



Town of Groton, Connecticut

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Meeting Minutes

Town Council

Mayor Bruce Flax, Councilors Dean G. Antipas, Diane Barber, Joe de la Cruz, Greg Grim, Karen F. Morton, Bonnie Nault, Deb Peruzzotti, and Harry A. Watson

Tuesday, August 2, 2016

7:30 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

REGULAR MEETING

Mayor Flax called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

I. ROLL CALL

Members Present: Mayor Flax, Councilor Antipas, Councilor Barber, Councilor de la Cruz, Councilor Morton, Councilor Nault, Councilor Peruzzotti and Councilor Watson

Members Absent: Councilor Grim

Mayor Flax declared that a quorum was present.

Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger and Town Clerk Betsy Moukawsher.

II. SALUTE TO THE FLAG

The Salute to the Flag was led by former Mayor Rita Schmidt.

III. RECOGNITION, AWARDS & MEMORIALS

None.

IV. RECEIPT OF CITIZENS' PETITIONS, COMMENTS AND CONCERNS

Rita Schmidt, 12 Bank Street, Mystic, addressed the Town Council in her capacity as the Town Council representative of the Eastern Connecticut Regional Tourism District. She announced that she is the newly-elected Chair of this organization. Ms. Schmidt presented the 2015-2016 Annual Review and highlighted some of the district's accomplishments from last year. She expressed the despair throughout the State's regional tourism districts as the result of the Governor's budget cuts. She reported that most tourism offices in the state are closing due to the lack of funds. She reported that the Eastern Regional Tourism District has plans to generate funds to support a reduced staff in its office. Ms. Schmidt reported that she included a letter to the Governor in the information packet that was written by Executive Director Ed Dombroskas on behalf of the Eastern Regional Tourism District and Mystic Country. This information is on file in the Town Clerk's Office.

V. RESPONSES TO CITIZENS' PETITIONS, COMMENTS AND CONCERNS

In response to Councilor Barber, Ms. Schmidt encouraged the Town Council to contact Governor Malloy and Ben Barnes at the Office of Policy and Management. Ms. Schmidt referred to a letter that had been written to the Governor by the Council of Governments in support of restoring funds to the State's tourism districts.

Councilor Nault stated that the Downtown Mystic Merchants Association will be meeting on August 3, 2016 and the cuts to the tourism district will be a topic of discussion.

Councilor de la Cruz stated his gratitude to Ms. Schmidt for representing the Town Council on the Eastern Regional Tourism District board.

Ms. Schmidt stated that at the last tourism caucus, State Representatives and State Senators from the districts expressed their support in restoring the funding. She stated that the Mystic Chamber

of Commerce has acted as the Mystic Tourism District for the last twenty years. She stated that it is actively working to have funding restored.

Ms. Schmidt stated that a lot of effort has been spent on the Heritage Park and that the Heritage Park Foundation relies on the Tourism District for support. She stated that it is critical for people in the community to be aware of what the Heritage Park has to offer in addition to the Water Taxi Service.

Councilor Antipas confirmed with Ms. Schmidt that all tourism districts throughout the entire State have had their funding eliminated. Ms. Schmidt stated that all of the districts are trying to find other funding resources in order to stay open and pay their bills.

Councilor Barber suggested that the Town Manager write a letter on behalf of the Town Council to the Governor in support of restoring funds to the tourism districts.

Mayor Flax stated that the revenues that are generated by tourism throughout the state are far greater than the small amount of money that the state allocates to the districts. He stated that revenues will drop because of the loss of the tourism districts.

Ms. Schmidt stated that an additional hotel tax was added eighteen years ago in order to fund the Tourism Districts so that the taxpayers would not be responsible for any of those expenses. The State currently collects the hotel tax, but it is no longer funding the Tourism Districts. Ms. Schmidt stated that the State also added an additional one dollar to all rental car fees that was supposed to go directly to the Tourism Districts.

In response to Councilor Nault, Ms. Schmidt stated that the State Tourism web site was maintained by the five Tourism Districts. She stated that she is unaware of how the State plans to maintain this web site now that the districts will be closed.

VI. CONSENT CALENDAR

a. Approval of Minutes

2016-0196 Approval of Minutes (Town Council)

RESOLUTION ACCEPTING TOWN COUNCIL MINUTES

RESOLVED, that the minutes of the Town Council meeting of July 19, 2016 are hereby accepted and approved.

