



Town of Groton, Connecticut

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Town Clerk 860-441-6640
Town Manager
860-441-6630

Meeting Minutes - **Draft**

Representative Town Meeting

Moderator Kevin Power, Representatives Jean-Claude Ambroise, Joe Baril, Nancy E. Barnhart, Alicia Bauer, Nancy E. Beckwith, Christopher J. Burns, Michael Collins, Nancy M. Congdon, Warren T. Cooper, Luanne E. DeMatto, Syma Ebbin, Peter Fairbank, Nancy E. Gilly, Patrice Granatosky, Dolores Harrell, Keith L. Hedrick, Damon Q. Helme, Lynn Crockett Hubbard, Michael Dean Johnson, Rosanne E. Kotowski, Elizabeth Luck, Jackie Massett, Carole McCarthy, Karen F. Morton, Scott Newsome, Dana C. Parfitt, Richard J. Pasqualini, Jr., Kristen L. Powers, Don Pratt, Betty A. Prochaska, Sandry Ramos-Morales, John F. Scott IV, Jack Sebastian, Dana S. Semeraro, Jennifer Smuts, Joan Steinfeld, Irma Streeter, Mark Svencer, Archie C. Swindell, and Robert A. Warn

Wednesday, November 10, 2010

7:30 PM

Groton Senior Center

Regular Meeting

A. ROLL CALL

*Moderator Kevin Power called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.
32 members were present, and a quorum was declared.*

The Moderator reported that Reps. Beckwith, Johnson, Pratt and Svencer called to say they are unable to attend this meeting.

Members Present: Moderator Power, Rep. Ambroise, Rep. Baril, Rep. Barnhart, Rep. Bauer, Rep. Collins, Rep. Congdon, Rep. Cooper, Rep. DeMatto, Rep. Ebbin, Rep. Fairbank, Rep. Gilly, Rep. Granatosky, Rep. Harrell, Rep. Hedrick, Rep. Hubbard, Rep. Kotowski, Rep. Luck, Rep. Massett, Rep. McCarthy, Rep. Morton, Rep. Parfitt, Rep. Pasqualini Jr., Rep. Prochaska, Rep. Scott, Rep. Semeraro, Rep. Sebastian, Rep. Smuts, Rep. Steinfeld, Rep. Streeter, Rep. Swindell and Rep. Warn

Members Absent: Rep. Beckwith, Rep. Burns, Rep. Helme, Rep. Johnson, Rep. Newsome, Rep. Powers, Rep. Pratt, Rep. Ramos-Morales and Rep. Svencer

Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Director of Public Works Gary Schneider, Mayor Jim Streeter, Town Councilors Bill Johnson and Harry Watson, Police Chief Kelly Fogg, School Superintendent Paul Kadri, Board of Education Director of Human Resources Kim Beam, City Councilor Lisa Luck, Groton Long Point President Bob Congdon, Town Clerk Betsy Moukawsher and Assistant Town Clerk Sally Whitney.

B. MOMENT OF SILENCE AND SALUTE TO THE FLAG

The members observed a moment of silence followed by the Salute to the Flag led by Town Clerk Betsy Moukawsher.

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF OCTOBER 13, 2010

*A motion that the minutes be adopted was made by Rep. Baril, seconded by Rep. Steinfeld.
The vote to adopt the minutes carried 26 in favor, 6 abstentions. (Abstaining: Reps. Bauer, DeMatto, Ebbin, Fairbank, Luck and Smuts.)*

D. CITIZENS' PETITIONS

None.

E. RECEPTION OF COMMUNICATIONS

Moderator Power noted that two communications supporting the Groton Long Point Police request for supplemental appropriation were sent to members. He stated that a letter from Councilor Johnson was forwarded to members in response to the RTMs' comments last month on commercial trash collection.

The Moderator informed members that a Report of the School Superintendent will be added to the monthly agenda after the Report of the Town Manager. It will allow a monthly update that provides information about the school district and individual school departments. He stated that Town department heads will be invited to future meetings to address budget concerns.

