



**Town of Groton, Connecticut**  
**Town Council Committee of the Whole**  
**Regular Meeting Minutes**

45 Fort Hill Road  
Groton, CT 06340

Town Manager: 860-441-6630

Town Clerk: 860-441-6640

*Mayor Patrice Granatosky, Councilor David Atwater, Councilor André Bumgardner, Councilor Rachael Franco, Councilor Conrad Heede, Councilor Lian Obrey, Councilor Juliette Parker, Councilor Rita Schmidt, and Councilor Joe Zeppieri*

**Tuesday, July 24, 2018**

**6:30 PM**

**Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1**

134 Groton Long Point Road, Groton

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Granatosky called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m.

**2. ROLL CALL**

**Chair**

Patrice Granatosky

**Members**

David Atwater

Audre Bumgardner

Rachael Franco

Conrad Heede

Lian Obrey

Juliette Parker

Rita Schmidt

**Town Manager**

John Burt

**3. CALENDAR AND COMMUNICATIONS**

Councilors reported on the meetings and events that they attended, and communications that they received.

Councilor Schmidt stated she has received several calls from citizens in the Mystic area about rubbish removal concerns. Mayor Granatosky stated Representative McDermott showed concern regarding the appearance of the entrance of the Town Hall. Town Manager John Burt met with Mr. McDermott and has begun implementing measures to 'spruce up' the entryway.

**4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

2018-88 July 10, 2018 Minutes - Committee of the Whole

Motion: To approve the minutes of the Committee of the Whole meeting of July 10, 2018.

|                             |     |                            |         |        |
|-----------------------------|-----|----------------------------|---------|--------|
| Moved by: Bumgardner, Audre |     | Seconded by: Schmidt, Rita |         |        |
| Committee Members           | YES | NO                         | ABSTAIN | RECUSE |

|                    |   |  |  |  |
|--------------------|---|--|--|--|
| David Atwater      | X |  |  |  |
| Aundre Bumgardner  | X |  |  |  |
| Rachael Franco     | X |  |  |  |
| Patrice Granatosky | X |  |  |  |
| Conrad Heede       | X |  |  |  |
| Lian Obrey         | X |  |  |  |
| Juliette Parker    | X |  |  |  |
| Rita Schmidt       | X |  |  |  |
| Joe Zeppieri       | X |  |  |  |
| APPROVED           |   |  |  |  |

5. NEW BUSINESS

5.a. 2018-74 Cable Television Advisory Council Appointment

Councilor Zeppieri has agreed to resign from the Cable Television Advisory Council so that James Loughlin could be appointed.

MOTION: To recommend a resolution appointing James Loughlin to the Cable Television Advisory Council.

|                            |     |                            |         |        |
|----------------------------|-----|----------------------------|---------|--------|
| Moved by: Parker, Juliette |     | Seconded by: Heede, Conrad |         |        |
| Committee Members          | YES | NO                         | ABSTAIN | RECUSE |
| David Atwater              | X   |                            |         |        |
| Aundre Bumgardner          | X   |                            |         |        |
| Rachael Franco             | X   |                            |         |        |
| Patrice Granatosky         | X   |                            |         |        |
| Conrad Heede               | X   |                            |         |        |
| Lian Obrey                 | X   |                            |         |        |
| Juliette Parker            | X   |                            |         |        |
| Rita Schmidt               | X   |                            |         |        |
| Joe Zeppieri               | X   |                            |         |        |
| APPROVED                   |     |                            |         |        |

5.b. 2018-78 Request to Fill Planner I Position

Jon Reiner, Director of Planning and Development Services, discussed the need to fill this position, noting the impact the vacancy has already had on the office. Councilor Atwater inquired whether there was a need to update the job description. Jon Reiner explained that the job description was broad enough and is still accurate for the position.

The Council had no objection to filling this position.

|          |
|----------|
| APPROVED |
|----------|

5.c. 2018-86 Blight Ordinance Presentation

A presentation was provided by Jon Reiner, Director of Planning and Development Services and Tom Zonarini, Zoning Enforcement Officer, regarding the current blight enforcement.

