



Town of Groton, Connecticut

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Meeting Minutes

Town Council

Mayor Harry A. Watson, Councilors Peter J. Bartinik, Jr., Natalie Burfoot Billing, Heather Sherman Bond, Catherine Kolnaski, Frank O'Beirne, Jr., Paulann H. Sheets, Thomas J. Skrmetti, and Elissa T. Wright.

Tuesday, March 1, 2005

7:30 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

REGULAR MEETING

I. ROLL CALL

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

Members Present: Mayor Watson, Councilor Bartinik, Jr., Councilor Billing, Councilor Bond, Councilor O'Beirne, Jr. and Councilor Wright

Members Absent: Councilor Kolnaski, Councilor Sheets and Councilor Skrmetti

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

II. SALUTE TO THE FLAG

The Salute to the Flag was led by Police Officer Bill Jervis.

III. RECOGNITION, AWARDS & MEMORIALS

2005-0034 Proclamation Recognizing the Groton Board of Education

Read

Mayor Watson read a proclamation honoring the Board of Education.

PUBLIC HEARING

Town Clerk Barbara Tarbox read the Notice of Public Hearing that appeared in The Day on February 17, 2005.

Recess for Public Hearing on:

2005-0027 Resolution Setting Public Hearing on Ordinance Regarding Alcohol Possession by Minors

Heard at Public Hearing

Mayor Watson called a recess for the Public Hearing at 7:35 p.m.

Kerenza Knowles, Community Health Coordinator for Ledge Light Health District, summarized a letter she received from the Glastonbury Police Department. The letter explains how and why the Town of Glastonbury implemented an ordinance regarding underage drinking in 1999. Ms. Knowles spoke in support of the Town of Groton adopting a similar ordinance. She noted that the Towns that have adopted an underage drinking ordinance have seen a drastic decrease in large-scale unsupervised parties and criminal activity. It will also help the police perform their duties to combat underage drinking.

Martha Reynolds, 1684 Center Groton Road, Ledyard, a teacher at Fitch High School, spoke in support of the Town adopting an underage drinking ordinance. Ms. Reynolds is also a member of the Groton Adolescent Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition (GASP) that supports the proposed ordinance.

Francis "Sam" Crowley, Director of Ledge Light Health District, stated he strongly supports adopting the proposed underage drinking ordinance.

Bill Jervis, 75 Shennecossett Parkway, a police officer for the Town of Groton, and a member of the GASP Coalition, spoke in support of adopting the underage drinking ordinance. He noted that it would strengthen local prevention efforts to curtail underage drinking in private residences. Mr. Jervis feels that the ordinance would help promote positive attitudes and behaviors that will ensure the safety and well being of the Town's youth.

Geralyn Laut, 103 Sleepy Hollow Drive, Glastonbury, noted that the Town of Glastonbury took a reactive approach to passing an underage drinking ordinance in 1999. It was only after a double homicide had occurred at an unsupervised house party involving alcohol that the Town of Glastonbury adopted the underage drinking ordinance. Ms. Laut commended the Town of Groton for taking a proactive approach instead of waiting until a tragedy occurs to implement an underage drinking ordinance.

Frank Dawson, 104 Ring Drive, a member of the Groton Long Point police, noted that the GLP Police are in favor of adopting the underage drinking ordinance. It will help raise awareness and concern in the adult community, as well as let minors know that underage drinking is neither acceptable behavior nor the social norm.

Mayor Watson closed the Public Hearing at 7:50 p.m.

IV. CITIZENS' PETITIONS, COMMENTS AND CONCERNS

Diane Marley, Crosswinds Drive, commented on Councilor Billing's opinion regarding the flyer that the GGG PAC inserted in a recent edition of the Mystic River Press. Ms. Marley does not agree with Councilor Billing's opinion that property taxes have not significantly increased over the past ten years. She noted that the GGG PAC has spent numerous hours working to improve cost control and efficiency of Town Departments.

