



Town of Groton, Connecticut

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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

Tuesday, November 1, 2016

7:30 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

REGULAR MEETING

Mayor Flax called the meeting to order at 7:31 p.m.

I. ROLL CALL

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

Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger and Town Clerk Betsy Moukawsher.

II. SALUTE TO THE FLAG

The Salute to the Flag was observed.

III. RECOGNITION, AWARDS & MEMORIALS

None.

IV. RECEIPT OF CITIZENS' PETITIONS, COMMENTS AND CONCERNS

Kevin Trejo, 536 Shennecossett Road, stated that he is a member of the Groton Schools 2020 PAC. He explained his support for the referendum that is on the November 8, 2016 election ballot. He encouraged the members of the Town Council and the general public to support the referendum.

Craig Koehler, 263 Brook Street, Noank, introduced himself as the Chairman of the School Facilities Initiative Task Force and the Co-Chair of the Groton Schools 2020 PAC. He stated his rationale for supporting the referendum. He announced the web site Groton2020.org and encouraged people to use the estimator on the website, which calculates individual tax increases over the course of the debt. He encouraged the Town Council to discuss any proposed uses of the three abandoned schools, should the referendum pass. He questioned the method of delivery for the explanatory text. He suggested that something of the magnitude of this referendum should have been mailed to the voters.

V. RESPONSES TO CITIZENS' PETITIONS, COMMENTS AND CONCERNS

In response to Councilor Nault, Town Clerk Betsy Moukawsher stated that the Town Council had authorized the development and delivery of the approved explanatory text. She stated that past methods of delivery only targeted registered voters. She stated that the current method ensures delivery of the text to every household in Groton. She stated that the explanatory text was inserted into the Mystic and Groton Times and delivered to every household in Groton and Mystic on October 20, 2016.

Councilor Antipas stated that it has been a tradition for Town Councilors to be reticent in discussing the pros and cons of a referendum. He stated that he is observing this tradition.

Councilor Peruzzotti stated that every referendum decision comes in front of the Town Council. She explained that the majority always rules and that Town Councilors must stand by the majority. She stated that what is done in their personal lives, through the media, is their personal choice as long as they continue to explain the Town Council's support for the project.

Councilor Watson stated that once the Town Council passes an ordinance, they have to be careful about spending town funds rooting for one way or another. He stated that the televised Town Council meetings use town funds by way of paying someone to record the meetings.

Councilor Antipas clarified that he is not carrying on the fight of the minority. He stated that the last vote that the Town Council took was to put the Ordinance on the ballot as a referendum. He stated that if he is asked of his opinion as a Town Councilor, he states that the Town Council is in favor of the Ordinance. He stated that he is reticent to state his position other than that of a Town Councilor.

Councilor Nault stated that she attended the Groton School 2020 PAC meeting on October 27, 2016 where she stated her personal opinion. She believes she is entitled to state her opinion because she votes in town. She stated that people may have known her to be a Town Councilor, but she did not introduce herself as one when she got up to speak at the forum.

Mayor Flax stated that Councilor Watson's point is that the Town Council meetings are broadcast using town funds. He stated that Town Councilors may express their views at open meetings.

VI. CONSENT CALENDAR

a. Approval of Minutes

2016-0259 Approval of Minutes (Town Council)

RESOLUTION ACCEPTING TOWN COUNCIL MINUTES

RESOLVED, that the minutes of the Town Council meeting of October 18, 2016 are hereby accepted and approved.

This Matter was Adopted on the Consent Calendar.

b. Deletions from the Town Council Referral List

2013-0249 Parking Ticket Fees

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

2016-0254 Recreation Trails Grant

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

2016-0256 Merritt Property Conversion

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 Morton, seconded by Councilor Nault, 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 Nault reported that she attended the Groton Utilities meeting on October 26, 2016, the Millennial and Senior Housing forum at Three Rivers Community College on October 26, 2016, the Groton Schools 2020 PAC meeting on October 27, 2016, and the Coast Guard Regimental Review on October 28, 2016.

Councilor Morton commented on an email exchange between Ledyard Police Chief Rich and the Town of Groton Chief Fusaro indicating that the new holding facility at the Ledyard Police Station is open for business. She stated that this illustrates the bond between all local police departments.

Councilor Antipas reported that he attended the Rev. Martin Luther King Scholarship Awards dinner

on October 20, 2016. He stated that he had to miss, on the same night, the quarterly meeting of the Southeastern CT Water Authority Advisory Board. He stated that he attended the Commissioning of the U.S.S. Illinois on October 29, 2016. He announced that he handed out a portion of the Town Council December 12, 2008 meeting minutes to illustrate that the Town Council continues to discuss basically the same issues in trying to develop budget guidelines.

