



Town of Groton, Connecticut

45 Fort Hill Road
Groton, CT 06340-4394
Town Clerk (860)441-6640
Town Manager
(860)441-6630

Meeting Minutes

Representative Town Meeting

Moderator Rita Schmidt

Representatives Joe Baril, Tom Barnhart, Lori Bartinik, Alicia Bauer, Genevieve Cerf, Michael Collins, Syma Ebbin, Peter Fairbank, Robert Garcia, Patrice Granatosky, Dolores Harrell, Debra Jenkins, Carole McCarthy, Kevin McMahon, Richard Metayer, David Miner, Deborah Monteiro, James Moulding, Scott Newsome, Nora Patterson, Deborah Peruzzotti, Joy Plunket, Robert Post, Kevin Power, Don Pratt, Mary-Ellen Schefers, Eleanor Scussel, Jack Sebastian, Jennifer Smuts, Eleanor Steere, Fritz Stein, Joan Steinfeld, Irma Streeter, Mark Svencer, Patti Thunberg, Cheryl Tilney, Kevin Trejo, Tom Vivirito, Robert Walker Sr, and John Wheeler.

Thursday, May 25, 2006

6:00 PM

Senior Center

Special Meeting

A. ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Moderator Rita Schmidt.

28 Members were present at roll call and a quorum was declared.

(Reps. Collins and Plunket arrived at 6:10, bringing the total number of members present to 30.)

Members Present: Moderator Schmidt, Rep. Baril, Rep. Bartinik, Rep. Collins, Rep. Ebbin, Rep. Fairbank, Rep. Granatosky, Rep. Harrell, Rep. Jenkins, Rep. McCarthy, Rep. Miner, Rep. Monteiro, Rep. Moulding, Rep. Newsome, Rep. Patterson, Rep. Plunket, Rep. Post, Rep. Power, Rep. Pratt, Rep. Schefers, Rep. Sebastian, Rep. Smuts, Rep. Steere, Rep. Stein, Rep. Steinfeld, Rep. Streeter, Rep. Tilney, Rep. Trejo, Rep. Vivirito and Rep. Wheeler, Jr.

Members Absent: Rep. Barnhart, Rep. Bauer, Rep. Cerf, Rep. Garcia, Rep. McMahon, Rep. Metayer, Rep. Peruzzotti, Rep. Scussel, Rep. Svencer, Rep. Thunberg and Rep. Walker, Sr.

Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Finance Director Sal Pandolfo, Town Attorney Mike Carey, and Deputy Town Clerk Janet Downs.

Reps. Barnhart, Cerf, Garcia, Peruzzotti, Scussel, Svencer, Thunberg and Walker had indicated that they would be unable to attend this meeting.

2006-0173

Adjustment to Adopted 2006-2007 Annual Budget

RESOLUTION ADJUSTING THE 2006-2007 ANNUAL BUDGET ADOPTED BY THE REPRESENTATIVE TOWN MEETING IN MAY 2006

WHEREAS, the Town Manager's recommended General Fund budget for Fiscal Year 2006-2007 was \$109,975,249, and the Town Council's approved budget was \$109,100,809, and

WHEREAS the Representative Town Meeting adopted a General Fund budget for Fiscal Year 2006-2007 which totaled \$110,155,434, thereby exceeding the greater of the totals proposed by the Manager or the Council by \$180,185, and

WHEREAS, Section 8.5 of the Town Charter, "Financial powers of the representative town meeting," requires that "in no case can the final total of the budget or of any bond issue be greater than that proposed by the manager (including the board of education budget) or the town council, whichever is greater," now therefore be it,

RESOLVED, that Account 1075 (Capital Reserves) be amended to the amount of \$1,379,465, reflecting a total decrease of \$180,185, so that the General Fund budget for Fiscal Year 2006-2007 is \$109,975,249.

A motion was made by Moderator Schmidt, seconded by Rep. Fairbank, that this matter be Adopted.

Rep. Sebastian asked what the other options may be and commented that he feels the RTM is "being spoon-fed" the suggestion to cut Capital Reserve.

Rep. Miner asked the Town Manager to explain the situation and how it came about.

Town Manager Oefinger apologized for the fact that this situation arose and explained that during the budget sessions, the focus was on the individual functions to ensure that the RTM's number was not greater than the higher of the Manager's number and the Council's number. In focusing on the individual functions, everyone lost sight of the fact that the RTM's bottom line was higher than both numbers.

Mr. Oefinger noted that a similar situation arose in 1995 and the corrective action taken was very similar to that being considered in this situation. He added that the RTM is still within the time constraints imposed by the Charter to take action on this matter. He has proposed that the necessary cut be made in the Capital Reserve Account (1075) which is a "savings account" for future projects and which historically, has had more money than needed in any one year. The Manager noted that in his opinion, taking the money from this account would create the least amount of damage and disruption. He considered suggesting taking the funds from Contingency, but some RTM members feel that this account is already under-funded. In addition, Capital Reserve is an account that was considered at the last budget session, and RTM practice has been to allow reconsideration of an account only at the same session or the next session. He again apologized for the mistake and noted that it was not his intent to "spoon feed" the RTM, but that in his opinion, this is the best place to cut. The RTM has the right, he added, to cut in other areas if it chooses. He reminded the RTM that he has no right, as some have suggested, to recommend cuts to the education budget and that in deciding on this recommendation, he considered the fact that the RTM chose to restore funds for education. He cautioned that the more extensive the discussion and subsequent action become, the higher the risk of making additional errors. He feels that his recommendation is the "lesser of the evils."

Responding to a comment from Rep. Pratt, the Manager confirmed that if necessary, the Council and RTM could vote for a supplemental appropriation for the funding of capital projects. The funding to be cut is money that would be carried over to next year. In addition, this is a common account that is used to fund projects for both Town Operations and the Board of Education.

Mr. Oefinger noted that this matter has been discussed extensively with both Finance Director Sal Pandolfo and Town Attorney Mike Carey, and that they are present to answer any questions.

Responding to a question from Rep. Power, the Town Manager explained that there are no bond ratings that are dependent on the size of the Capital Reserve.

In answer to Rep. Sebastian, the Moderator confirmed that the RTM can only reconsider accounts that were voted on at the last meeting.

Mr. Oefinger reiterated that when this happened in 1995, action was taken outside the time limit, but it was explained by the Town Attorney that the RTM did not fail to adopt a budget; it simply made an error in appropriating too much money.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Votes: In Favor: 29 - Moderator Schmidt, Rep. Baril, Rep. Bartinik, Rep. Collins, Rep. Ebbin, Rep. Fairbank, Rep. Granatosky, Rep. Harrell, Rep. Jenkins, Rep. McCarthy, Rep. Miner, Rep. Monteiro, Rep. Moulding, Rep. Newsome, Rep. Patterson, Rep. Plunket, Rep. Post, Rep. Power, Rep. Pratt, Rep. Schefers, Rep. Smuts, Rep. Steere, Rep. Stein, Rep. Steinfeld, Rep. Streeter, Rep. Tilney, Rep. Trejo, Rep. Vivirito and Rep. Wheeler, Jr.
Opposed: 1 - Rep. Sebastian

C. ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn at 6:20 p.m. was made by Rep. Treho, seconded by Rep. Jenkins and so voted unanimously.

Attest:

Barbara Tarbox, Town Clerk
Clerk of the RTM

Janet L. Downs, Deputy Town Clerk