



Town of Groton, Connecticut

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Meeting Minutes

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, August 1, 2017

7:30 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

REGULAR MEETING

Mayor Flax called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. Town Clerk Betsy Moukawsher read the roll call of the meeting.

I. ROLL CALL

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

II. SALUTE TO THE FLAG

The Salute to the Flag was led by Kevin Trejo.

III. RECOGNITION, AWARDS & MEMORIALS

2017-0189 Proclamation Honoring Mark R. Oefinger

Read

Councilor Watson read this proclamation.

Presentation of the Awards for the Economic Development Logo and Design Contest.

Sam Eisenbeiser from the Department of Economic and Community Development, gave a brief description of the logo design contest. He stated that out of thirty entries, the Logo Review Panel selected Susan Fonseca for the second prize and Susan Lavender for the first prize. Ms. Fonceco received a thirty minute flight lesson donated by Coastal Air of Groton as her prize and Ms. Lavender received \$250.00 as her prize. The winning logo design will be used for the Town's Economic Development web site and promotional materials.

IV. RECEIPT OF CITIZENS' PETITIONS, COMMENTS AND CONCERNS

Vic Panceria, President of the Groton Regional Theater, stated that his title enables him to do the things that the other board member do not want to do. He stated that the Groton Regional Theater was formed in 1997 by a group of local theater people who made their home at the Groton Senior Center. He stated that performances have been presented there every year with a percentage of the profits donated to the Senior Center for many of their programs and the sponsorship of their annual Christmas dinner. He stated that with the recent increase of programs at the Senior Center, the Board of Directors are seeking a new venue in order to accommodate the space needed for the additional programs. He stated that since they are the only theater group based in Groton and wish to remain in Groton, they would like to use the vacant auditorium at Fitch Middle School. He stated that this would allow for a larger audience, greater participation, and the option to donate to other programs besides the Senior Center. He stated that the group would be able to present more elaborate productions. He stated that they pledge to maintain the auditorium in good working order. He stated that the space could also be used for school functions such as choirs and band performances and graduations. He stated that the board members are grateful for the opportunity to present this proposal to the Town Council. He stated that while the Town Council is considering this proposal, the board members would like to tour the facility.

Elissa Wright, 51 Pearl Street, Noank, presented her views on the proposed ordinance to combine

the Planning and Zoning Commissions. She stated that she concurs with the position that the members of the Planning and Zoning Commissions stated at the June 20, 2017 Public Hearing. She stated that at a minimum, an in-depth study should be conducted, as was listed among many of the recommendations of the Zoning and Subdivisions Regulation Audit. She stated that one of the recommendations was to study the feasibility of combining the Planning and Zoning Commissions. She stated that there is no evidence that the Town Council conducted due diligence by investigating all of the implications and ramifications of this proposal or to properly evaluate the need and justification for such a change. She strongly urged the Town Council to conduct a solid study first, before proceeding with such a proposal. She stated that Planning and Zoning Commissions perform differently but have related functions, which remain separate and distinct even when they are a combined body. She stated that land use regulations are one of the most powerful functions of town government. She used the Haley Farm State Park acquisition to illustrate the value of having separate commissions. She stated that in January 1965, a developer had an option to purchase the 250 acre Haley Farm. The developer applied to the Zoning Commission for a zone change to allow up to 500 multi-family apartments to be built on 49 acres at the site. She stated that the Planning Commission recommended the zone change to the Zoning Commission. She stated that after a public hearing, the Zoning Commission unanimously denied the zone change application. She stated that by having the opinions from two separate bodies, looking at the same proposal, the outcome was successful in paving the way for the eventual State purchase of the land for preservation. She stated that she is a life long resident with deep concern for the general welfare of the community. She stated that having the two separate commissions has served the community well for more than six decades and should not be abandoned in the absence of any convincing information demonstrating a change that would point the way to a better Groton.

V. RESPONSES TO CITIZENS' PETITIONS, COMMENTS AND CONCERNS

Councilor Nault stated that they will need to take a look at it the auditorium at Fitch Middle School in order to see what is needed. She suggested Avery Point as another possible venue.

Councilor Barber stated her concern with the cost involved in preparing the space for public use.

Mayor Flax stated that he was aware that the group had been using the Senior Center. He stated that they need more space in order to provide larger productions. He stated that he will look into this proposal and speak to the Director Public Works and the Director of Parks and Recreation.

Councilor Barber suggested the use of the Fitch High School auditorium.

Town Manager John Burt reported that the necessary sprinkler system is scheduled to be installed in January. He stated that there is currently some storage there, but the space is limited for public use until after the sprinkler system is installed. He offered to provide a tour of the facility.

VI. CONSENT CALENDAR

a. Approval of Minutes

2017-0185 Approval of Minutes (Town Council)

RESOLUTION ACCEPTING TOWN COUNCIL MINUTES

RESOLVED, that the minutes of the Town Council meeting of July 18, 2017 are hereby accepted and approved.

This Matter was Adopted on the Consent Calendar.

b. Administrative Items

2017-0183 Special Trust Fund Contributions

RESOLUTION ACCEPTING CONTRIBUTIONS TO SPECIAL TRUST FUNDS

RESOLVED, that the Town Council hereby accepts contributions to the Town as follows:
Mystic Photography Group - \$25.00 - Library Miscellaneous
Joan DeAngelis - \$25.00 - Library Miscellaneous
The Savings Institute - \$175.00 - Social Services Discretionary
Jordan & Lois Correia - \$50.00 - Social Services Discretionary
Margaret Adams - \$100.00 - Groton Utilities Energy Assistance Program
Julius Panucci - \$30.00 - Groton Utilities Energy Assistance Program
City of Groton Matching Funds - \$174.00 - Groton Utilities Energy Assistance Program

This Matter was Adopted on the Consent Calendar.

c. Deletions from the Town Council Referral List

2017-0181 State Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection, Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security Grant Authorization

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

2017-0182 Road Maintenance and Rehabilitation Program - Modification of Roads For Calendar Year 2017

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 Moravsik, 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 and Councilor Nault reported that they attended the Town Manager's retirement party.

