



Town of Groton, Connecticut

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Town Clerk 860-441-6640
Town Manager
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Meeting Minutes

Town Council

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

Tuesday, September 1, 2015

7:30 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

REGULAR MEETING

I. ROLL CALL

Mayor Schmidt called the meeting to order at 7:34 p.m.

Members Present: Mayor Schmidt, Councilor de la Cruz, Councilor Flax, Councilor Frink, Councilor Granatosky and Councilor Moravsik

Members Absent: Councilor Peruzzotti, Councilor Watson and Councilor Antipas

Also present were Acting Town Manager Gary Schneider and Town Clerk Betsy Moukawsher.

II. SALUTE TO THE FLAG

The Salute to the Flag was led by Councilor Patrice Granatosky.

III. RECOGNITION, AWARDS & MEMORIALS

None.

IV. RECEIPT OF CITIZENS' PETITIONS, COMMENTS AND CONCERNS

None.

V. RESPONSES TO CITIZENS' PETITIONS, COMMENTS AND CONCERNS

None.

VI. CONSENT CALENDAR

a. Administrative Items

2015-0211 Special Trust Fund Contributions

RESOLUTION ACCEPTING CONTRIBUTIONS TO SPECIAL TRUST FUNDS

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

Donna & John Purdy - \$50.00 - Library Miscellaneous

Oliver Porter - \$30.00 - Library Renovations

Barbara Pantalone - \$20.00 - Library Renovations

Mystic Photography Group - \$25.00 - Library Miscellaneous

Sara Psimer - \$25.00 - Library Renovations

Chris Daniels & Laurel Butler - \$250.00 - Library Renovations

This matter was Adopted.

b. Deletions from the Town Council Referral List

2015-0195 Request for Waiver of Building Permit Fees - Mystic Arts Center

This matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken.

2015-0200 Senior Resources Title III Older Americans Grant

This matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken.

2015-0210 Conversion of High Pressure Sodium (HPS) Street Lights to LED

This matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken.

2015-0212 Road Maintenance and Rehabilitation Program - Additional Roads For Calendar Year 2015

This matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken.

2015-0213 Request for Waiver of Land Use Permit Fees - Christ United Methodist Church

This matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken.

Passed The Consent Calendar

A motion was made by Councilor Frink, seconded by Councilor Moravsik, The motion carried.

Councilor Watson arrived at 7:40 p.m.

Members Present: Mayor Schmidt, Councilor de la Cruz, Councilor Flax, Councilor Frink, Councilor Granatosky, Councilor Moravsik and Councilor Watson

Members Absent: Councilor Peruzzotti and Councilor Antipas

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

Councilor de la Cruz reported that he participated in a motorcycle rally to raise charitable funds. He is planning to travel to Gloucester, Massachusetts on September 14, 2015 to review their Angel program. He invited Councilors to join him if they are available.

Councilor Moravsik attended the Public Safety meeting on August 19, 2015, the Groton Ambulance Association special meeting on August 24, 2015, and the SEAT meeting in Norwich on August 26, 2015.

Councilor Watson reported that there had been an accident on Fort Hill Road on his way to the meeting. He gave that as the reason for his delay. He attended the U.S.S. Groton Sail meeting, and he attended the 11th presentation of the Harry Watson Internship for Ledge Light Health District on August 11, 2015. He received a communication from Ed Johnson with an update on the progress of the Noank School Community Garden and questions regarding the installation of water at the garden. He also attended the Schools Facilities Task Force meeting on August 20, 2015.

Councilor Flax stated that he was contacted by a Warren Avenue resident with an interest in having speed bumps installed on his street. Acting Town Manager Schneider explained that this request should be brought to the Traffic Authority and that he would forward any information to that body.

Councilor Granatosky mentioned an email that she received from Natalie Billing regarding the proposed cost for the reuse of Fitch Middle School. She attended the RTM Rules and Procedures Committee meeting on August 31, 2015. She reported that the committee would like to request the Town Council to appoint a Charter Revision Commission with the goal of including a budget referendum in the new Charter. She received a request for information from a citizen for an update on the proposed SEAT bus route changes. She asked the Town Council SEAT representative to give an update at the next meeting.

