

**CITY OF GROTON
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
MINUTES
MONDAY, JANUARY 26, 2009**

MUNICIPAL BUILDING
COUNCIL CHAMBERS
7:30 PM

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

I. ROLL CALL

Present: Mayor Dennis Popp, Deputy Mayor Paul Duarte, Councilors David Hale, Hubert Poppe, Celeste Duffy, Marian Galbraith and City Clerk Debra Patrick.

Excused: Councilor Michael Street, Treasurer Janice Waller-Brett and Finance Director Tony Timpano.

REFERRAL ITEM # 314 APPROVE THE 2009 CITY OF GROTON RECREATION DEPARTMENT USER FEES

Mayor Popp said the Town of Groton charges \$25.00 per week and the Town of Ledyard \$35.00 per week while we charge \$100.00 for the 7 week program. He said that with the 2 locations at Washington Park and West Side Middle School additional staffing is necessary.

He said that due to the probability of increased costs for the Summer Playground program he would like the Beach & Parks Committee to look at the user fees again before making a final decision on this year's fee schedule.

REFERRAL ITEM # 315 APPROVE THE RULES AND REGULATIONS AT EASTERN POINT BEACH FOR THE YEAR 2009

Mayor Popp said Parks & Recreation Director Mary Hill was not at the meeting because she was at West Side Middle School with the basketball program participants. He said the only major changes were to hours of operations and the addition of swim lessons.

Councilor Hale approved **Councilor Duffy** seconded a motion to move **REFERRAL ITEM # 315** to the Mayor and Council meeting of February 2, 2009. **Motion carried.**

REFERRAL ITEM # 316 ACCEPT AN ASSISTANCE TO FIRE FIGHTERS GRANT TO SUPPORT THE TOTAL PROGRAM COST OF \$750,000.00 (FEDERAL PORTION \$712,500.00) AND THAT THE CITY OF GROTON MATCH 5% OF THE TOTAL PROJECT COST (\$37,500.00)

Chief Delia spoke to the Council about the grant money he has been able to procure the past few years and the equipment the department was able to purchase with it. He said this year he was able to submit additional grants for a total of \$900,000.00 however the funds awarded are less at \$750,000.00. He said the department needs a new tower truck and the funds will go a long way in helping them to purchase one. The current vehicle is constantly in need of repairs and due to restrictions imposed by the grant they intend to include it as a trade-in during the purchasing process. He said that they have been very fortunate that the times when our truck is in for service

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the Poquonnock Bridge Fire Department's truck has been available and we have been able to do the same for them when theirs is in for service. He said it is very unusual for the grant money to be awarded for a tower truck and he strongly recommended approval by the Council to accept it. Councilor Galbraith asked where the additional funds for the purchase would come from. Chief Delia said it would have to be bonded and he would come back to the Council once he had the figures.

Councilor Hale approved **Deputy Mayor Duarte** seconded a motion to move **REFERRAL ITEM # 316** to the Mayor and Council meeting of February 2, 2009. **Motion carried.**

REFERRAL ITEM # 317 PUBLIC WORKS PRESENTATION - SNOWPLOWING

Highway Foreman Tim Umrysz and Supervisor Steve Biekert were in attendance to answer questions for the Councilors.

Mr. Umrysz gave the Councilors an overview of the procedures to prepare for snow removal. There was some discussion on the new treated salt that works well with the colder temperatures down to zero. There was discussion on the use of sand, the sand/salt mixture and the new treated materials. There was continued discussion on how the new products will adhere to the asphalt. Councilor Galbraith said she brought the subject up at a recent Council meeting due to the complaints she received from residents and people driving in who work in the City. She said they told her the roads had not been cleared as well as they had been in the past or even in the Town of Groton. She asked if the reason may have been due to the extreme cold.

Mr. Umrysz said that would certainly be an explanation for the roads appearing less cleared than usual. He said traffic can be a major impediment to getting the roads cleared and extreme cold will make it difficult to clear the snow once the bottom layer freezes.

He went on to say there are a number of roads that fall under the jurisdiction of the Town of Groton or the State that some people may not be aware of.

There was discussion on how the temperature will effect the ability to clear all of the snow and ice once it gets packed down.