Mr. Zonarini discussed the unregistered vehicle ordinances within Stonington, Waterford,

and New London. It is recommended by Mr. Zonarini that unlicensed/unregistered vehicles be placed on the Blight Ordinance rather than the Zoning Ordinance due to a different level of standards.

Councilor Obrey inquired about available training and presented the problem of back yard regulations. Mr. Zonarini stated he has had extensive training and is open to reviewing current ordinances. He suggested the Blight Ordinance be better defined for ease of enforcement. Mr. Burt suggested reviewing the ordinance and returning with suggestions to improve.

Mayor Granatosky suggested further implementing the current ordinance and using the clause as an enforcement measure. Mr. Burt presented the option to bring the Blight Ordinance to the attorney for their review and suggestions.

Councilor Bumgardner questioned whether the Town has held any citation hearings. Mr. Zonarini stated there have not been any hearings in the last year and a half since he has been with the Town. Councilor Atwater reinforced the need for definition clarity for purpose of litigation. Councilor Zeppieri agreed and stated property should not be in such poor repair that it affects neighboring properties.

Suggestions were made for public assistance for the elderly and those who cannot afford to rectify the situation. Mr. Burt did not disagree but requests the opinion of the town attorney. Councilor Bumgardner suggested any revenues associated with fines be used to pay Mr. Zonarini's salary or to fund a future blight complaint for persons that are elderly or financially unable to remedy the complaint. Councilor Parker suggested contacting local churches for volunteers to help those in need so the Town does not have the burden of cleaning up properties.

Mr. Burt noted he has sent many requests to Mr. Zonarini. Mr. Zonarini has been prompt with his responses and has been current on the issues.

Mayor Grantosky requested that the Office of Planning and Development Services continue to explore the Blight Ordinance and take into consideration the Town Council's comments.

DISCUSSED

5.d. 2018-81 Seely Easement from City of Groton

Jon Reiner, Director of Planning and Development Services, displayed a map showing the location of the Groton Utility easement across the water utility property. Until this easement, Jon Reiner explained that Seely School Drive was the only access to the school property. He explained that the City of Groton produced the easement, at no cost, and approved it giving the Town more access.

Mayor Granatosky thanked the City of Groton and Mr. Burt thanked Groton Utilities for working with the Town.

**MOTION:** To recommend a resolution authorizing the Town Manager to sign and accept the City of Groton/Groton Utility easement for 55 Seely School Drive.

|                       |                             |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| Moved by: Obrey, Lian | Seconded by: Atwater, David |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------|

| Committee Members  | YES | NO | ABSTAIN | RECUSE |
|--------------------|-----|----|---------|--------|
| David Atwater      | X   |    |         |        |
| Aundre Bumgardner  | X   |    |         |        |
| Rachael Franco     | X   |    |         |        |
| Patrice Granatosky | X   |    |         |        |
| Conrad Heede       | X   |    |         |        |
| Lian Obrey         | X   |    |         |        |
| Juliette Parker    | X   |    |         |        |
| Rita Schmidt       | X   |    |         |        |
| Joe Zeppieri       | X   |    |         |        |
| APPROVED           |     |    |         |        |

5.e. 2018-87 Request to Fill Police Department Vacancies

Chief Fusaro was present and acknowledged the recent retirements of Sergeant Keith Ashby and Detective Rob Emery. The loss of these officers requires replacement by entry-level officers. Also, a part-time dispatcher is needed.

Councilor Zeppieri moved to consider the the filling of the police officer positions and the Telecommunicator position separately. He questioned whether filling two positions was necessary for the safety of the community. Chief Fusaro explained the need for safety of both police officers and the community. He noted filling the positions will give the current police officers the necessary time off for both mental and physical health, and would reduce overtime. Councilor Zeppieri suggested the possibility of only filling one position due to possible budgetary issues in the future.

Discussion began on the importance of proper staffing requirements that need to be met and that the funding has also been included in the current budget. It was also noted again that the officers that retired were paid at the top of the pay scale and the new officers would be paid considerably less as they will just be starting their careers.

