed: 1 - Councilor de la Cruz

Abstain: 1 - Councilor Morton

**2016-0068**

**Disposition of Town Owned Property Acquired through Tax Foreclosure**

RESOLUTION MAKING A DETERMINATION REGARDING TOWN PROPERTIES ACQUIRED THROUGH TAX SALE OR FORECLOSURE

WHEREAS, the August 2014 Process for Resale of Town Owned Property (as amended) requires the Town Council to review properties acquired through tax sale or foreclosure and to make a determination of whether the properties are to be used or reserved for town purposes or sold, and

WHEREAS, the Town Council has reviewed four parcels acquired through tax sale/foreclosure of which none are used or reserved for Town purposes and referred them to the Planning Commissions under CGS Section 8-24, and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission has recommended action consistent with staff's recommendation for the parcels, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Town Council makes the following determinations on the four parcels acquired through tax sale/foreclosure:

PIN 16810462770E, 0 South Road - Sell to adjacent property owner only or retain

PIN 168910459100, 157 Grove Avenue - Sell

PIN 169909168945E, 517 Gold Star Highway - Sell

PIN 169909262469E, 529 Gold Star Highway - Sell

**A motion was made by Councilor Antipas, seconded by Councilor Watson, that this matter be Adopted.**

**The motion carried unanimously**

**2016-0105**

**FYE 2016 Fourth Quarter Transfers**

RESOLUTION FOR FYE 2016 FOURTH QUARTER TRANSFERS

WHEREAS, the Town Charter provides for supplemental appropriations to Adopted Budgets and transfers from the Contingency function during the year and

WHEREAS, the Town Charter also provides for the transfer of funds from one departmental function to another departmental function during the last three months of the fiscal year, and

WHEREAS, transfers are necessary and represent unforeseen or unexpected expenditures at the time the FYE 2016 budget was adopted, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that transfers totaling \$212,704 be transferred from Contingency (#1074) to the following General Fund departments/functions and transfers of \$10,000 or more are referred to the RTM for approval:

Legal Services (#10060 5290) @ \$197,704;

For costs associated with miscellaneous litigation

Insurance & Claims (#10706 5154) @ \$15,000;  
For increase in unemployment costs

Refer to RTM

**A motion was made by Councilor Watson, seconded by Councilor Morton, that this matter be Adopted and Referred to the Representative Town Meeting.**

**The motion carried unanimously**

#### **X. OTHER BUSINESS**

*Councilor Morton stated that she is concerned about the Vergennes Court issue. She stated that there seems to be a lack of communication between the Town of Groton and the residents.*

*Town Manager Oefinger stated that he would be glad to review the history of the Vergennes Court project at the Committee of the Whole meeting next week. He noted that the primary concern is to minimize the number of curb cuts in the area.*

*Councilor Antipas made a motion to suspend the rules to consider the appointment of Heather Somers to the Noank School Public Gardens Task Force.*

*Mayor Flax stated that he thought it would be best to check with Heather Somers to verify that she wants to be on the Task Force.*

*Councilor Antipas withdrew his motion.*

*Councilor Nault stated there is a focus group at the Senior Center at 6:00 p.m. on May 4, 2016. She noted that there is an Economic Development Commission meeting on Thursday, May 5, 2016.*

*Councilor Watson stated that the Chairperson of the Groton Board of Education was in Hartford with Dr. Graner, trying to get information regarding Education Cost Share Grant (ECS) and grant funding for the Schools Initiative Project.*

#### **XI. ADJOURNMENT**

*A motion was made by Councilor Peruzzotti and seconded by Councilor Watson. Mayor Flax adjourned the meeting at 8:35 p.m.*

*Attest:*

*Betsy Moukawsher  
Clerk of the Town Council*

*Nathan Caron  
Office Assistant II*