



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 Dean Antipas, Kathryn M. Brown-Tracy, Bruce S. Flax, Catherine Kolnaski, Deborah B. Monteiro, Frank O'Beirne, Jr., Rita M. Schmidt, and Paulann H. Sheets

Tuesday, November 10, 2009

7:00 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

REGULAR MEETING - REVISED

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Watson called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. **ROLL CALL**

Members Present: Mayor Watson, Councilor Antipas, Councilor Brown-Tracy, Councilor Flax, Councilor Kolnaski, Councilor Monteiro, Councilor O'Beirne, Jr. and Councilor Sheets
Members Absent: 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**

Mayor Watson noted the presence in the audience of a group of Boy Scouts from Troop 2 in Mystic who are working on a merit badge.

4. **Approval of Minutes**

2009-0279 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 meeting of October 27, 2009 are hereby accepted and approved.

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

The motion carried unanimously

5. **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

None.

6. **NEW BUSINESS**

2009-0008 Pending Litigation (2009 Standing Referral)

A motion was made by Mayor Watson, seconded by Councilor Kolnaski, that members of the Committee of the Whole, along with Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Manager of Labor Relations Joyce Sauchuk and Attorney Hinda Kimmel go into executive session at 7:05 p.m. pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes Section 1-200(6)(B) for the purpose of discussing strategy and negotiations with respect to a pending EEOC claim titled Jayne LaLonde v. Town of Groton, et al.

The motion carried unanimously

Discussed

The executive session concluded at 7:18 p.m.

A motion was made by Mayor Watson, seconded by Councilor Kolnaski, that the Committee of the Whole consent and/or agree to resolve a pending EEOC claim titled Jayne LaLonde v. Town of Groton, et al, as outlined in executive session, and authorize the Town Manager and/or the Town's insurer to cause to be prepared and to execute the requisite legal documents to effectuate this settlement, subject to the approval of the Town Attorney as to form and legal sufficiency.

The motion carried unanimously

2006-0100 Thames Street Rehabilitation Study**Discussed**

Councilor Kolnaski expressed support for the Town Manager's suggestion that the Town Council meet with the Thames Street Advisory Committee and the City Council. Councilor Flax asked if there is a list of priorities for the street. The Town Manager explained that the project is a complete reconstruction so whatever is pulled out must be put back. The Council may want to consider bringing the engineer back for a value engineering exercise if the thought is to bring this back to the voters. The Town Manager expressed disappointed that the voters did not approve the referendum, explaining that this is the time to be doing this type of project from a cost standpoint. The Town Manager noted that the Council may want to consider a special referendum. Councilor O'Beirne stated that special referendums historically have a low voter turnout. He asked for information from the engineering firm about phasing options for the project. Councilor Antipas suggested that the fundamental problem with the referendum was that voters did not know what the project was about or what the costs were for so he feels that education will be an important component in any future effort. Councilor Sheets noted that the granite curbing seemed to be a sticking point with many people. Discussion followed on possible reasons for the failure of the referendum.

2008-0121 Condition of Chipperini Property on Library Street**Discussed**

Town Manager Oefinger explained that the lawsuit brought against the Town of Groton by Ms. Chipperini has been withdrawn. He then provided a brief report on demolition at the site. The Town is waiting for information from a structural engineer on the integrity of the remaining structures on site (chimney and decking). If the information is not forthcoming, the Town will move ahead and seek a summary judgment. Councilor O'Beirne asked if a cease and desist order has been issued for the work that Ms. Chipperini is doing at the site, and the Town Manager stated he would check.

2009-0161 SEA-CMEEC Proposed Electric Generating Facilities**Discussed**

Glenn Wilson of CMMEC noted that this project was referred to the Planning Commission under CGS 8-24 and received a favorable report. Comments made by the Planning Commission will be addressed. The Town Manager explained that ultimately, the Town Council needs to approve the lease, but the first step is to schedule a public hearing on the proposed lease.

A motion was made by Councilor Kolnaski, seconded by Councilor Monteiro, to schedule a public hearing on the proposed lease of property on Gary Court to Groton Utilities.

The motion carried unanimously

2009-0217 Contract Agreement between the Groton Board of Education and the Groton Education Association**Recommended for a Resolution**

Councilor Antipas provided an overview of the agreement

A motion was made by Councilor Kolnaski, seconded by Councilor Antipas, to accept the agreement between the Groton Board of Education and the Groton Education Association.