Rep. Ebbin was applauded by members for her notable achievements that were recognized by the Eastern Connecticut Conservation District and for receiving the Professional Project Contributor Award for education and outreach efforts in the Niantic River watershed.

F. REPORT OF THE TOWN MANAGER:

1. Financial report

Mr. Oefinger reported that the Fund Balance as of October 31, 2010 is approximately \$8.7 million; the General Contingency balance is \$350,000; the Capital Reserve balance is \$233,546. He noted that a supplemental appropriation of \$225,000 for River Road repairs has been approved by the Town Council and if approved this evening by the RTM, the fund balance of the General Fund portion of the Capital Reserve Fund will be \$161,723.

2. Monthly briefing

The Town Manager highlighted numerous items in the Town Manager News. He recognized the Director of Finance and his staff for receiving the Distinguished Budget Presentation Award for the 17th consecutive year. He announced that donations and volunteers are needed for the upcoming Holiday Basket distributions that are scheduled for November 19, 2010 and December 17, 2010.

In response to Rep. Granatosky, the Town Manager confirmed that the Southeastern Council of Governments is seeking repeal of the mandate for the Board of Education Minimum Budget Requirement in addition to several other mandates.

G. Report of the School Superintendent

School Superintendent Paul Kadri reported that each month a different school department will be featured to provide information to identify the functions, goals and achievements of individual departments. He stated that this will provide members with a better understanding of the school district. He introduced Human Resources Director Kim Beam for this evening's presentation.

G. LIAISON REPORTS

Thames Street Study/Review Group

Rep. McCarthy suggested that the chairman of the Thames Street Committee be invited to speak about the final report and address any concerns or questions from the RTM.

Town Councilor Watson announced that the Town Council is requesting the Town Bonding Attorney to initiate preparations for a May 2011 referendum for Thames Street rehabilitation.

H. COMMITTEE REPORTS

1. FINANCE

Chairman Hedrick read the minutes of the meeting held on November 1, 2010. (Minutes are attached.)

Motion to approve the minutes was made by Rep. Luck, seconded by Rep. Scott and so voted unanimously.

2010-0195

Groton Long Point Police Budget - Request for Supplemental Appropriation

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING A TRANSFER FROM CONTINGENCY FOR THE GROTON LONG POINT POLICE DEPARTMENT

WHEREAS, during its deliberations on the FYE 2011 budget the Representative Town Meeting voted to reduce Groton Long Point's police budget by \$208,000, and

WHEREAS, the Groton Long Point Board subsequently voted to reduce its public safety budget by \$80,000 and pay the remaining \$128,000 through an increase in the district's mill rate, and

WHEREAS, prior to this decision, the president of the Groton Long Point Board had requested supplemental funding from the Town of Groton in the amount of \$128,000, and

WHEREAS, the Town Council has authorized a Town-wide police assessment in an effort to bring Groton Long Point, City of Groton, and Town of Groton representatives to the table to discuss police services, and

WHEREAS, the Town Council felt that Groton Long Point's request for supplemental funding should be addressed separately from the Town-wide police assessment, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that a transfer of \$128,000 be made from the FYE 2011 General Fund's Contingency account (#10741-5499) to Groton Long Point's police account (#10910-5230).

Refer to RTM.

A motion was made by Rep. Sebastian, seconded by Rep. Congdon, that this matter be Adopted.

Rep. Sebastian provided facts pertaining to the motion that he feels should be considered. He feels that the RTM overstepped its authority during the budget process in its decision to not fund the Groton Long Point Police Department. He believes that it was a policy decision that violates the Town Charter.

In response to Rep. Gilly, the Town Manager explained the Town's practice in regard to fourth quarter transfers. He stated that if Contingency is exhausted, then Fund Balance would be used as a last resort for expenditures.

Rep. Scott explained his rationale for his original motion during the RTM's annual budget meeting that eliminated the funding for the Groton Long Point Police Department. He would support restoring the funding only if it were applied to the Town Police Department which would then provide police protection equal to that afforded to the residents of Mumford Cove, Mystic and Noank. He provided examples of neighboring communities that have one police department that provides services for separate boroughs or subdivisions. He will not support the motion on the floor.

