



Town of Groton, Connecticut

Meeting Minutes

Town Council Committee of the Whole

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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, March 25, 2008

7:00 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

REGULAR MEETING

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Watson called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

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

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

3. Calendar and Communications

Councilor Kolnaski noted receipt of the Board of Education budget. The Liaison Committee has asked that the Council forward any questions to the Board of Education through Chairman Beverly Washington, prior to meeting with the Board of Education for budget review.

4. Approval of Minutes

2008-0066 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 of February 26, 2008 are hereby accepted and approved.

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

The motion carried unanimously

5. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

6. NEW BUSINESS

2008-0059 Burnett's Corners Preservation Society Plan

Recommended for a Resolution

Town Manager Oefinger distributed an e-mail from Jim Mitchell of the Burnett's Corners Preservation Society indicating that he would not be present tonight. Councilor Streeter expressed frustration that Mr. Mitchell tried just today to contact Mr. Fossum to attend the meeting, even though Mr. Mitchell was notified of the meeting by letter dated March 12th. The Town Manager read a previous e-mail from Mr. Mitchell and Mr. Oefinger's response that prompted the communication distributed to the Council. Councilor Monteiro asked for a review of the process to obtain the property and demolish the building. The Town Manager indicated that the Town Attorney would have to be engaged and staff can develop an outline of the process for the Council.

Manager of Inspection Services Kevin Quinn noted the engineering report from 10 years ago encouraged expedition of the restoration plan to prevent further deterioration of the building. Mr.

Quinn feels the Preservation Society's money would be better spent hiring an engineer to evaluate the building again.

Councilor Streeter noted that the Council requested a restoration plan, not a painting plan.

Councilor Schmidt stated she knew of funds available for historic restoration that would have to be applied for by October, but work on the structure would need to be done in the interim. The Town Manager explained that such grants often require more extensive, historically accurate, preservation work. One of the challenges in this case has been the definition of "preservation". Although the Town views preservation as a "ground up", structural rehabilitation, the Burnett's Corners Preservation Society's goal appears to be making sure the structure isn't demolished. The Society has not identified a long-term use for the building other than storage.

Councilor Sheets asked if the Groton Historical Society would have jurisdiction over this building. Councilor Streeter stated that this type of project is not within the mission statement of the Society, which is more archival in nature.

Councilor Monteiro expressed concern that this will be a much bigger project than the Burnett's Corners Preservation Society anticipates and the terms restoration and preservation need to be defined.

Town Manager Oefinger explained that if the building is determined to be structurally unsound, the Building Code gives the Building Official the authority to order the property owner to provide an engineer's structural assessment and/or to order demolition. There is no value in the Town owning this property, except to take the building down, but that burden could be placed on the property owner.

A motion was made by Councilor Streeter, seconded by Councilor Kolnaski, to initiate the process to repossess the property.

A motion was made by Councilor Bond, seconded by Mayor Watson, to amend the motion to use the Town's expertise or require the property owner to determine if the building is structurally sound and if sound, to ask the Burnett's Corners Preservation Society to come back with a restoration plan.

The amendment to the motion carried unanimously.

The motion carried unanimously

2008-0074

Submarine Capital of the World Inc. Request for Donation

Recommended for a Resolution

Bud Fay explained the mission of Submarine Capital of the World Inc. The group monitors what the Navy is doing and what is happening in Congress and addresses the need for an independent voice, not beholden to the legislature or the military community. The Board of Directors is comprised of prominent business men and women from the community. It is a 501(c)3 company and initial funding was provided by Groton Utilities (\$10,000) and Charter Oak Credit Unit (\$5,000, with another \$5,000 in escrow). Mailing, printing and intern services are also provided by Charter Oak. The group has created a website (subcap.com). Other achievements include production of two videos, networking of organizations, and lobbying for state funding for the Sub Base.

Town Manager Oefinger noted that the Town budgets for Navy related activities if the Town Council would like to contribute to the group.

Mr. Fay explained that the funds will be used to produce a highly professional video to tell the submarine story to lay people around the country.

Councilors thanked Mr. Fay for his efforts.

A motion was made by Councilor Bond, seconded by Councilor Kolnaski, to authorize a contribution of up to \$5,000.

The motion carried unanimously

2008-0069 Other Post Employment Benefits (OPEB) Trust Ordinance

Discussed

Director of Finance Sal Pandolfo and Director of Administrative Services Doug Ackerman were present to address the Council. Mr. Pandolfo asked the Council to set a date for a public hearing on this ordinance. The Government Accounting Standards Bureau (GASB) sets policy for the public sector with respect to accounting principals. Other Post Employment Benefits (OPEB) - health insurance benefits for retirees - have historically been financed on a pay as you go basis, but GASB has required implementation of a policy that handles OPEB the same way that pensions are handled. The Town has been putting money aside since 2005 and the funds must now be transferred to a trust.