Mayor Schmidt attended the Public Safety Committee meeting on August 19, 2015, the planning meeting for the celebration of the Submarine Base 100th Anniversary on August 24, 2015, and a Senior Center trip to the Clark Museum to see the Van Gogh exhibit and Whistler's Mother on August 27, 2015.

b. Clerk of the Representative Town Meeting

The Town Clerk reported that the RTM Rules and Procedures Committee had met on August 31, 2015. The next regular RTM meeting will be on September 9, 2015 at 7:30 p.m., at the Groton Senior Center. She announced that the Schools Facilities Task Force will make a presentation at that meeting.

c. Clerk of the Council

The Town Clerk reported that the Registrar of Voters held a lottery to determine the ballot order for the November 3, 2015 Municipal Election on Monday, August 31, 2015.

d. Town Manager

Acting Town Manager Gary Schneider gave a briefing to the Council of the progress to provide water to the Noank School Public Garden. In response to Councilor Frink, Mr. Schneider explained that the cost of equipment and installation is estimated to be \$9,400.00.

Mayor Schmidt referred to an email that the Town Council received from the Human Services department. The communication was to alert the Town Council that produce has been pilfered from the community garden, either by animals or humans. They are asking for assistance to alleviate this problem.

In response to the question from Councilor de la Cruz, Mr. Schneider explained that the cost for the water installation will be paid with available funds that had been approved in the 2015 Capital Improvement Project for the demolition of the Noank School. He stated that part of the demolition project was to prepare a site for the public garden. He said that providing water is considered a necessary part of this project and that the accepted bid for the demolition of the school came in about \$45,000 lower than expected. The water project will be funded from this balance.

Councilor de la Cruz expressed his frustration with spending money on this project. He stated that the Council has had to cut funding for other projects that cost as little as \$900.00.

Councilor Granatosky announced that she works as a teacher at the Ella Grasso Technical High School and that the school has a fine Plumbing Department, Carpentry Department, and Electrical Department. She explained that these departments had just recently completed a project similar to what the Noank Public Garden needs. She suggested that Grasso students be considered for any future projects that are needed for the Noank Garden. She stated that this would provide a good experience for the students and it might cost less than an outside contractor.

VIII. COMMITTEE REPORTS**a. Community Relations - Chairman de la Cruz**

No report.

b. Finance - Chairman Frink

No report.

c. Personnel & Appointments - Chairman Flax

No report.

d. Rules - Chairman Frink

No report.

e. Public Safety - Chairman Moravsik

No report.

f. Committee of the Whole - Mayor Schmidt

No report.

IX. NEW BUSINESS**2015-0195 Request for Waiver of Building Permit Fees - Mystic Arts Center**

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE TOWN MANAGER TO SEND A LETTER TO THE MYSTIC ARTS CENTER DENYING A REQUEST FOR WAIVER OF A BUILDING PERMIT FEE

WHEREAS, the Mystic Arts Center, a non-profit 501(c)3 organization, requested a waiver of the \$510 building permit fee for the Mystic Arts Center roof replacement project, and

WHEREAS, the Town Council reviewed the Town Code of Ordinances Section 5-1 entitled "Fees for permits and certificate of occupancy" and determined that the Council does not have the authority to waive building permit fees on a case by case basis, and

WHEREAS, although the ordinance allows the Town Council to amend the fee schedule by ordinance, the Town Council has determined that it would not be in the Town's best interest to waive building permit fees for all non-profit organizations, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that Town Manager Mark R. Oefinger is authorized to send a letter to the Mystic Arts Center relaying the findings of the Town Council as noted in the resolution.

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

The motion carried unanimously

2015-0200

Senior Resources Title III Older Americans Grant

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE TOWN MANAGER OR HIS DESIGNEE TO SEEK A TITLE III OLDER AMERICANS GRANT THROUGH SENIOR RESOURCES TO SUPPORT A SENIOR LEARNING NETWORK ENRICHMENT PROGRAM

WHEREAS, the Senior Learning Network (SLN) recognizes the continuous learning needs of citizens by developing programming specifically designed for people age 55 and up, and

WHEREAS, the Groton Senior Center would like to establish a regular ongoing SLN program with program fees partially covered by grant funding in the first year and then fully funded by participant fees in subsequent years, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Groton Town Council hereby authorizes the Town Manager Mark R. Oefinger or his designee to seek funding in the amount of \$2,500 from the Title III Older Americans Grant program through Senior Resources which will be utilized by the Groton Senior Center to establish a Senior Learning Network program.