Rep. Congdon stated she will support the motion. She commented on the funding for City of Groton and Groton Long Point Police Departments and the unfair reduction to Groton Long Point. She stated that the requested funding for the Groton Long Point Police Department is the cost for the service if provided by the Town of Groton.

Rep. Steinfeld yielded the floor to Groton Long Point President Bob Congdon.

Mr. Congdon believes two police departments are better than one and cited facts concerning the costs for the Town of Groton to provide equal patrol service. He noted that Chief Fogg had not recommended that the Town assume patrolling Groton Long Point this year due to the detrimental effects of overtime on his department. Mr. Congdon believes that all residents deserve fair and equal police protection and that it is the responsibility of the RTM to fund this service.

Rep. Massett stated she will not support the motion. She believes that the budget process was followed and that any action now by the RTM to reverse its decision in May would be creating a precedent that she would not encourage. She noted that this item has been previously addressed three times by the RTM.

Rep. Cooper stated that due to the current economic climate, consolidation of all three

departments should be considered. He feels that no new information has been presented and that the RTM has failed to approve funding twice before and he will not support this motion.

Rep. Hubbard feels that police protection should be preserved and provided to all residents; she will support the motion.

Rep. Smuts will support the motion. She feels the funding will provide an equal level of police protection for residents of Groton Long Point for the same cost as if the Town provided the service. She mentioned that the taxes received from Groton Long Point more than pay for police protection.

Rep. Ebbin commented that Groton Long Point residents benefit from many other services that are provided to all residents. She noted that during budget deliberations the majority of residents who requested that the budget be cut and taxes reduced were residents of Groton Long Point. She feels that Contingency should not be used as this is not an emergency and that due process was followed by the RTM during the budget review. She will abstain.

Rep. Sebastian mentioned that the process for consolidation is clearly stated in the Town Charter and can't be started by the RTM. He stated that two police departments cannot patrol the same area.

Rep. Swindell feels that the action of the RTM in May was wrong. He believes it sent the message that police funding would not be provided as in past years. He stated that the Town funding only supplements the cost of the Groton Long Point's police department. He will support the motion.

Rep. Morton disagrees and will not support the motion. She mentioned that Groton Long Point residents chose to form their own police force. She feels that the Town of Groton can provide equal patrol service and that additional security services can be contracted for as desired by the Association or individuals.

Rep. Granatosky agrees with Rep. Massett and that no further debate is necessary.

Rep. Bauer agrees with Rep. Morton. She feels that the Town should review assuming patrol service at Groton Long Point before the next budget cycle. She will not support the motion.

Rep. Ambrose feels that consideration of this item is warranted. He opposes cutting the funding until the study of police consolidation is completed.

Rep. DeMatto clarified for the record that she was elected recently to fill a vacancy and would not have supported the RTM action on this matter in May. Her preference is that the Town have one police department that provides service to the entire Town and City. She feels compelled to support the action of the RTM during the budget process and will not support the use of Contingency funds.

MOTION TO MOVE THE QUESTION was made by Rep. Harrell, seconded by Rep. Pasqualini. The vote on moving the question carried 20 in favor, 12 opposed. (Opposed: Reps. Ambrose, Barnhart, Ebbin, Gilly, Kotowski, Massett, Scott, Smuts, Streeter, Steinfeld, Swindell and Power.)

The motion failed by the following vote:

Votes: In Favor: 10 - Rep. Ambrose, Rep. Barnhart, Rep. Collins, Rep. Congdon, Rep. Hubbard, Rep. Sebastian, Rep. Smuts, Rep. Steinfeld, Rep. Streeter and Rep. Swindell
Opposed: 21 - Moderator Power, Rep. Baril, Rep. Bauer, Rep. Cooper, Rep. DeMatto, Rep. Fairbank, Rep. Gilly, Rep. Granatosky, Rep. Harrell, Rep. Hedrick, Rep. Kotowski, Rep. Luck, Rep. Massett, Rep. McCarthy, Rep. Morton, Rep. Parfitt, Rep. Pasqualini Jr., Rep. Prochaska, Rep. Scott, Rep. Semeraro and Rep. Warn
Abstain: 1 - Rep. Ebbin

Rep. Smuts left at this time.