Ed Ettinger, Cedar Street, Mystic, would like to see commercial properties taxed at a higher level. He feels that residential homes are being taxed too heavily. Mr. Ettinger talked about different options that the Town should consider using for revenue.

Robert Schneider, Main Street, Noank, a member of the Groton Open Space Association, expressed his concerns about flaws in the process that led to the Zoning Commission's three to one vote on February 2, to approve the zoning amendment that created Active Senior Housing. He recommended that a definition of buildable land be inserted into the Active Senior Housing amendment as soon as possible.

Edith Fairgrieve, 8 Rowland Street, a Director of the Groton Open Space Association, asked that several parcels of land purchased by the Town in the late 1980's be designated on the Land Records as open space. Ms. Fairgrieve would also like to see any extra monies taken in from real estate conveyance taxes used as a start-up for the new Land Acquisition Fund.

John Sutherland, 32 Neptune Drive, disagrees with statements regarding the Town's budget in the last ten years as made by Councilor Billing. Mr. Sutherland noted his own facts and figures from the years 1995 to 2005. He feels that the Town Council should look at the process of controlling expenditures more closely. He noted that the GGG PAC is interested in responsible conservative government.

V. RESPONSES TO CITIZENS' PETITIONS, COMMENTS AND CONCERNS

Councilor O'Beirne would like to meet with members of the Groton Good Government (GGG) PAC to review their budget figures

VI. CONSENT CALENDAR

A motion to approve the consent calendar was made by Councilor O'Beirne, seconded by Councilor Bartinik.

Motion to Amend Consent Calendar

A Motion to Amend the Consent Calendar in order not to delete Item 2004-0325, Recognition of John Ledyard, was made by Councilor Wright, seconded by Councilor Bartinik. The Vote on Amending the Consent Calendar failed 4 in favor, 2 opposed. (Opposed: Councilors Billing, O'Beirne)

a. Approval of Minutes**2005-0053 Approval of Minutes (Town Council)**

RESOLUTION ACCEPTING TOWN COUNCIL MINUTES

RESOLVED, that the minutes of the Town Council of February 15, 2005 are hereby accepted and approved.

b. Deletions from the Town Council Referral List

- 1997-0006 Passive Recreation**
- 2001-0072 Review of Ambulance Response and Responsibilities**
- 2003-0067 Establishment of Open Space Land Acquisition Fund**
- 2003-0077 Bluff Point Management Proposal**
- 2003-0203 Review of Board of Assessment Appeals (BAA) Deliberations**
- 2003-0226 Council Policy in Regards to Responding to Citizens' Petitions**
- 2004-0005 Revised Position Descriptions (2004 Standing Referral)**
- 2004-0006 2004 Unaffiliated and Other Appointments (Standing Referral)**
- 2004-0007 2004 Republican Town Committee Appointments (Standing Referral)**
- 2004-0008 2004 Democratic Town Committee Appointments (Standing Referral)**
- 2004-0096 Future Polling Locations**
- 2004-0217 Bulky Waste Permits**
- 2004-0325 Recognition of John Ledyard**
- 2004-0326 Appropriateness of Individual Councilors Evaluating the Town Manager in Public**
- 2005-0011 Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan**
- 2005-0040 Fitch Chamber Choir Carnegie Hall Trip - Donation Request**
- 2005-0045 Meals on Wheels Provider for Senior Center**
- 2005-0050 Assistance in Open Space Funding**
- 2005-0051 Setting Public Hearing Date on FYE06 Proposed Budget**

c. Special Trust Fund Contributions**2005-0048 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 Marriott and Spa - \$250.00 - Police Discretionary
 Various Donations - \$350.00 - Groton Utilities Energy Assistance Program
 City of Groton - \$488.26 - Groton Utilities Energy Assistance Program

The vote to accept the consent calendar failed 3 in favor, 3 opposed. (Opposed: Councilors Bartinik, Bond, Wright)

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

Councilor O'Beirne and other members of the SUBBASE Realignment Commission met with Governor Rell. Discussion pertained to the possibility that the submarine base may be closed in

2005.