This Matter was Adopted on the Consent Calendar.

b. Administrative Items

2016-0191 Special Trust Fund Contributions

RESOLUTION ACCEPTING CONTRIBUTIONS TO SPECIAL TRUST FUNDS

RESOLVED, that the Town Council hereby accepts contributions to the Town as follows:

Thomas Norris - \$25.00 - Library Miscellaneous

Lee Vincent - \$50.00 - Social Services Discretionary

First United Methodist Church - \$500.00 - Social Services Discretionary

This Matter was Adopted on the Consent Calendar.

c. Deletions from the Town Council Referral List

2016-0181 Market Analysis Presentation

This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - No further action on the Consent Calendar.

2016-0187 Library of America/National Endowment for the Humanities Grant

This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.

- 2016-0188 Groton Education Foundation Grant - Library**
This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.
- 2016-0192 Miscellaneous and Ad Hoc Committee Appointments - School Readiness**
This matter was Adopted.
- 2016-0193 Additional Resolution on Mystic Education Center Brownfield Grant**
This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.
- 2016-0195 Expansion of and Appointments to Noank School Public Gardens Task Force**
This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.
- 2016-0194 Town Council/Board of Education Joint Task Force on Shared Services**

Passed The Consent Calendar

A motion was made by Councilor Antipas, seconded by Councilor Watson, to adopt the Consent Calendar, including all the preceding items marked as having been adopted on the Consent Calendar.

The motion carried unanimously

VII. COMMUNICATIONS & REPORTS (Other than Committee Reports)

a. Town Councilors

Councilor de la Cruz announced that the 3rd Annual Softball Game between the Groton Town Police Department and the Groton City Police Department will be held on August 20, 2016 at Washington Park. He announced that the next Community Speaks Out meeting will be held on August 17, 2016 at the Groton Public Library.

Councilor Nault reported that she had attended the Economic Development Commission Special Meeting that was held on July 28, 2016. She reported that the consultant that helped write the new Town Zoning Regulations gave a presentation on the changes.

Councilor Watson reported that he attended the retirement party for Felix Prokop. He stated that Mr. Prokop had been a long-time employee for the Ledge Light Health District.

Councilor Antipas stated that he attended the meeting for the Southeastern Connecticut Water Authority Advisory Board on July 21, 2016 and the Boating Advisory Board meeting on July 28, 2016.

Councilor Barber stated that she attended the Heritage Park meeting and a meeting with the Alexey von Schlippe Art Gallery Board of Directors at the UConn Avery Point Campus regarding the closing of the Art Gallery.

Councilor Peruzzotti reported that she marched in the Town of Groton's Fourth of July parade.

Mayor Flax reported that he attended the Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments meeting on July 20, 2016. He reported that he met with the Town Manager on a couple of occasions. He reported that he attended the U.S.S. Groton Sail Foundation meeting on July 25, 2016. He reported that he received several emailings regarding vacation pay-outs and expenditures, an email regarding a police matter at the entrance of Groton Long Point, and an email regarding a car that had been towed on Pearl Street. He stated that he received an email from a constituent reporting that the company Solar City had been exploring the possibility of installing solar panels at the Town Landfill and has found that this is not viable.

Mayor Flax reported that he had discussed the possibility of meeting with the City Mayor to explore consolidation of their jail facilities and Emergency Dispatch Services. The Councilors shared in this discussion and concluded that an invitation will be sent to the City of Groton with three options for a meeting.

b. Clerk of the Representative Town Meeting

Town Clerk Betsy Moukawsher reported that the RTM Education Committee was meeting on August 2, 2016 at 6:00 p.m. at the Groton Senior Center to discuss the Adoption of the Ordinance Appropriating \$184,500,000 for the Design and Construction of the Groton Schools 2020 Plan. She stated that the RTM Finance Committee will be meeting on August 3, 2016 at 7:00 p.m. at the Groton Senior Center to discuss the same Ordinance. She stated that the full RTM will be meeting on August 10, 2016 at 7:30 p.m. at the Groton Senior Center with this Ordinance on their agenda. She announced that there is a Republican vacancy in the 6th district due to the resignation of Representative Luanne DeMatto.

c. Clerk of the Council

Town Clerk Betsy Moukawsher reviewed current dog license renewal information. She explained that fees collected for dog licenses are distribute to the State of Connecticut and to the Town for the purpose of Animal Control. She also reported on revenues collected through Conveyance Tax for the Town of Groton.

d. Town Manager

Town Manager Mark Oefinger reviewed items that may be placed on the agenda for the next Committee of the Whole meeting. He announced that the next Connecticut Sub Century meeting will be held Friday, August 5, 2016 at 9:00 a.m. at the Town Hall Annex. He suggested that Councilors should try to attend either the RTM Finance Committee meeting on August 3, 2016 or the regular RTM meeting on August 10, 2016.