Rep. Sebastian posed a question regarding the use of the Groton Long Point Police Department outside its jurisdiction to support the Town Police.

"Point of Order" was raised by several members stating that discussion on the Groton Long Point Police appropriation is over.

The Moderator ruled Rep. Sebastian out of order and stated that debate is closed.

A recess was declared at 9:06 p.m. The meeting resumed at 9:14 p.m.

2. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT & SERVICES - Chairman Pratt

No meeting, no report.

3. EDUCATION - Chairman Swindell

No meeting, no report.

4. RECREATION - Chairman Warn

No meeting, no report.

5. PUBLIC SAFETY - Chairman Parfitt

No meeting, no report.

6. PUBLIC WORKS - Chairman Collins

Chairman Collins read the minutes of the meeting held on November 3, 2010. (Minutes are attached.)

Motion to approve the minutes was made by Rep. Hedrick, seconded by Rep. Ambrose and so voted unanimously.

2010-0217 Supplemental Appropriation for River Road Construction

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING A SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATION FOR RIVER ROAD REPAIRS

WHEREAS, approximately 150 linear feet of River Road was damaged by flooding in March 2010, closing the road to through traffic, and

WHEREAS, current estimates are \$30,000 to purchase materials that would allow the road to be opened to alternating one-way traffic and \$195,000 to make permanent repairs to the road, and

WHEREAS, funds are not available in the current operating budget to repair the damaged portion of River Road, and

WHEREAS, there are completed capital projects that can be closed out with their remaining funds returned to the Capital Reserve Fund Balance, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that a supplemental appropriation of \$225,000 be appropriated from the Capital Reserve Fund Balance as a FYE 2011 road project for River Road repairs.

Refer to RTM, Rule 6.5.3.

A motion was made by Rep. Collins, seconded by Rep. Steinfeld, that this matter be Adopted.

The motion carried unanimously

Rep. Fairbank left at this time.

7. RULES & PROCEDURES - Chairman Scott

No meeting, no report.

I. OTHER BUSINESS

2010-0181 FYE2012 Budget Discussion

FYE2012 BUDGET DISCUSSION

In response to Rep. Swindell, the Moderator noted that the School Superintendent can provide informal preliminary budget information each month under the new monthly agenda item "Report of the School Superintendent". Moderator Power informed Rep. Swindell that as chairman of the education committee, he can contact the Town Clerk's office to schedule public meetings with the Board of Education for informal budget discussions.

Rep. Sebastian commented that the Town needs to review and study Town revenues and not concentrate only on expenditures for the budget.

Moderator Power announced that department heads are being invited to address the RTM in regard to budget. He suggested that Economic Development could be scheduled for January. He invited members to prepare questions and creative ideas concerning economic development in Groton for that meeting.

Rep. Massett commented that the budget brainstorming session was very valuable. She hopes that more such sessions will be held.

Rep. Ambroise expressed concern that the municipal budget is developed prior to knowing what the State's budget is. He acknowledged that many items, such as personnel, pensions and benefits, are governed by contracts and that the most expensive item is personnel. He suggested that if any contracts are due for negotiation, contributions by employees for benefits and pensions should be increased.

In response to Rep. Steinfeld, the Town Manager stated that almost all contracts are due for negotiation in 2011 and that there is no provision in any contract that guarantees against employee layoffs.

Rep. Swindell announced that he is volunteering to serve as the liaison to the Groton Heights School Reuse Task Force.

The Moderator mentioned that the Town Council has established a Mystic & Noank Library Study Committee to review budget and funding for the Library. Reps. Semeraro and Power will serve on this committee.

J. ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn at 9:32 p.m. was made by Moderator Power, seconded by Rep. Ambroise and so voted unanimously.

Attest:

*Betsy Moukawsher, Town Clerk
Clerk of the RTM*

Sally A. Whitney, Assistant Town Clerk