A motion was made by Councilor Bond, seconded by Councilor Kolnaski, to recommend resolutions introducing the ordinance, setting a public hearing date of April 15th, and authorizing the Director of Finance to obtain a cost estimate for altering the benefit system.

The motion carried unanimously

2007-0072 Citizen Committee on Property Tax Relief - Update

Tabled

Discussion of this item was tabled to allow the Council time to read a report distributed with the agenda packet.

2008-0014 Par Four Restaurant Lease

Discussed

The Planning Commission had a favorable response to the GCS 8-24 referral on this item.

A motion was made by Councilor Bond, seconded by Councilor Streeter, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.

The motion carried unanimously

2008-0075 Gravel Street Pump Station Lease - Update

Discussed

Town Manager Oefinger explained that last year the legislation passed a law requiring the Town to conduct a public hearing on leases (with some exceptions). A written analysis of the legislation was provided to the Council by Town Attorney Baribeault. Councilor Sheets asked that the Town Attorney re-review the issue of whether or not an appeal of the decision can be taken.

A motion was made by Councilor Bond, seconded by Councilor Monteiro, to schedule a public hearing on the Gravel Street Pump Station Lease on April 15th.

The motion carried unanimously

2008-0044 Bluff Point to Preston Bike Trail

Recommended for a Resolution

Representative Tom Reynolds is looking for Groton's support of this proposal and appointment to a committee to study it. They are not looking for monetary support. The resolution would indicate the Council's willingness to have someone serve on the Committee to investigate options. Mayor Watson noted he has received calls from two people interested in serving on the Committee - Rick DeMatto and Bill Billing.

A motion was made by Councilor Schmidt, seconded by Councilor Kolnaski, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.

A motion was made by Councilor Kolnaski, seconded by Councilor Monteiro, to amend the resolution to allow the Mayor to make the appointments to the Committee.

The motion to amend carried unanimously.

Discussion followed on the need to involve Groton Utilities in the discussion and encourage their participation.

The motion carried unanimously

2008-0065 Traffic Signal on Allyn Street at Sandy Hollow Road

Discussed

Town Manager Oefinger explained the proposal by the State Department of Transportation to install a traffic light at the Exit 89 north bound ramp and an additional light at the Allyn Street/Sandy Hollow Road intersection with a contribution from the Town of \$10,000. One concern raised with DOT is what will be done when the exit ramp geometrics are fixed in the future. Councilor Sheets thought that DOT should consider a light at the Exit 89 south bound ramp.

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

The motion carried by the following vote:

Votes: In Favor: 7 - Mayor Watson, Councilor Bond, Councilor Brown-Tracy, Councilor Monteiro, Councilor Schmidt, Councilor Sheets and Councilor Streeter
Opposed: 1 - Councilor Kolnaski

2008-0073 Connecticut Coalition for Justice in Education Funding Membership Dues

Recommended for a Resolution

The requested contribution from the Town Council is for \$3,500 for last fiscal year, \$3,500 for the current fiscal year, and \$5,250 in FYE 09. Assistant to the Town Manager Lee Vincent noted CCJEF's efforts have been inconsistent, but they are the only group that is addressing this issue. The first lawsuit was dismissed, however it was done in such a way that it will be easy for CCJEF to appeal to a higher court. The potential payoff is significant so it may be worthwhile for the Town to contribute. Town Manager Oefinger expressed concern that the Town cannot find a total of \$7,000 to pay the past and current dues and the Town Manager did not include the dues in the FYE 09 Proposed Budget. The Board of Education also only participated in 2006.

A motion was made by Councilor Sheets, seconded by Councilor Sheets, to pay the \$3,500 FYE 08 dues, and to discuss the FYE 09 dues during budget deliberations.

The motion carried unanimously

2008-0006 Property Acquisition/Sale (2008 Standing Referral)

Discussed

Town Manager Oefinger received a request from Linda and Don Saffomilla of 65 Sylvan Street to procure a strip of land that is adjacent to their property from the Town. The Town Manager provided a brief history of the parcel and noted that the parcel must be appraised to determine value.

Discussion followed on the Town's responsibility if the Saffomillas improve the parcel with a driveway, for example. The consensus of the Council was to have staff negotiate a price with the Saffomillas and return to the Council with a recommendation.

2007-0310 FYE 2009 Budget

Discussed

Town Manager Oefinger reminded the Council that the public hearing on the Proposed Budget is scheduled for Monday, March 31st. He also asked that Councilors forward any questions that they might have on the budget to the Town Manager prior to the budget review sessions so they can be addressed in a timely manner.

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

Assistant to the Town Manager Vincent reviewed highlights of CCM's testimony to the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee on a bill of interest to towns and cities.

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

None.

8. OTHER BUSINESS

Town Manager Oefinger would like to update the Council on personnel issues. A special meeting of the Committee of the Whole was scheduled for April 1st at 6:30 p.m.

9. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Councilor Kolnaski, seconded by Councilor Sheets, to adjourn the meeting at 9:00 p.m.

The motion carried unanimously.