VIII. COMMITTEE REPORTS**a. Personnel & Appointments - Chairman Watson**

Chairman Watson reported that the committee met on August 2, 2016 and that he will file a report at the next Town Council meeting.

b. Rules - Chairman Antipas

No meeting, no report.

c. Committee of the Whole - Mayor Flax

Mayor Flax stated that the Committee of the Whole had met on July 26, 2016 where they discussed many of the items that are on tonight's meeting agenda.

IX. NEW BUSINESS**2016-0187 Library of America/National Endowment for the Humanities Grant**

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING SUBMISSION OF A LIBRARY OF AMERICA/NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES GRANT APPLICATION

WHEREAS, the Library of America/National Endowment for the Humanities offers competitive grants to present public programs, and

WHEREAS, the Groton Public Library is currently involved in presenting several programs celebrating Connecticut's Submarine Century, and

WHEREAS, the grant would assist the library in continuing related programming and expanding the program to include topics in World War I history, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that Town Manager Mark R. Oefinger or his designee is authorized to submit a grant application in the amount of \$1,200 for two programs or \$1,800 for three programs to the Library of America/National Endowment for the Humanities.

A motion was made by Councilor Antipas, seconded by Councilor Nault, that this matter be Adopted.

The motion carried unanimously

2016-0188 Groton Education Foundation Grant - Library

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING SUBMISSION OF A GROTON EDUCATION FOUNDATION GRANT APPLICATION FOR A LIBRARY SUNDAY OPENING

WHEREAS, the Groton Education Foundation supports educational innovation and excellence within the Groton community through grants, and

WHEREAS, the Groton Public Library has been working to secure funding to allow the Library to remain open on Sundays from September 18, 2016 to April 30, 2017, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that Town Manager Mark R. Oefinger or his designee is authorized to submit an application to the Groton Education Foundation for grant funding in the amount of \$520.00 to cover the cost of opening the Library on one Sunday during FYE 2017.

A motion was made by Councilor Morton, seconded by Councilor Barber, that this matter be Adopted.

The motion carried unanimously

2016-0192 Miscellaneous and Ad Hoc Committee Appointments - School Readiness

RESOLUTION MAKING APPOINTMENT TO MISCELLANEOUS AND AD HOC COMMITTEE

RESOLVED, that Town Councilor Harry Watson is appointed as the Mayor's designee to the School Readiness Council.

A motion was made by Councilor Barber, seconded by Councilor Nault, that this matter be Adopted.

The motion carried unanimously

2016-0193 Additional Resolution on Mystic Education Center Brownfield Grant

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING APPLICATION FOR AND RECEIPT OF BROWNFIELDS GRANT FOR THE MYSTIC EDUCATION CENTER

WHEREAS, on July 19, 2016 the Groton Town Council passed resolution #2016-0183 authorizing an application for and receipt of a brownfields grant for the Mystic Education Center, and

WHEREAS, the State Department of Community and Economic Development requires specific language in the resolution, and

WHEREAS, pursuant to Public Act No. 15-193 Sections 3 and 4, the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development is authorized to extend financial assistance for economic development projects, and

WHEREAS, it is desirable and in the public interest that the Town of Groton make an application to the State for \$50,000 in order to undertake the reuse of the state-owned former Mystic Education Center and to execute an Assistance Agreement, now therefore be it

RESOLVED by the Town Council

1. That it is cognizant of the conditions and prerequisites for the state financial assistance imposed by Public Act No. 15-193 Sections 3 and 4; and
2. That the filing of an application for State financial assistance by the Town of Groton in an amount not to exceed \$50,000 is hereby approved and that Mark R. Oefinger, Town Manager, or his designee, is directed to execute and file such application with the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development, to provide such additional information, to execute such other documents as may be required, to execute an Assistance Agreement with the State of Connecticut for State financial assistance if such an agreement is offered, to execute any amendments, decisions, and revisions thereto, and to act as the authorized representative of the

Town of Groton.

A motion was made by Councilor Peruzzotti, seconded by Councilor Nault, that this matter be Adopted.

The motion carried unanimously

2016-0195 Expansion of and Appointments to Noank School Public Gardens Task Force

RESOLUTION EXPANDING THE NOANK SCHOOL PUBLIC GARDENS TASK FORCE AND MAKING ADDITIONAL APPOINTMENTS

WHEREAS, the Town Council established the Noank School Public Gardens Task Force to oversee and manage the day-to-day functions of the Town-sanctioned public gardens at the former Noank School property in accordance with a Guiding Document dated October 21, 2014, and

WHEREAS, the Town Council subsequently appointed seven individuals to serve on the Task Force, and

WHEREAS, the Task Force has requested that the Town Council expand the Noank School Public Gardens Task Force membership to nine people, and

WHEREAS, the Task Force has recommended that one of the new positions be reserved for a student of either Fitch High School or Grasso Technical High School and that the other position be filled by Eric Larson, 61 Prospect Hill Road, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Town Council expands the Noank School Public Gardens Task Force from seven members to nine members, and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Town Council designates one member of the Noank School Public Gardens Task Force as a student from Fitch High School or Grasso Technical High School (to be chosen by the Task Force) and appoints Eric Larson, 61 Prospect Hill Road, as the final member of the Task Force.