Councilor Obrey questioned the cost to the Town to send people to the police academy. Chief Fusaro explained that the Town pays \$2,500.00 per seat for the academy, which is also included in the budget. He also mentioned that the new officers have to work for the Town for at least 2 years or they will have to pay the Town back for their training. Councilor Bumgardener asked if residents, minorities, and woman were given the same opportunity to apply. Chief Fusaro stated yes, he encouraged anyone that wants to apply to do so. He went on to note that there is also a need to cover officers that are currently on disability leave and active duty military.

Chief Fusaro went on to explain that the new part-time pay plan included a telecommunicator position that he is also requesting to fill. He mentioned that it would benefit the department in assisting with coverage and reducing overtime. Chief Fusaro stated this position would not include benefits. He explained the need to have enough coverage to be able to answer calls in a timely manner as there are mandates in place. Chief Fusaro noted that the telecommunicators have to notify the fire departments, local police, ambulance and paramedics all while tending to a single call.

Discussion began regarding the staff having efficient equipment and work stations. Chief Fusaro explained that the work stations have been updated.

The Council has no objections to filling these positions.

APPROVED

5.f. 2018-89 Memorandum of Understanding between Town of Groton and State of Connecticut regarding the Connecticut Land Mobile Radio Network

Chief Fusaro presented the need to upgrade the current system explaining that the Town will no longer maintain their own personal radio system. He explained the State of Connecticut has contracted with Motorola to maintain and update the new radio system with the various towns being "tenants" on the State system. The maintenance fee after one year will be approximately \$30,000 paid to the State after the first year, noting this is a five-year contract. This fee will ensure that the Town's radio system is kept up-to-date and running properly. Chief Fusaro noted that the past radio system was not maintained properly and it is critical to up date these systems.

MOTION: To recommend a resolution authorizing the Town Manager and the Police Chief to sign the Memorandum of Understanding agreement for the use of the Connecticut Land Mobile Radio Network.

| Moved by: Zeppieri, Joe |     | Seconded by: Obrey, Lian |         |        |
|-------------------------|-----|--------------------------|---------|--------|
| Committee Members       | YES | NO                       | ABSTAIN | RECUSE |
| David Atwater           | X   |                          |         |        |
| Aundre Bumgardner       | X   |                          |         |        |
| Rachael Franco          | X   |                          |         |        |
| Patrice Granatosky      | X   |                          |         |        |
| Conrad Heede            | X   |                          |         |        |
| Lian Obrey              | X   |                          |         |        |
| Juliette Parker         | X   |                          |         |        |
| Rita Schmidt            | X   |                          |         |        |
| Joe Zeppieri            | X   |                          |         |        |
| APPROVED                |     |                          |         |        |

5.g. 2/2018 - 1 Cost of Living Adjustments for Retirees

Robert Zagami, Human Resources Director/ Assistant Town Manager, noted a total cost figure of \$65,000 was determined in order to give all bargaining group retirees a 2 % COLA increase. He explained that the Town is not contractually obligated to give COLA increases but mentioned there would likely be a grievance introduced to the Town Council. There was some confusion as to if the Retirement Board was the one to decide on the COLAs. Town Manager John Burt explained that it was the Town Council to decide on what is given for COLAs. Mr. Zagami noted that the last Town Council had only given the non-union police group a COLA increase and not any other group. He also explained the process of requesting a COLA increase.

Councilor Obrey stated that there is an obligation for the Town to meet with retirees for a review of their pensions and questioned the guidelines for a COLA increase. Mr. Zagami stated that he works with the Town Attorney for review of negotiations and for COLA requests. Town Manager John Burt stated that he can detail the current process for a COLA increase and make some recommendations for the Town Council.

Councilor Zeppieri thought it would be helpful to know other Towns' retirement figures prior to moving forward with this item. Town Manager John Burt stated that he could check with

Connecticut Conference of Municipalities to see if they had these figures.

Councilor Heede asked if there was an option to make COLAs neutral. Mr. Burt stated that the retirement agreements would have to be reviewed and negotiated.