Councilor Poppe asked at what point they begin plowing.

Mr. Umrysz said that if the snow begins during the workday the trucks are sent out immediately to sand. If the snow begins in the overnight hours the Police Department will call the on call person and the employees will be called as soon after as is possible.

Councilor Poppe asked for Mr. Umrysz's opinion on the job the State does on roads here in the City compared to what we do.

Mr. Umrysz said he felt they did a good job.

Councilor Poppe asked what the policy was on the more narrow streets.

Mr. Umrysz said they use the smaller trucks and they get to the hills as soon as the main roads are cleared.

Councilor Poppe asked if sanitation/recycling is stopped during inclement weather.

Mr. Umrysz said it was due to safety concerns for the employees on the back of the truck and the drivers are usually needed to work the plows. He said the crews can be out there for more than 24 hours at a time.

Councilor Galbraith asked about the Magic Zero and asked if he was optimistic about it.

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Mr. Umrysz said they have not used it much and it is hard to come by.

Councilor Poppe asked why it is hard to come by.

Mr. Umrysz said demand must be the cause.

Mayor Popp asked Mr. Umrysz to explain how they mix the applications.

Mr. Umrysz said they apply the mix in the order applicable for the temperatures.

Councilor Poppe asked what is used by the State on bridges.

Mr. Umrysz said it is calcium chloride.

Councilor Hale said it is very corrosive.

Councilor Poppe asked how this year compares to the past couple of years.

Mr. Umrysz said it is busier due to the milder winters the past couple of years.

Councilor Poppe asked how the costs compared to last year.

Mr. Umrysz said it is close in price.

Councilor Poppe asked if we get a discount as a municipality.

Mr. Umrysz said they work on a bid through Council of Governments and costs can be based on volume.

Councilor Galbraith thanked Mr. Umrysz for coming to clarify things for her and thanks to his staff for all their hard work.

Councilor Poppe brought up the issue of having an ordinance requiring residents to remove cars from the street during a snow storm. He reported what they do in New York City during snow storms.

Mayor Popp said that it might be possible to require 1 side of the street parking. He said they will look at individual streets to see what can be done. Some streets have a better side than others but others just don't have the space.

There was discussion on Thames Street and a number of smaller streets in the City that have limited if any off street parking for residents. That if they can't park on the street they live on then where will they park their vehicles.

There was discussion on how they would soon be talking about potholes.

Steve Biekert said they have attended to some of the potholes but it is difficult to do this time of year.

REFERRAL ITEM # 2 JOINT TOWN/CITY ISSUES

- A. PASSIVE RECREATION
- B. BUDDINGTON ROAD PROPERTIES
- D. WATER ISSUES
- E. CABLE TV

Mayor Popp said all they need is a closing date on Buddington Road properties but everything else is completed.

Deputy Mayor Duarte moved **Councilor Duffy** seconded a motion to delete **REFERRAL ITEM #2B** from the **Committee of the Whole Referral List**. **Motion carried.**

Councilor Hale moved **Deputy Mayor Duarte** seconded a motion to delete **REFERRAL ITEM #2E** from the **Committee of the Whole Referral List**. **Motion carried.**

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REFERRAL ITEM #5 POLICE RELATED ORDINANCES

There was some discussion on whether this item should be deleted. City Clerk Patrick said she is working on creating a list of Ordinances that can be deleted. Many date back to 1904 that are obsolete or have been superceded by new ones. It was decided that they would address this item at a later date when they can make a referral to the Public Safety Committee.

**REFERRAL ITEM #5 ORDINANCE CONCERNING PLACEMENT AND
REMOVAL OF TEMPORARY SIGNS, FLYERS AND POSTERS**

Mayor Popp said that the issues have been resolved for the most part and it can be covered by Zoning.

Deputy Mayor Duarte moved **Councilor Hale** seconded a motion to delete **REFERRAL ITEM #5** from the **Committee of the Whole Referral List**. **Motion carried.**

**REFERRAL ITEM #179 LIQUIFIED NATURAL GAS FACILITY IN LONG ISLAND
SOUND**

There was considerable discussion on this item regarding the need for a facility such as this and whether the City Council supported it. There was discussion regarding the opposition by the State of Connecticut and that Attorney General Blumenthal is fighting it. Councilor Poppe felt strongly that it was a necessity and was opposed to deleting the item.