Councilor O'Beirne received several emails: regarding the GGG PAC tax flyer, concerning vandalism in Noank, regarding the purchase of the Burrows property, and requesting funding for the Fitch High School's Choir trip to Carnegie Hall.

Councilor Wright received the same emails as Councilor O'Beirne. She also received an email supporting the purchase of land to be designated as open space. She attended a joint meeting between the Shellfish Task Force and the Sewer Authority concerning the re-routing of sewers in the Fort Hill Homes neighborhood. She noted a letter from Wil Langdon concerning a retaining wall on Route 1 in Mystic which was included in the Town Manager's recent report.

Councilors Bartinik, Bond, and Billing received the same communications as the other councilors.

Mayor Watson attended the Commissioning and Reception ceremonies for the USS Jimmy Carter on February 19. He went to the ground-breaking ceremony for the privatization of Navy Housing on February 16. Mayor Watson attended the COG and GASP Coalition meetings on February 16.

b. Representative Town Meeting

Town Clerk Barbara Tarbox noted that the RTM meeting scheduled for Wednesday, March 9 has been cancelled due to lack of business.

c. Clerk of the Council

Clerk of the Council Barbara Tarbox attended a Public Hearing at the State Legislature. She and other Town Clerks testified about a proposed increase in vitals fees and maintaining the local conveyance tax at .0050.

d. Town Manager

Town Manager Mark Oefinger would like to cancel Group I and Group II meetings for next week in order to start a special COW meeting on March 8, 2005 at 6 p.m.

Mr. Oefinger proposed having the majority of budget accounts review on Saturdays. He feels Saturdays tend to be more productive. Approximately six or seven meetings will be scheduled in order to review the FYE 2006 budget thoroughly.

Town Manager Oefinger was pleased to announce that the Groton Library has received the 2005 Award for Library Excellence, which is given to only a handful of libraries in the State each year. The award ceremony will be held on April 2 at the State Library.

Assistant to the Town Manager Lee Vincent noted that the Town has been waiting since 1999 for the Noank Hatchery property to be approved by the State.

e. Town Attorney

None.

VIII. COMMITTEE REPORTS

a. Community & Cultural Development - Chairman Billing

Chairman Billing read the minutes of the committee meeting held on February 22, which are on file in the Town Clerk's office.

b. Economic Development - Chairman Bond

Chairman Bond read the minutes of the committee meeting held on February 22, which are on file in the Town Clerk's office.

c. Education/Health & Social Services - Chairman Kolnaski

No meeting. No report.

d. Environment & Recreation - Chairman Sheets

No meeting. No report.

e. Finance - Chairman Wright

Chairman Wright read the minutes of the committee meeting held on February 22, which are on file in the Town Clerk's office.

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

No meeting. No report.

g. Public Safety - Chairman Skrmetti

No meeting. No report.

h. Public Works - Chairman Bartinik

No meeting. No report.

i. Committee of the Whole - Mayor Watson

Mayor Watson summarized the Committee of the Whole meeting, which was held on February 22, 2005.

IX. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

X. NEW BUSINESS**2005-0011 Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan****RESOLUTION APPROVING THE REGIONAL HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN**

WHEREAS, the Town of Groton has participated as a member of the Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments' Regional Hazard Mitigation Planning process;

WHEREAS, the Regional Hazard Mitigation Steering Committee has overseen preparation of a recommended Southeastern Connecticut Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan and Community Annex for the Town of Groton;

WHEREAS, the Regional Plan and Community Annex have been publicized and made available for review by the Region's residents, neighboring communities and the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection;

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Connecticut Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan and the Community Annex for the Town of Groton is hereby adopted as an official plan of the Town of Groton and be it,

FURTHER RESOLVED that the Manager of Emergency Communication/Emergency Director is charged with supervising the implementation of the plan's recommendations within funding limitation as provided by the Town or other sources and be it,

FURTHER RESOLVED that the Manager of Emergency Communication/Emergency Director shall annually monitor implementation of the plan and shall submit a written progress report to this governing body.

