

Special Meeting
Council Committee Public Safety/Public Works

Wednesday February 4, 2026 7:00PM Room City Council Chambers

I-Call to Order @ 7:04PM

Present:

Chair Ambroise
Councilor Piazza
Mayor Rusk
Chief Tompkins
Director of Finance Yuhas
Battalion Chief Price (Union Rep)
Battalion Chief Gilmour (Union Rep)
Firefighter Matt Parizo (Union Rep)

Absent

Councilor Norris

II-Approval of Minutes

Minutes from January 28, 2026 special meeting approved by consensus as presented.

III. Referred Items

a. Fire Department Staffing

Discussion continued on increasing City of Groton firefighting staff. Director Yuhas provided estimates for firefighter salaries and benefits based on current collective bargaining agreement. Discussion continued of seeking Safer Grant when applications are accepted. Discussion on the lengthy timeline to onboard new firefighters using this grant so another option to onboard/create a new firefighter position prior to this approach. This will be discussed later in the agenda.

IV. Continued Business

a. West Pleasant Valley Fire Protection Agreement

The original signed document was located from 1962. There is no language discussing fire marshal inspection fees. Fire marshal inspection fees were not able to be collected due to Connecticut General Statute until a few years ago. Chief Tompkins has reached out to the contacts for WPV. Awaiting communication back to seek next steps. This agenda item will be revisited at a future meeting. The intent of this agenda item by this committee is to determine if the City of Groton can create an ordinance to collect fire marshal inspection fees in the WPV fire district that is covered by City of Groton Fire Department.

One point of note is that the Town of Groton processes building permits. Discussion began on how CoG fire would collect fire marshal inspection fees.

b. Discussion of Fairview Homes Fire Protection

At present, Fairview Homes does not provide any money to WPV or CoG for fire protection. It is a part of WPV district. Connecticut General Statutes (CGS) now allow Fairview Homes to be charged for fire protection. The committee would like to consider fire marshal inspection fees in this area also. Awaiting contact by Chief Tompkins with WPV contact to determine next steps.

V. New Business

a. Consideration of Additional Firefighter Staff prior to SAFER Grant

Discussion by committee to consider creating one additional firefighter position. This would be added prior to applying for SAFER Grant for 3 firefighters when it becomes open for applications. It could take around 3 months to recruit and onboard a new firefighter that already has fire academy training. It will also be an additional few months once onboarded to provide training in City of Groton Fire Department procedures.

Motion made by Piazza

2nd by Ambroise

Recommend to City Council to create 1 new City of Groton firefighter position for FYE27 budget.

Motion Passes 2-0-0

b. Consideration of Changing Firefighter Minimum

Councilor Piazza asked if anything can be done to increase staffing standards at the state level. Mayor Rusk noted she has been in contact with state legislators and due to it being a short session of the legislature it is doubtful anything will be done.

Discussion on the possibility of firefighter selling back of overtime earned rather than letting it lapse every fiscal year. This could be done by a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

The committee discussed the commitment of using OT budget to increase the firefighter minimum would deplete the account and increase the approved yearly expenses for the overall city budget. There would be a need to call another Freeman's meeting outlined in the City Charter to approve the additional expenses for the remaining fiscal year ending June 30th. Also, the increase of the FF minimum would significantly increase the OT budget for the upcoming fiscal year.

An option was brought up by Mr. Gilmour to consider raising the FF minimum on all weekday third shifts and all weekend shifts to 5. During the weekdays the Chief and

Deputy Chief would cover that 5th position in order to provide adequate coverage at fire incidents.

The committee would like to bring these issues to discuss at a Committee of the Whole to seek further input prior to making a decision.

Adjournment

Motion made by Piazza

Seconded by Ambroise

Passes 2-0-0

Meeting adjourned @ 9:02PM

Next meeting February 18th 5:30PM