Councilor Galbraith moved **Councilor Hale** seconded a motion to delete **REFERRAL ITEM #179** from the **Committee of the Whole Referral List**. **Motion carried 4-1-0 with Councilor Poppe opposing.**

**REFERRAL ITEM #244 ACCEPT AND APPROVE THE PROPOSED MANAGEMENT
PERSONNEL SALARY INCREASES AS PRESENTED AND
RECOMMENDED BY THE DIRECTOR OF UTILITIES OF THE
CITY OF GROTON**

Mayor Popp said he was unsure what to do about this since we are in the midst of a study being done and it will be presented soon. Councilor Galbraith asked if we could change the name of the referral and leave it. Mayor Popp and City Clerk Patrick agreed that they should make a new referral next month and delete this one at that time.

**REFERRAL ITEM # 285 INDEPENDENT AUDITORS'S REPORT ON INTERNAL
CONTROL OVER FINANCIAL REPORTING AND THE ESTABLISHMENT
OR A FRAUD PREVENTION AND DETECTION POLICY**

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Mayor Popp said the RFP came to him in early December, he made some changes and sent it back for review in Finance. He asked if the Council still wanted to do this.

Councilor Poppe asked why we would want to do it.

Mayor Popp said it is to put fraud prevention procedures in place. As an example there are 3 people taking cash in the front office, 1 in the back office and in the Finance Department. Joe Centofanti addressed the Council and gave his recommendations to have a centralized money receipt area in order to be able to balance the books easily. He also recommended that we set up a petty cash fund in the Finance Department.

Councilor Galbraith said that she believed that Mr. Centofanti said part of an internal audit was to look at our processes and to look at how we handled our financial issues. He also felt that with the upcoming change in personnel it was a good time to look at this to insure our policies and processes are up to date and efficient.

Mayor Popp asked which policies and processes we were talking about.

Councilor Galbraith said she thought it was the overall processes that guide our offices and how we handle our money.

Councilor Poppe asked how much that was going to cost.

Mayor Popp said he believed an estimate was given. He thought it was around the \$40,000.00 to \$60,000.00 range.

Councilor Poppe said he didn't think spending \$100,000.00 to straighten out how we handle our petty cash was wise.

Mayor Popp said it involved much more than just the petty cash. It's all the money that comes in to Groton Utilities and TVC. We have hired an armored car to come in now because of the sums of cash coming in. It was also to set up a fraud prevention policy. He told Councilor Poppe that he understands what he is saying but if we set up policies to prevent fraud or theft then we are being good stewards.

Councilor Poppe asked if there was reason to believe there was fraud or theft taking place.

Mayor Popp said he didn't know that there was. He said he has no reason to distrust the employees.

Councilor Hale said that for a long time no one had any reason to mistrust the employee in Ledyard who was convicted. He went on to say that it was not a reflection on any of the employees here.

Mayor Popp asked for a motion to enter Executive Session for further discussion.

II. POSSIBLE EXECUTIVE SESSION

Councilor Poppe moved **Councilor Hale** seconded a motion to enter Executive Session to discuss referral item # 285, personnel issues to include City Clerk Patrick. **Motion carried.**

Executive Session commenced at 8:25 p.m.

Councilor Hale moved **Councilor Duffy** seconded a motion to exit Executive Session.

Motion carried.

Executive Session ended at 8:30 p.m.

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III. COMMENTS FROM EXECUTIVE SESSION

None.

Councilor Hale asked if we were going to leave Referral Item #285 open.

Mayor Popp said we would.

There was discussion on the cost of salt and how some people have removed the sand from some of the boxes to use for some commercial plowing.

Councilor Hale said that the sand is there for private citizens to use not commercial companies.

He suggested that if a commercial company is seen taking the sand it should be reported.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

Councilor Hale moved **Councilor Duffy** seconded a motion to adjourn. **Motion carried.**

Mayor Popp adjourned the meeting at **8:34 p.m.**

ATTEST:

APPROVED:

Debra Patrick
City Clerk