

**CITY OF GROTON  
SPECIAL  
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE  
MINUTES  
MONDAY, APRIL 16, 2012**

**MUNICIPAL BUILDING  
6:00 PM**

Mayor Galbraith called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

**I. ROLL CALL**

Present: Mayor Marian Galbraith, Deputy Mayor Celeste Duffy, Councilors David Hale, Keith Hedrick, Lawrence Gerrish, Amy Moncy, William Jervis, Finance Director Michael Hillsberg and City Clerk Debra Patrick. Excused: Treasurer Janice Waller-Brett.

**Item # 431 BUDGET REVIEW**

Parks & Recreation Director Mary Hill presented her budget and explained the 2 functions, Recreation and Maintenance. She said the Recreation budget is up about 1% due to an expected increase in the minimum wage although the exact amount of the increase in the wage has not yet been determined.

Finance Director Hillsberg asked if all employees would be given an increase equal to the increase in the minimum wage.

Ms. Hill said they would not but she would have to increase the wages for the returning staff to a lesser degree so they would not be making as little as a first year employee.

Councilor Hedrick asked if there might be an advantage to consolidating the phone plans since he sees such a discrepancy between plans in costs.

Mr. Hillsberg said they were all under the same State plan but there are options for each department based on the type of usage they need such as texting.

There was some discussion on the Director's salary and how it is broken down into 2 separate functions within the budget.

Ms. Hill went over her Maintenance budget and said there is an increase and much of it is due to OPEB, seasonal staff, Capital Improvement and unemployment compensation. She explained how many items have been moved into more appropriate cost centers and the CIP projects in the budget. Councilor Hedrick asked if there might be grants available.

There was discussion as to whether there might be some grant funds available for the bleachers in the CIP due to the need for handicapped accessibility.

Mayor Galbraith said she hasn't seen any but they would certainly keep looking.

Councilor Gerrish said it appears as though the budget was held in check.

Mr. Hillsberg said that while the economy has worsened the attendance at the Summer Playground program has increased.

Deputy Mayor Duffy said the needed improvements for the Zbierski House are not in this budget. She said the asbestos removal was discussed at the Beach & Parks Committee.

Ms. Hill said some of the improvements are in the budget but as things change they will address them.

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Deputy Mayor Duffy asked if there were any new programs.

Ms. Hill said they are looking at some new programs however they must be mindful of space constraints at the present time for indoor programs.

The Councilors thanked Ms. Hill for coming in to go over her budget.

Barbara Goodrich, City Planner went over her budget and explained where she made adjustments. This year she combined 2 cost centers, cut office supplies and advertising. She explained that the advertising is required by State Statute but cut what she safely could. She will begin working with Thames Records Management scanning her records into the Document Management program for retention purposes.

Deputy Mayor Duffy asked if she will have enough supplies with the cuts she has made.

Ms. Goodrich said she will work with what she has and made upgrades in software that will allow her to do more in house mapping and that she shares the expense of a plotter with the Highway Department Engineers.

The Councilors thanked Ms. Goodrich for her time.

Rick Stevens, Manager, Water Division, Groton Utilities presented the budget for the WPCA.

Mr. Stevens thanked Mayor Galbraith and Finance Director Hillsberg for helping to prepare a more detailed budget. He went over the highlights of the budget explaining that labor costs are up slightly due to interns who have become full time employees and some are approaching step increases they have earned through attaining certifications. He also said there is an increase in OPEB and facility repairs are up. He praised the staff for their energy conservation efforts which results in costs savings.

There was some discussion on Capital Reserve and equipment replacement.

Councilor Money said she was happy to see the Optimization Study.

Mayor Galbraith said that the coordinated efforts of WPCA staff, Mr. Stevens and the Groton Utilities Project Management costs for the study will be less.

There was discussion of the costs for benefits and the staff who go above and beyond in doing such a great job within the constraints of their budget.

The Councilors thanked Mr. Stevens for his time.

Mayor Galbraith went over the General Government budget for the Council. She said a small amount was added for professional development under legislative for the Councilors to allow for travel to the National League of Cities Conference each year. She said the Boards and Commissions is for the Retirement Board and Charter Revision Commission. She said the Charter Revision Commission will require enough funding for advertising the entire proposed Charter in the newspaper as required by State Statute. She said Clerk Patrick contacted the newspaper to negotiate a lower price. There is additional funding for contractual services for the City Attorney for Charter Revision and for the election. She said there are costs associated with the Retirement Board for actuarial's. She said under Citizen participation funding was increased slightly for City Day and under Beautification. She said there was a decrease in funding for Beautification and Community Events due to the small amount that has been spent in the current FY. She said there is a separate line item for Beautification that will be replacing trees on Triton Place and Elms on Shennecossett Road. She said the City will continue to contribute when there are true City events.

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She went over the highlights of the Administration line items. She said they combined a number of items under another function to more accurately show what the money is being spent for. She said legal services are under Contractual Services and that funding for legal services was added to HR as well to cover associated costs for employees. She said labor costs have been very high but are expected to level off. She said a new position has been added, File Clerk, to assist various departments with administrative help. She said the person will rotate around to provide assistance where needed.

There was discussion on the costs of the salary, benefits and the responsibilities and utilization of the position.

She said General Government will now contribute to CIP.

Mr. Hillsberg said the fuel dispensing system is being replaced and there is a portion of that cost on the General Government CIP. He said this new system will have the ability to track usage and mileage.

Mayor Galbraith went over the Civil Preparedness budget. She said the EOC will be moved into Council Chambers due to flooding concerns in the basement and HVAC issues. She went over the modifications to the room in the 2 phases that will take place and said that the equipment from the EOC will be moved up eliminating the need to purchase new. She said storage will be built in and the closets in the room would be utilized as well. She said during Phase II the dais would be lowered leaving just enough space under it for wiring and the stairs would be taken out and a ramp added to allow for access for a handicapped person. She said both secure and open Wifi would be installed. She said as part of their 5 year plan the IT Department would be including over \$9,000.00 for the technology aspects.

There was discussion on the possibility of any Smartboards that are in the now closed schools might be utilized here.

Mayor Galbraith said the funding for LedgeLight Health District is reimbursed by the Town of Groton.

Mayor Galbraith asked the Councilors to give some thought to the budget she is presenting and let her know if there are any areas of concern.

There was further discussion of the File Clerk position and how that position could be utilized long term.

**II. POSSIBLE EXECUTIVE SESSION**

None.

**III. COMMENTS FROM EXECUTIVE SESSION**

None.

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**IV. ADJOURNMENT**

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

**Mayor Galbraith** adjourned the meeting at **7:23 p.m.**

**ATTEST:**

**APPROVED:**

**Debra Patrick**  
**City Clerk**