A motion was made by Councilor Bartinik, Jr., seconded by Councilor Wright, that this matter be Adopted.

In response to Councilor Billing's question, Town Manager Mark Oefinger noted that Emergency Communications Manager Joe Sastre will address any budgetary obstacles.

The motion carried unanimously.

2005-0040 Fitch Chamber Choir Carnegie Hall Trip - Donation Request**RESOLUTION APPROVING FUNDING FOR THE FITCH HIGH SCHOOL CHAMBER**

CHOIR

WHEREAS, the Fitch Senior High School Chamber Choir is one of only five choirs in the nation to be invited to perform at Carnegie Hall in New York City, and

WHEREAS, the Chamber Choir has been invited by the music director whose works they have performed in concert, and

WHEREAS, the expenses of the proposed trip to New York are in furtherance of a significant educational objective and will also bring considerable honor to the Town of Groton, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the amount of \$500 be expended from funds already appropriated to the Town Council in Cost Center 10010-5230.

A motion was made by Councilor Billing, seconded by Councilor Bond, that this matter be Adopted.

While Councilor Billing voted in opposition to this resolution in COW, she feels that she should represent the majority who have voted in favor.

Councilor O'Beirne is opposed to this motion; he feels that the Board of Education budget includes funds for exactly this purpose.

The motion failed by the following vote:

Votes: In Favor: 4 - Mayor Watson, Councilor Billing, Councilor Bond and Councilor Wright
Opposed: 2 - Councilor Bartinik, Jr. and Councilor O'Beirne, Jr.

2005-0045 Meals on Wheels Provider for Senior Center

Not acted upon

Town Manager Oefinger noted he will obtain more information for the Town Council regarding this item. No motion was made.

2005-0050 Assistance in Open Space Funding

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING COLLABORATION WITH THE TRUST FOR PUBLIC LANDS TO AID IN ACQUISITION OF OPEN SPACE AND RECREATIONAL LAND

WHEREAS, the Town of Groton has been offered the opportunity to purchase desirable land overlooking the Thames River, and

WHEREAS, THE Town Council wishes to explore all feasible ways and means of acquiring this property, and

WHEREAS, open space and related funding programs may be available from the State of Connecticut, from the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and from other sources, and

WHEREAS, obtaining and utilizing various grant funds for such a purpose is complex and time consuming, and

WHEREAS, the Trust for Public Lands is a valuable resource with accumulated knowledge and expertise, and have offered their services in land appraisal and grant writing as part of their national program to promote local ownership of desirable public spaces, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Town Manager may use the Trust for Public Lands to prepare grant applications and to advise/assist the town on other related matters.

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

The motion carried unanimously.

2005-0051 Setting Public Hearing Date on FYE06 Proposed Budget

RESOLUTION SETTING PUBLIC HEARING DATE ON FYE06 PROPOSED BUDGET

RESOLVED, that the Groton Town Council will hold a public hearing on the FYE-2006 Annual Town Budget, pursuant to Section 8.4.1 of the Town Charter, on Tuesday, March 29, 2005 at 7:00 P.M. at the Groton Senior Center, 102 Newtown Road (Route 117), Groton, Connecticut.

A motion was made by Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., seconded by Councilor Wright, that this matter be Adopted.

The motion carried unanimously.

XI. OTHER BUSINESS

None.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to Adjourn at 9:20 p.m. was made by Mayor Watson, seconded by Councilor Billing and so voted unanimously.

Attest:

*Barbara Tarbox, Town Clerk
Clerk of the Council*

Maegan Paquette, Office Assistant