



Town of Groton, Connecticut

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Meeting Minutes

Town Council Committee of the Whole

Mayor Harry A. Watson, Councilors Heather Sherman Bond, Kathryn M. Brown-Tracy, Catherine Kolnaski, Deborah B. Monteiro, Frank O'Beirne, Jr., Rita M. Schmidt, Paulann H. Sheets, and James L. Streeter

Tuesday, May 13, 2008

7:00 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

REGULAR MEETING

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Watson called the meeting to order at 7:08 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Members Present: Mayor Watson, Councilor Bond, Councilor Kolnaski, Councilor Monteiro, Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., Councilor Sheets and Councilor Streeter
Members Absent: Councilor Brown-Tracy and Councilor Schmidt

Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Assistant to the Town Manager Lee Vincent and Executive Assistant Nicki Bresnyan.

3. Calendar and Communications

Councilor Monteiro attended an RTM budget meeting where a number of comments were made regarding Town Councilors' attendance at the NLC Conference in Washington D.C. She assured everyone that it was a working conference with the entire time spent learning, meeting with legislators, and pushing Groton's legislative agenda. Councilor Sheets noted that she, too, attended the conference and she found it a great learning opportunity. Mayor Watson further added that mayors, councilors, and selectmen from all over the country attend the conference and speak on behalf of cities and towns. A direct result of attending NLC conferences in the past includes funding for the Mystic Streetscape Program and the Avery Point Lighthouse.

4. Approval of Minutes

2008-0120 Approval of Minutes (Committee of the Whole)

RESOLUTION ACCEPTING COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MINUTES

RESOLVED, that the minutes of the Town Council Committee of the Whole meetings of January 28, 2008, March 3, 2008, April 22, 2008, and May 6, 2008 are hereby accepted and approved.

A motion was made by Councilor Kolnaski, seconded by Councilor Monteiro, to adopt.

The motion carried unanimously

5. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

6. NEW BUSINESS

2008-0124 Potential Amendments to the Non-Union Retirement Program

A motion was made by Councilor Bond, seconded by Councilor Monteiro, that members of the Town Council, Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Director of Administrative Services Douglas Ackerman, Manager of Human Resources Joyce Sauchuk and Attorney Eileen Duggan go into executive session at 7:15 p.m. pursuant to General Statutes Section 1-200(6)(E) for the purpose of discussion related to draft documents and correspondence regarding potential amendments to the non-union retirement programs that are protected by the attorney-client privilege.

The motion carried unanimously

The executive session concluded at 8:10 p.m.

2007-0027 Burnett's Corners**Discussed**

Town Manager Oefinger met with Jim Mitchell from the Burnett's Corners Preservation Society and Mr. Mitchell provided documentation on the release of the deed to the Society by the Town Council in 1997. This means that there isn't a role for the Town Council to play in determining whether or not this group has met the conditions of the original transfer. This is now strictly a Building Code issue. Building Official Kevin Quinn also attended the meeting with Mr. Mitchell where Mr. Mitchell stated his intent to go to next Historic District Commission meeting to seek approval for replacement of the roof and begin discussions on other improvements. Mr. Mitchell also indicated that he has had discussions and a meeting with someone from the State Historic Commission and Town Manager Oefinger asked that the Town be included in any future meetings with the State Historic Commission regarding this structure. The Town Manager stated he will provide minutes of the discussions that led to the Town Council's action in 1997.

According to Mr. Mitchell, the building is currently being used for community storage and the basement is filled with siding and trim material to be used for this building. The Town Manager will update the Town Council on any approvals, action, or timeframe information he receives on the building.

Councilor O'Beirne stated that he recalls the Council's action in 1997, noting that there was a good first effort at stabilization resulting in the release of the deed, however nothing has happened since then. At the most recent meeting with Mr. Mitchell, the Town Manager was told that one structural issue is a corner beam that needs to be addressed as soon as possible.

2007-0072 Citizen Committee on Property Tax Relief - Update**Discussed**

Councilor Bond distributed proposed changes to the Citizen Committee's recommendation. She asked Councilors to review it for discussion at the next Committee of the Whole meeting. The Tax Collector has indicated a significant increase in the number of people inquiring about tax deferral this year.

2007-0310 FYE 2009 Budget**Discussed**

Town Manager Oefinger provided an update on RTM budget deliberations. Staff is starting to update revenue projections. The mill rate must be set by the end of the first week of June.