Councilor Franco noted that the Town's retirement fund was one of the highest in the State and could not comprehend the major breakdown that has taken place in approving COLAs for Town retirees. Councilor Parker requested that the COLAs possibly be included in the budget next year.

Mayor Granatosky noted that there needs to be a process developed by the Town Council to make sure this does not happen again in the future. She also mentioned the importance of the Town Council creating a policy for COLAs.

Mayor Grantosky requested a recess at 8:24 p.m. The meeting resumed at 8:29 p.m.

Councilor Franco asked if any union workers were given a COLA increase in the past 5 years. Mr. Zagami stated that the non-union police group received a COLA per the last Town Council and would receive the additional COLA with this motion.

Mayor Granatosky reminded the Council that the 2% COLA would mean a \$65,000 increase, \$1.37 million unfunded liability.

Mayor Granatosky made a motion that the awarding of COLA's be reviewed by the Town Council every 2 years, seconded by Councilor Parker. Mr. Burt asked that this request be handled as a separate agenda item at a future meeting. Mayor Granatosky withdrew her motion and Councilor Parker withdrew her second.

Mayor Granatosky requested consideration for a regular system of procedure and policy in the future. Mr. Burt stated he would draft a policy and have the Town Council review it.

Motion: To recommend a resolution approving an increase of 2% for all qualified retirees having been retired for at least five years, effective July 1, 2018, or as authorized by collective bargaining agreements.

| Moved by: Obrey, Lian |     | Seconded by: Parker, Juliette |         |        |
|-----------------------|-----|-------------------------------|---------|--------|
| Committee Members     | YES | NO                            | ABSTAIN | RECUSE |
| David Atwater         | X   |                               |         |        |
| Aundre Bumgardner     | X   |                               |         |        |
| Rachael Franco        | X   |                               |         |        |
| Patrice Granatosky    | X   |                               |         |        |
| Conrad Heede          | X   |                               |         |        |
| Lian Obrey            | X   |                               |         |        |
| Juliette Parker       | X   |                               |         |        |
| Rita Schmidt          | X   |                               |         |        |
| Joe Zeppieri          |     | X                             |         |        |
| APPROVED              |     |                               |         |        |

5.h. 2018-80 Ethics Ordinance Introduction

It was noted that the Charter states an Ethics Commission must be established.

Town Manager John Burt presented a draft of the Ethics Ordinance with language that was stricken and/or replaced. Councilor Zeppieri questioned an area on Page 7 of the document and asked that it be re-written.

Mayor Granatosky asked if a budget vote issue that is often raised has been addressed within this document.

Town Manager Burt stated he will review these two requests with the Town Attorney and confirm that these issues have been addressed. He noted a lot of time has been spent on this ordinance to cover the Town.

Mayor Granatosky mentioned that the time to seat people on the commission is now so there is a balanced group in place prior to a need arising.

MOTION: To introduce the Ethics Ordinance and schedule a public hearing on September 4, 2018 at 6:30 p.m. at the Town Hall Annex, Community Room 1.

|                            |     |                             |         |        |
|----------------------------|-----|-----------------------------|---------|--------|
| Moved by: Parker, Juliette |     | Seconded by: Atwater, David |         |        |
| Committee Members          | YES | NO                          | ABSTAIN | RECUSE |
| David Atwater              | X   |                             |         |        |
| Aundre Bumgardner          | X   |                             |         |        |
| Rachael Franco             | X   |                             |         |        |
| Patrice Granatosky         | X   |                             |         |        |
| Conrad Heede               | X   |                             |         |        |
| Lian Obrey                 | X   |                             |         |        |
| Juliette Parker            | X   |                             |         |        |
| Rita Schmidt               | X   |                             |         |        |
| Joe Zeppieri               | X   |                             |         |        |
| APPROVED                   |     |                             |         |        |

5.i. 2018-82 Department Reorganization

Town Manager Burt discussed the additional duties of Lisa Hylton, Administrative Secretary, due to the retirement of Nicki Bresnyan, Assistant to the Town Manager. He noted there will be a savings of approximately \$62,000 per year, plus benefits, with the change of the Administrative Secretary position to an Executive Assistant position due to the elimination of the Assistant to the Town Manager position. Mr. Burt discussed the initial plan to move Human Resources to the third floor and consolidate staff; however, at a cost of approximately \$100,000 it is not practical.