Mayor Flax reported that he also attending the Martin Luther King dinner. He stated that he attended an S.B. Butler PTO meeting. He reported that he attended a Council of Governments meeting on October 19, 2016. He reported that he also attended the October 29, 2016 Commissioning of the U.S.S Illinois. He stated that the Committee of the Whole will meet with the Board of Education on November 15, 2016 at 6:00 p.m. prior to the regular Town Council meeting. He announced that there will be a joint meeting with the RTM on November 16, 2016 at 7:00 p.m. at the Senior Center to have a general discussion regarding the budget.

b. Clerk of the Representative Town Meeting

Town Clerk Betsy Moukawsher announced that the next RTM meeting is scheduled for November 9, 2016 at the Groton Senior Center at 7:30 p.m. where they will discuss referral 2016-0236 Fiscal Year Ending 2017 Contingency Transfer for United Steelworkers Wages.

c. Clerk of the Council

Town Clerk Betsy Moukawsher reported that absentee ballots are still available for anyone who will be unable to vote in person at the November 8, 2016 election during normal voting hours. She stated that as of November 1, 1368 ballots had been issued. She reported that Groton Animal Control Officers have been conducting a door-to-door campaign sporadically throughout the town. She reported receiving two reappointment applications from the Democratic Town Committee, which were forwarded to the Appointments and Personnel Committee. She reported that she attended the promotion ceremony for Patrol Sergeant Richard Sawyer and administered the oath of office on October 27, 2016. She announced a communication from RTM Moderator Scott Newsome to schedule a joint meeting with the RTM and Town Council for November 16 at 7:00 p.m. She reported that the multi-purpose room at the Groton Senior Center has been reserved for this meeting.

d. Town Manager

Town Manager Mark Oefinger reviewed the upcoming November 9, 2016 Committee of the Whole meeting and the items for the agenda.

Councilor Peruzzotti requested information regarding a metal fence that has been erected on property across the street from Long Hill Pharmacy. Town Manager Mark Oefinger stated that he is aware of this issue and that it is under review.

VIII. COMMITTEE REPORTS

a. Personnel & Appointments - Chairman Watson

No meeting, no report.

b. Rules - Chairman Antipas

Chairman Antipas announced an item to discuss in committee regarding new business at meetings. He stated that he plans to call a meeting for the purpose of discussing this item.

Mayor Flax announced that the Town Council/City Council/RTM/ Board of Education Liaison Committee met on October 5, 2016. They will be meeting again on November 2, 2016 at the School Administration Building. He stated that minutes are on file at the Town Clerk's office.

c. Committee of the Whole - Mayor Flax

Mayor Flax announced the Committee of the Whole met the previous week to discuss many items along with the items on tonight's agenda.

IX. NEW BUSINESS

2013-0249 Parking Ticket Fees

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING PREPARATION OF AN ORDINANCE FOR PARKING VIOLATION, NON-RESIDENT FINGERPRINT, SOLICITOR PERMIT, AND ANIMAL CONTROL FEES

WHEREAS, the Town Council has considered increasing and/or establishing various fees in the Police Department as authorized by Connecticut General Statutes, and

WHEREAS, a survey of surrounding towns' fees revealed that increasing the Town of Groton's fees would make them consistent with other towns in the region, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Town Council authorizes and directs Town staff and the Town Attorney to prepare an ordinance for parking violation, non-resident fingerprint, solicitor permit, and animal control fees for the Town Council's review.

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

Councilor Antipas stated that his concern with raising fees is that it would impact residents that could least afford them, without creating any real revenue for the Town and no deterrence either. He stated that as the proposal was presented, the fee increases would be a deterrent. He would support the fee increases to be used as a deterrent.

Councilor Watson stated that this is just another example of our Chief of Police stepping up and doing a good job in getting things to where they should be.

The motion carried unanimously

2016-0254 Recreation Trails Grant

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE SUBMISSION OF A RECREATION TRAILS GRANT APPLICATION

WHEREAS, Groton Parks and Recreation is seeking authorization to apply for a \$100,000 grant from the State of Connecticut to fund the construction of two trail projects within the Copp Family Park, and

WHEREAS, the total project cost is \$125,000 with the Town's required 20% match of \$25,000 coming from funds approved in the FYE 2015 Capital Improvement Program, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that Town Manager Mark R. Oefinger or his designee is authorized to apply for a grant in the amount of \$100,000 from the State of Connecticut Recreation Trails Grant program for two trail construction projects within the Copp Family Park.

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

The motion carried unanimously

2016-0256 Merritt Property Conversion

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING APPROVAL OF MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING FOR CONVERSION OF MERRITT PROPERTY TO NON-CONSERVATION USE

WHEREAS, the Town of Groton purchased the Merritt property on Fort Hill Road/Groton Long Point Road for the future construction of recreation fields, and

WHEREAS, the Town of Groton proposes to build a new combined middle school on the Merritt property consistent with the Groton 2020 School Plan, and

WHEREAS, the Town of Groton is proposing to substitute the Boulder Heights property located at the end of Colver Avenue for the Merritt property for future recreation use, and

WHEREAS, in the future the Town will plan for the development of recreational trails and/or fields at the Boulder Heights property, and

WHEREAS, these proposed changes will serve the needs of the Town, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Town Council hereby authorizes the Town Manager to sign a Memorandum of Understanding and all other necessary documentation between the Town of Groton and the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection to remove the recreation and conservation restrictions on the Merritt property.

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

Councilor Grim asked for and received confirmation of the Town Council's trigger authority regarding the ordinance if the referendum passes.

The motion carried unanimously

X. ADJOURNMENT

Councilor Watson made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Councilor Nault. Mayor Flax adjourned the meeting at 8:10 p.m.

Attest:

*Town Clerk Betsy Moukawsher
Clerk of the Town Council*