A motion was made by Councilor Watson, seconded by Councilor Barber, that this matter be Adopted.

The motion carried unanimously

2016-0194 Town Council/Board of Education Joint Task Force on Shared Services

Not acted upon

Mayor Flax made a motion to suspend the Town Council Rules in order to discuss and vote on item 2016-0202 in order to execute documents pertaining to the United State District Court case #3:14 CV 01850 WWE. The motion was seconded by Councilor Antipas and the vote carried unanimously.

2016-0202 Authorization for Town Manager to Execute Documents Pertaining to Resolution of a Court Case

AUTHORIZATION FOR TOWN MANAGER TO EXECUTE DOCUMENTS PERTAINING TO UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT CASE #3:14 CV 01850 WWE

WHEREAS, the Town is a party to litigation bearing United States District Court Case #3:14 CV 01850 WWE, and

WHEREAS, Town representatives participated in a mediation on July 26, 2016 regarding United States District Court Case #3:14 CV 01850 WWE and reached a tentative agreement to resolve all aspects of the matter, and

WHEREAS, the Town Attorney recommends that the Town approve the mediated tentative agreement, and

WHEREAS, the Town Council determines that it is in the best interest of the Town to approve the

terms of the mediated tentative agreement, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Town Council authorizes Town Manager Mark R. Oefinger to execute documents to be prepared by attorneys representing the Town and consistent with the terms of a mediated tentative agreement pertaining to United States District Court Case #3:14 CV 01850 WWE.

A motion was made by Councilor Nault, seconded by Councilor de la Cruz, that this matter be Adopted.

The motion carried unanimously

Councilor Nault requested a referral to authorize the process for accepting bids for a new Town Attorney.

Councilor Antipas requested referrals to form a Ad Hoc Safety Committee, to form a Task Force to review Town Services and Operations, review reusing the SCRRA building at the Landfill, to form a Citizen's Academy, to consider posting a web site application for a Build a Town Budget model, and to review the ordinance that designates scenic roads.

Mayor Flax requested that Councilor Nault submit her referral request in writing.

Councilor Morton reported that there had been an article in the newspaper regarding a petition circulating in Town that has about 250 signatures by citizens that are opposed to closing Vergennes Court. She stated that this issue is reminiscent of the Allyn Street sign issue. She stated that the Vergennes Court issue is generating a lot of attention from the people who live in that neighborhood. She stated that the Council must treat the citizens from the Fort Hill Homes neighborhood in the same manner as the people from the Allyn Street neighborhood. She stated that the Town could better spend the money that will be used to close the street, if the residents are opposed to this proposal.

Mayor Flax stated that he believes that the proposal to close Vergennes Court has already been approved. He stated that there will be a public information meeting in September. He stated that every citizen has the right to be heard.

Town Manager Mark Oefinger stated that there had been a fatality at this intersection but that the proposed closure predates that accident. He stated that this project has been around since 2005. He stated that this proposed closure is a result of a traffic study that had been conducted as part of a proposed new school that was to be built at the current Claude Chester School site. He stated that he believes that there is a lot of misinformation circulating. He confirmed that there will be a public informational meeting in September. He stated that a pedestrian walkway had always been included in this proposal. He stated that the proposal will only have access for emergency vehicles.

Councilor de la Cruz stated that the neighbors he talked to expressed that this proposal was a done deal. He stated that a lot of people know that there will be a pedestrian walkway. He stated that there is a problem with lighting in that area. He suggested that lighting should be reviewed.

In response to Councilor de la Cruz, Town Manager Mark Oefinger stated that the RTM and the Town Council authorized town funds long ago for this project and that he is not sure of what the repercussion, if any, would be if the Town Council stopped it. He suggested several options that could alleviate the traffic congestion in that area.

In response to Councilor Watson, Town Manager Mark Oefinger confirmed the State had paved a small portion of South Road near the end that had been damaged by large asphalt and cement trucks. He stated that South Road is a State-owned road.

X. ADJOURNMENT

Councilor Watson made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Councilor Barber. Mayor Flax adjourned the meeting at 8:52 p.m.

Attest:

*Betsy Moukawsher
Groton Town Clerk
Clerk of the Town Council*