2008-0009 Legislative Policy (2008 Standing Referral)**Discussed**

Assistant to the Town Manager Lee Vincent noted a CCM Legislative Committee meeting next Tuesday and stated he will update the Council then.

Councilor Sheets distributed a proposed resolution in support of a petition demanding the extension of the conveyance tax on a permanent basis.

A motion was made by Councilor Sheets, seconded by Councilor Monteiro, to recommend a resolution in support of extending the conveyance tax.

Discussion followed on revising the wording of the proposed resolution, how best to involve the Council of Governments and its members, and having elected officials attend the special session.

The motion carried unanimously

2008-0011 Joint Meeting with City of Groton (2008 Standing Referral)**Discussed**

The next meeting with the City of Groton is scheduled for June 3rd at 6:00 p.m., prior to the

regular Town Council meeting. Town Manager Oefinger solicited topics for discussion.

2008-0012 Joint Meeting with Board of Education (2008 Standing Referral)

Discussed

Staff is attempting to schedule a joint meeting with the Board of Education at the request of Mayor Watson and Board of Education Chairman Beverly Washington regarding issues with the new schools. Public Works and JCJ Architects will be invited to the meeting.

2008-0122 Joint Meeting with the Stonington Board of Selectmen

Discussed

A joint meeting with the Stonington Board of Selectmen has been scheduled for June 17th at 6:00 p.m., prior to the regular Town Council meeting. This came out of a Mystic Cooperative Task Group meeting.

2008-0093 Council Goalsetting

Discussed

Councilor Bond personally likes to have goals that are attainable and measurable. Councilor O'Beirne noted there is no responsibility assigned or degree of urgency identified for the goals. Councilor Sheets feels there is value to the exercise of setting goals. She suggested that the current project to revise the land use regulations contributes to a number of the goals. Councilors were asked again to review the goals, make suggestions, and forward their comments to Mayor Watson for next week.

2008-0107 FYE 2008 Audit

Discussed

There are new accounting standards in place regarding the audit process and the auditor would like to meet with the Committee of the Whole or the Finance Committee prior to the audit, rather than just reporting out at the end of the process. The consensus was to leave the referral in Committee of the Whole.

2008-0123 Reuse of Noank School

Recommended for a Resolution

A public information meeting on the temporary use of Noank School for the Senior Center was attended by Mayor Watson and Councilors Monteiro and Kolnaski. Many questions were asked and answered. The anticipated timeframe for the temporary relocation of the Senior Center is 18 to 24 months. Mayor Watson suggested that if a committee is formed to study the long term reuse of Noank School, their process will take about the same length of time.

Town Manager Oefinger explained that this referral deals with the ultimate use for the property and a committee would be a good way to address neighbors' concerns with future use of the property. The Town Manager reviewed the questions and concerns raised at the meetings, and the Town's attempts to address them. Whether or not the Senior Center is allowed to relocate to Noank School is ultimately up to the Noank Zoning Commission. Although staff has reviewed other options, there do not appear to be any feasible alternative locations to relocate the Senior Center.

The consensus of the Council was to support the formation of a Noank School Reuse Committee. Councilor Bond volunteered to represent the Council. Town Manager Oefinger will prepare a resolution with suggested membership.

7. Consideration of Committee Referral Items as per Town Council Referral List

Proposed for Deletion:

2006-0222 Elderly Tax Freeze Legislation

Recommended for Deletion

2006-0223 Town Council E-Mail Accounts**Recommended for Deletion****2007-0081 Town Council E-Mail Communications/FOI Considerations****Recommended for Deletion****2007-0174 Mixed Use Zone Amendment Proposal****Recommended for Deletion****8. OTHER BUSINESS**

Mayor Watson noted that on May 27th Shennecossett Golf Course will be receiving an award and the Mayor will be attending. Discussion followed and the consensus of the Council was to cancel the Group and Committee of the Whole meetings for that night and to discuss rescheduling the meeting for May 29th next week.

2008-0127 Moratorium on Planning and Zoning Applications Affecting Watershed Lands**MORATORIUM ON PLANNING AND ZONING APPLICATIONS AFFECTING
WATERSHED LANDS****Referred**

Councilor Sheets distributed a proposal to request a one year moratorium on planning and zoning applications affecting watershed land. She asked for a referral to the Committee of the Whole and the Mayor made the referral.

9. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Councilor Kolnaski, seconded by Councilor Streeter, to adjourn the meeting at 9:28 p.m.

The motion carried unanimously.