



# 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 Committee of the Whole

**Mayor Harry A. Watson, Councilors Peter J. Bartinik, Jr., Heather Sherman Bond, Catherine Kolnaski, Frank O'Beirne, Jr., John F. Scott, Paulann H. Sheets, James L. Streeter, and Elissa T. Wright.**

Tuesday, January 17, 2006

6:00 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

#### SPECIAL MEETING

#### 1. CALL TO ORDER

*The meeting convened at 6:00 p.m.*

#### 2. ROLL CALL

Members Present: Mayor Watson, Councilor Bartinik, Jr., Councilor Bond, Councilor Kolnaski, Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., Councilor Sheets, Councilor Streeter and Councilor Wright  
Members Absent: Councilor Scott

*Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger and Assistant to the Town Manager Lee Vincent.*

*Legislators: Senator Cathy Cook, Representative Ed Moukawsher, Representative Lemmy Winkler*

#### 3. NEW BUSINESS

##### 2006-0007 Legislative Policy (2006 Standing Referral)

*Moukawsher said that towns will get a larger Pequot-Mohegan Fund cut this year (FY 2007). There will definitely be more money from the state. It's still not adequate, but he is still trying to get the state's total municipal aid back to a better level.*

*Winkler said she has doubts about the state's municipal aid and spending level and doesn't estimate the outcome as optimistically as Mr. Moukawsher. She said that Groton is the only town of the 169 that suffers a shortfall of \$6,000,000 in Federal aid, compared to its costs for hosting a major Federal activity.*

*Cook said that the General Assembly will convene on February 8 for a limited session of 100 days, in which only bills that affect the fiscal picture are considered. February 10 is the deadline for new bills in any case. Sen. Cook said that they were given a long-range outlook from OPM: There will be a further surplus for two to three years, followed by a "precipitous drop" as the Baby-Boomers start to drop out of their high-paid jobs. So we can use a very large Rainy-Day Fund. We have to look toward carrying out a ten-year plan for unfunded pensions, and that mission will deprive all the rest of the list of possible spending.*

*Discussion of ECS: Sheets, Kolnaski and Winkler were on the Board of Education together, at which time they voted for significant advances in teachers' pay, depending on the expectation of a steady commitment of the state to pay ECS. The question is, why can't we demand that the state follow-through on its promises? Kolnaski observed that better ECS is the best key to property tax relief.*

*Cook said that the Governor has a Task Force on Unfunded Mandates, and we should help look for them. She said that local sales tax will be considered, with more allowed for regional deals.*

*O'Beirne observed that ten years ago we got \$22,000,000 for ECS, and in the latest year, it had just moved up to \$24,000,000. That steady level of ECS funds means that the state's share has fallen from one-half to one-third of Groton's schools budget. O'Beirne asked, why not loose the*

towns to devise their own methods and schedules for revaluations. Sen. Cook said that some towns were extremely irresponsible about doing revaluations, so they will not be trusted to do it right.

Moukawsher added that it is not just a problem about ECS; he said that of all of the programs that have embodied grant promises for the towns, every one of them has been broken.

Wright stated that the state's tax structure is atavistic: it reflects a largely manufacturing economy that existed in the past, but now we have a mostly service economy. She said we should ask our legislature to look to setting a limitation on municipal tax rates, or on the grand list, or better in the grand levy. Wright cited a study by Professor Pomp(?) of UConn law School, who says that the state's tax and appropriation and entitlement structure allows \$45 billion in "tax expenditures" annually and, worse, that the huge amount of tax expenditures gets essentially no review. Cook responded that in fact OFA is doing that now.

Wright also asked about getting impact fees when new developments are started. Oefinger added that in some other states it is a common practice that involved negotiations between towns and developers.

Watson urged the three legislators to be sure to keep us on the priority list, all the way through the bonding process, for our WPCA project.

Cook announced that the US Coast Guard R&D Center will go ahead at Avery Point, and they will be moving into their own building there. UConn will build the structure and lease it to the Coast Guard. It will be on the parking lot by the current police station.

Councilors expressed a desire to meet again soon so we can cover other important items on our discussion list, and Mr. Vincent is supposed to coordinate the scheduling. It was also noted that Mr. Vincent expects to meet separately with Sen. Cook soon on other matters of more state-wide concern.

#### 4. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:17 p.m.