The motion carried unanimously

2009-0256 Town Clerk Salary Range**Discussed**

Councilor Monteiro asked if there is a job description for Groton's Town Clerk and suggested that the Council sit down with the new Town Clerk. Councilor O'Beirne suggested that Barbara Tarbox identify the primary duties of her office. Councilor Flax suggested that the classification of the Town Clerk should be looked at closely if included in the Non-Union Terms and Conditions.

Councilor Antipas expressed concern with marrying the Town Clerk position to the Non-Union Terms and Conditions because the position is unique and is not a Town employee. He suggested the Council "interview" the new Town Clerk prior to setting the salary. The consensus of the Council was to postpone discussion of this item until the new Town Council is seated.

2009-0263 Bluff Point to Preston Trail - Update

Discussed

Dave Holdridge forwarded a sample resolution and request for additional appointments to the Bluff Point to Preston Trail Committee to the Town Council for consideration.

A motion was made by Mayor Watson, seconded by Councilor Brown-Tracy, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.

The motion carried unanimously

2009-0271 Budget Guidelines for FYE 2011

Recommended for a Resolution

Councilor O'Beirne suggested that Councilors decide if they want to provide guidance, and if so, then discussion can take place regarding the type of guidance to give. He cited a Town Attorney opinion that the Council can not compel the Town Manager to come in with a certain budget, but it can provide guidance. Councilor Monteiro felt that meeting with the department heads last year in budget workshops was a useful exercise. Mayor Watson noted that revenues are also a very important part of the budget process. Councilor Sheets agreed that the Council needs to take a stand in light of decreasing state revenues, and that across the board percentage cuts are not the best way to go. Councilor O'Beirne suggested that giving guidance does not preclude the process followed last year where departments provided analyses of incremental and decremental budgets. Councilor O'Beirne would like to see a zero dollar increase in the operating budgets for the Town and Board and Education. Councilor Antipas suggested working backwards by identifying a percentage increase in taxes that would be acceptable, applying the hypothetical state numbers, and seeing if a budget can be developed within those guidelines. Councilor Flax feels the Council needs to identify issues that have been discussed in the past so that they can be discussed now instead of during the budget process. The Town Manager expressed his preference for talking about programs, which are tough decisions to make, rather than percentages. He noted that a zero dollar increase does not mean no increase in taxes and arbitrary reductions do not address what costs or programs the Town Council wants to eliminate. Discussion followed on the considerations associated with providing guidance to the Town Manager and Board of Education. Councilors Monteiro and Brown-Tracy agreed that it is time for the Council to identify what services need to be cut. The Town Manager asked that if the Council provides direction to the Town Manager, then the same budget direction be given to the other five entities that receive money from the town. The Town Operations portion of the budget can not be reduced enough to bear sole responsibility for lessening the burden on the taxpayer. The Town Manager reviewed options for meeting with department heads. Councilor O'Beirne would like to see a goal of a zero dollar increase rather than a level service budget. Councilor Kolnaski expressed support for meeting with the department heads. The Town Manager noted that the Town has been working on eliminating inefficiencies for the last eight to ten years; however, if the Council is trying not to increase the tax burden, it can not be accomplished through efficiencies. Discussion followed. The consensus was to meet with the department heads.

A motion was made by Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., seconded by Councilor Antipas, to provide the Town Manager and Board of Education with a goal of a zero dollar increase for the FYE 2011 budget.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Votes: In Favor: 7 - Mayor Watson, Councilor Antipas, Councilor Brown-Tracy, Councilor Flax, Councilor Monteiro, Councilor O'Beirne, Jr. and Councilor Sheets
Opposed: 1 - Councilor Kolnaski

2009-0274 Year Round Expanded DUI Enforcement Grant

A motion was made by Councilor Kolnaski, seconded by Councilor Monteiro, that this matter be

Recommended for a Resolution.

The motion carried unanimously

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

None.

8. OTHER BUSINESS

2009-0264 Adoption of Property Maintenance Code Ordinance Amendment

Discussed

The Town Manager explained that a scrivener's error was made when referencing the original ordinance number to be amended. The Town Attorney has advised that the error can be corrected from this point forward since the title of the ordinance and language of this ordinance are correct.

A motion was made by Mayor Watson, seconded by Councilor Flax, to acknowledge and correct the scrivener's error in the proposed ordinance amendment so that all references to Ordinance No. 243 are changed to Ordinance No. 264.

The motion carried unanimously

The Town Manager noted that a joint meeting with the Board of Education was tentively scheduled for November 16th. Councilors felt that the meeting should be postponed until December when the new Council and Board of Education are seated.

9. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Councilor Kolnaski, seconded by Councilor Monteiro, to adjourn the meeting at 8:59 p.m.

The motion carried unanimously.