Councilor Moravsik reported that he attend a SEAT meeting and the Town Manager's retirement party.

Mayor Flax reported that he attend a Council of Government (COG) meeting, the Town Manager's retirement party, and a meeting with Town Manager John Burt.

b. Clerk of the Representative Town Meeting

Town Clerk Betsy Moukawsher reported that the RTM did not meet in July because of the lack of business. They are scheduled to meet on August 9th, 2017 at 7:30 p.m. at the Groton Senior Center.

c. Clerk of the Council

Town Clerk Betsy Moukawsher reported that she had attended the retirement party for the outgoing Town Manager, Mark Oefinger. She reported various vacancies, new applications, and resignations for boards and commissions.

d. Town Manager

Town Manager John Burt reported that he had toured the Groton Utility facility. He stated that Groton Utility is in the process of upgrading their street lights to LED. He stated that the Utility Commission has approved the proposed upgrade and that the proposal will be sent to the City Council for final approval. He stated that the funds have been budgeted for and once the City Council approves the project, the parts will be ordered. They hope to have the lights installed by the end of the year. He stated that he had received a home complaint on a house that is in the process of foreclosure. He stated that this property has a history of blight issues and that the owner is now deceased. He stated that the property is now in Probate. He explained that in his former position, they had a fund to take care of blighted properties. He stated that he would like further discussion on this issue.

In response to Councilor Barber, Town Manager John Burt stated that Michigan State law requires action on blighted properties. He stated that the funds used to eradicate blighted properties was generated by fees, delinquent taxes, and foreclosed properties.

Councilor Nault described a similar situation in her neighborhood. She stated her concern is with pests.

Mayor Flax announced that Mike Spellman had been named the new City of Groton Police Chief. He congratulated Chief Spellman and offered complements to his appointment.

VIII. COMMITTEE REPORTS

a. Personnel & Appointments - Chairman Watson

Chairman Watson reported that the committee met this evening and that he will provide a full report at the next Town Council meeting.

b. Rules - Chairman Antipas

No meeting, no report.

c. Committee of the Whole - Mayor Flax

Mayor Flax stated that the Committee of the Whole has met and discussed the items on the agenda.

IX. NEW BUSINESS

2017-0181 State Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection, Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security Grant Authorization

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE TOWN MANAGER TO EXECUTE DOCUMENTS WITH THE CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY SERVICES AND PUBLIC PROTECTION, DIVISION OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AND HOMELAND SECURITY

RESOLVED, that the Groton Town Council may enter into with and deliver to the State of Connecticut, Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection, Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security any and all documents which it deems necessary or appropriate; and be it further

RESOLVED, that John Burt, as Town Manager of the Town of Groton, is authorized and directed to execute and deliver any and all documents on behalf of the Town of Groton and Groton Town Council and to do and perform all acts and things which he deems to be necessary or appropriate to carry out the terms of such documents, including, but not limited to, executing and delivering all agreements and documents contemplated by such documents.

A motion was made by Councilor Peruzzotti, seconded by Councilor Moravsik, that this matter be Adopted.

The motion carried unanimously

2017-0182 Road Maintenance and Rehabilitation Program - Modification of Roads For Calendar Year 2017

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING MODIFICATION OF ROADS IN THE TOWN'S YEAR 5 ROAD MAINTENANCE AND REHABILITATION PROGRAM

WHEREAS, in November 2012 Groton voters approved a five-year road maintenance and rehabilitation program for calendar years 2013 through 2017 that provides funding for the Town, City, and Groton Long Point to maintain and rehabilitate the community's road system, and

WHEREAS, an extension of the road maintenance and rehabilitation program was approved by the Town Council and RTM to 2022, and

WHEREAS, the program requires each entity to file a report with the Town Council by December 30th of each year that identifies the roads completed in the calendar year, compares estimated costs to actual costs, and identifies the roads to be addressed in the upcoming year, and

WHEREAS, the Public Works Department had prepared a list of roads for calendar year 2017 that the Town Council had approved, and

WHEREAS, the Department has been informed of underground utility work planned for several of the roads in calendar year 2017, and it would be in the best interest of the Town to resurface these roads in calendar year 2018 and move the roads planned for 2018 to 2017, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Town Council authorizes the Public Works Department to move the previously approved roads from 2017 to 2018 and those from 2018 to 2017 in the road maintenance and rehabilitation program.

A motion was made by Councilor Barber, seconded by Councilor Peruzzotti, that this matter be Adopted.

In response to Councilor Moravsik, Mayor Flax explained that these changes are still within the scope of the original bond.

Mayor Flax listed the changes in the scheduled paving program.

In response to Councilor Grim, Mayor Flax stated that the bike path needs to be constructed on Thomas Road before the paving can be done.

The motion carried unanimously

Councilor Grim request a referral to consider a spending freeze and a hiring freeze. He stated that the Town is still unaware of our revenue stream. He stated that surrounding towns have adopted this policy. He thought that it might be something that the Town Council should consider at the next Committee of the Whole.

Town Manager John Burt stated that this subject has been discussed internally, and he would not recommend a blanket freeze because some positions have to be filled to get business done.

X. ADJOURNMENT

Councilor Barber made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Councilor Peruzzotti. Mayor Flax accepted this motion and adjourned the meeting at 8:04 p.m.

Attest:

*Betsy Moukawsher
Groton Town Clerk
Clerk of the Council*