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

The motion carried unanimously

2015-0210

Conversion of High Pressure Sodium (HPS) Street Lights to LED

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE ACQUISITION OF STREET LIGHTS IN THE GROTON UTILITY SERVICE AREA AND EXPLORATION OF A PROJECT TO CONVERT STREET AND PARKING LOT LIGHTS TO LIGHT-EMITTING DIODE (LED)

WHEREAS, the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM) has undertaken an LED Street Light Retrofit Initiative and entered into service agreements with three qualified lighting contractors, and

WHEREAS, the conversion to LED lighting can significantly reduce energy and maintenance costs with an estimated payback period of four to eight years, depending on whether or not the municipality owns the street lights, and

WHEREAS, the Town currently owns all of the approximately 1400 street lights in the Eversource service area and has had informal discussions with Groton Utilities about purchasing the approximately 1100 street lights in their service area, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Town Manager Mark R. Oefinger is authorized to pursue the acquisition of the street lights in the Groton Utility service area, and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Director of Public Works is authorized to enter into discussions with the three CCM vetted contractors to develop a proposal for conversion of street and parking lot lights to LED, with the proposal to be reviewed by the Town Council.

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

The motion carried unanimously

2015-0212 Road Maintenance and Rehabilitation Program - Additional Roads For Calendar Year 2015

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING ADDITIONAL ROADS IN THE TOWN'S YEAR 3 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, 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 has asked to add Watrous Avenue, Wightman Avenue, and Hillside Drive to the roads previously authorized by the Town Council for the Year 3 program, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Town Council authorizes the addition of Watrous Avenue, Wightman Avenue, and Hillside Drive to the Year 3 Road Maintenance and Rehabilitation Program for the Town of Groton.

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

In response to Councilor Flax, Mr. Schneider reviewed the schedule for the third year of the road program. He explained that the bridge construction on North Stonington Road and the water main work on High Street would require the Town to delay road work for these streets. He stated that the three new roads to be approved were not identified in the original Road Maintenance and Rehabilitation Program, but that they now are in need of resurfacing.

Councilor Granatosky referred to the map in the Committee of the Whole packet that depicts the three streets, Watrous Avenue, Wightman Avenue and Hillside Drive. She stated that these streets are connected to make a loop. She stated that in her opinion it would be wise to keep the pavement even.

In response to Councilor Moravsik, Mr. Schneider stated that the Traffic Authority will be reviewing Mr. Parker's request for the removal of curbing on Prospect Hill Road.

The motion carried unanimously

2015-0213 Request for Waiver of Land Use Permit Fees - Christ United Methodist Church

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE TOWN MANAGER TO SEND A LETTER TO CHRIST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH DENYING A REQUEST FOR WAIVER OF LAND USE APPLICATION FEES

WHEREAS, Christ United Methodist Church, a non-profit ecclesiastical association, requested a waiver of the fees associated with a variance application for a freestanding sign at the intersection of Hazelnut Hill Road and Route 117, and

WHEREAS, the Town Council reviewed the Town Code of Ordinances Section 2-86 entitled "Permit, application fees" and determined that the ordinance only exempts "boards, commissions, councils, and departments of the Town of Groton" from fee requirements, and

WHEREAS, in addition to lacking the authority to grant a waiver, the Town Council feels it would not be in the Town's best interest to waive land use application fees for all non-profit organizations, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that Town Manager Mark R. Oefinger is authorized to send a letter to Christ United Methodist Church relaying the findings of the Town Council as noted in the resolution.

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

The motion carried unanimously

X. OTHER BUSINESS

In response to Councilor Flax, Mr. Schneider stated that he does not know if the Town has hired a consultant to review potential reuse of the Mystic Education Center facility. He explained that he will provide information to the Council regarding the consultants VHB and Camoin Associates.

Councilor de la Cruz stated that a better use of the funds, instead of installing water for the Noank Community Garden, would be to give the money to the Community Soup Kitchen. He stated as an example the needs of TVCCA for their support for housing to be \$9,000 for the year compared to the \$10,000 needed for the Noank Community Garden water installation. He stated that he expected the Community Garden to raise funds for their projects.

Councilor Moravsik stated that any more funding proposed for the Noank Public Garden needs to be approved by the Town Council.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

Councilor Watson made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Councilor Moravsik. Seeing no objection, Mayor Schmidt adjourned the meeting at 8:06 p.m.

Attest:

*Betsy Moukawsher, Town Clerk
Clerk of the Council*