MOTION: To recommend a resolution to approve the change of the Administrative Secretary position to an Executive Assistant position at a savings of approximately \$62,000 per year plus benefits.

|                           |     |                               |         |        |
|---------------------------|-----|-------------------------------|---------|--------|
| Moved by: Franco, Rachael |     | Seconded by: Parker, Juliette |         |        |
| Committee Members         | YES | NO                            | ABSTAIN | RECUSE |
| David Atwater             | X   |                               |         |        |

|                    |   |  |  |  |
|--------------------|---|--|--|--|
| Aundre Bumgardner  | X |  |  |  |
| Rachael Franco     | X |  |  |  |
| Patrice Granatosky | X |  |  |  |
| Conrad Heede       | X |  |  |  |
| Lian Obrey         | X |  |  |  |
| Juliette Parker    | X |  |  |  |
| Rita Schmidt       | X |  |  |  |
| Joe Zeppieri       | X |  |  |  |
| APPROVED           |   |  |  |  |

5.j. 2018-83 Beautification Committee

Councilor Franco explained her vision for the Beautification Committee. This committee would consist of five volunteer members appointed by the Town Council to assist in adding color, art work and clean-up within the community. Councilor Obrey stated that she would like to see local business owners as part of the committee as it will benefit their businesses.

Councilor Franco noted that this committee would not add to the workload of Town staff and hopes to apply for and receive grant funding for the committee. Councilor Heede asked that follow-up be done on the properties that have been chosen as part of the beautification process.

MOTION: To recommend a resolution establishing a Beautification Committee.

|                         |     |                              |         |        |
|-------------------------|-----|------------------------------|---------|--------|
| Moved by: Heede, Conrad |     | Seconded by: Franco, Rachael |         |        |
| Committee Members       | YES | NO                           | ABSTAIN | RECUSE |
| David Atwater           | X   |                              |         |        |
| Aundre Bumgardner       | X   |                              |         |        |
| Rachael Franco          | X   |                              |         |        |
| Patrice Granatosky      | X   |                              |         |        |
| Conrad Heede            | X   |                              |         |        |
| Lian Obrey              | X   |                              |         |        |
| Juliette Parker         | X   |                              |         |        |
| Rita Schmidt            | X   |                              |         |        |
| Joe Zeppieri            | X   |                              |         |        |
| APPROVED                |     |                              |         |        |

6. REVIEW OF AGENDA ITEMS - None

7. OTHER BUSINESS

7.a. Discussion

Councilor Atwater discussed a letter, dated July 19, 2018, by Gary Schneider regarding the resurfacing of High Street to begin on July 23, 2018. He recommended earlier notification in the future.

Councilor Obrey requested an updated schedule for Par Four improvements and is also looking forward to a tour of the new Fitch building.

Councilor Franco discussed a notification she and Councilor Parker received from Ms. Foley. Mayor Granatosky noted that she had spoken to Ms. Foley as well and Mr. Burt was actively

responding to her concerns.

Councilor Franco requested an update on Mystic Oral School. Both Mr. Burt and Councilor Obrey gave a brief update on the process. It was noted that the State should be conducting another meeting concerning the property soon.

Mr. Burt also gave an update on the Route 12/Crystal Lake Road project with a reclaiming road date of August 12<sup>th</sup>.

Mayor Granatosky thanked the Public Works Department for their work on Thomas Road noting that she has seen more pedestrian traffic.

Councilor Heede mentioned Stonington's Task Force for a Plastic Ordinance. He requested if this was something that the Town would consider. Town Manager Burt stated that he would take it to the Conservation Commission and ask their opinion on it. If the Conservation Commission does not want to take action on it, he will return it to the Town Council for an Ad Hoc Committee.

## 8. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:23 p.m.