



Tuesday, February 24, 2026 | 6:00 PM

Special COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE - Minutes

Mayor Jill Rusk, Deputy Mayor Stephen Sheffield, Councilor Jean-Claude Ambroise, Councilor Nicholas Johns, Councilor Christy McElroy, Councilor Christine Piazza, Councilor Paul Norris and City Clerk Dani Baycura

The following minutes meet all requirements under CT FOIA for public meetings and is not a transcript of the meeting. Please visit [Groton Municipal Television on YouTube](#) to view the meeting in further detail.

I. CALL TO ORDER & ROLL CALL

Meeting was called to order at 6:01pm.

Present: Mayor Rusk, Councilor Johns and Councilor McElroy. Via Zoom: Deputy Mayor Sheffield and Councilor Ambroise.

II. NEW BUSINESS OR REFERRAL

A. Boards and Commissions

1. Planning and Zoning Commission Appointment – M. Lhowe

Applicant Mary Lhowe was introduced to the council and responded to general inquiries made by city councilors. Informed she was a registered Democrat, has enjoyed living in the City so far and would be interested in seeing Thames Street utilize its waterfront. But also overall, finds the land use commission interesting and a good fit for her.

Motion to move to Mayor and Council March 2, 2026: Councilor Ambroise. Second: Deputy Mayor Sheffield. Motion carried, 4-0-0.

2. Youth Advisory Committee Re-appointment – K. Strickland

Motion to move to Mayor and Council March 2, 2026: Councilor Ambroise. Second: Councilor Johns. Motion carried, 4-0-0.

3. L. Lambert decided to withdraw her name for reappointment.

4. Youth Advisory Committee Re-appointment – M. Bishop

Motion to move to Mayor and Council March 2, 2026: Councilor Johns. Second: Councilor McElroy. Motion carried, 4-0-0.



B. Economic Development

1. CT Main Street Invite

Economic Development Manager Patrick, invited city officials to attend an upcoming event hosted by Connecticut Main Street on March 12th.

C. Parks and Recreation

1. Lower Thames View Update

Director Hill discussed the timeline for the design phase, aiming to complete it by December 1, 2026 to align with the construction season, with the project potentially opening the following spring. The project is funded through a SHIP grant approved in 2018, with additional federal grants covering the dock renovation, and the team emphasized their commitment to managing costs and ensuring compliance with regulations. Councilor Ambroise expressed support for the project while emphasizing the importance of careful planning and contingency measures to avoid cost overruns.

Motion to move to Mayor and Council March 2, 2026: Councilor McElroy. Second: Councilor Johns. Motion carried, 4-0-0.

2. Mohegan Basketball Club Donation

The city received the final \$25,000 installment from the Connecticut Sun, which will be placed in a special revenue account for future maintenance of the Washington Park basketball court.

Motion to move to Mayor and Council March 2, 2026: Deputy Mayor Sheffield. Second: Councilor McElroy. Motion carried, 4-0-0.

3. Submarine Memorial Guardrail

The council approved to move forward with repair and replacement plan of the guardrail fencing at the Submarine Veteran's Memorial Garden, which was budgeted in the current capital improvement plan.

Motion to move to Mayor and Council March 2, 2026: Councilor Johns. Second: Councilor McElroy. Motion carried, 4-0-0.

D. Public Safety/Public Works Committee Update

1. West Pleasant Valley Fire Inspection Fees

The Public Safety and Public Works Committee, chaired by Councilor Ambroise, has been working on fire staffing and inspection fees. They discussed



implementing fire inspection fees for multi-family homes with three or more units and all commercial properties in the City of Groton, as well as for the West Pleasant Valley area. The committee found no legal barriers to collecting fees in West Pleasant Valley and recommended instituting an ordinance to generate revenue to offset the cost of increasing firefighter staffing. The group agreed to move forward with the ordinance in the city and explore charging fire marshal fees for West Pleasant Valley, similar to other fire districts. Deputy Mayor Sheffield expressed interest in collaborating with the Finance Director to ensure sustainable funding options for additional firefighters. Chief Tompkins explained that fire districts in Groton can independently charge fees for fire marshal services, which could bring in hundreds of thousands of dollars annually. The council agreed to support Chief Tompkins' investigation into implementing these fees, as it would help offset the costs of increasing firefighter staffing.

2. Fire Staffing

The council discussed increasing firefighter staffing in Groton, with a goal of reaching a 5-person minimum shift. Mayor Rusk presented options for funding additional firefighters, including applying for a SAFER grant or hiring immediately. The council agreed to gather public input through polls and public comment at upcoming meetings. They decided to aim for hiring two firefighters by July 2026 and applying for the SAFER grant, with the possibility of hiring one firefighter sooner. The mayor emphasized that while the current budget doesn't allow for immediate hiring, the council has the power to adjust the budget based on public feedback.

III. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn: Councilor Johns. Second: Councilor McElroy. Motion carried, 4-0-0.

Meeting adjourned at 7:55pm.

ATTEST:

APPROVED:

Dani Baycura
City Clerk