



City of Groton, Connecticut

**City Municipal Building
295 Meridian Street
Groton, CT 06340**

**Committee of the Whole
Minutes**

Council Chambers

Monday, April 25, 2022

6:00 PM

Mayor Keith Hedrick, Deputy Mayor Gweneviere Depot, Councilor Rashaad Carter, Councilor Lisa McCabe, Councilor Paul Norris, Councilor Christine Piazza and Councilor Stephen Sheffield

Mayor Keith Hedrick called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

I. ROLL CALL

Present: Mayor Keith Hedrick, Deputy Mayor Gweneviere Depot, Councilor Paul Norris, Councilor Christine Piazza, Councilor Stephen Sheffield, Finance Director Ron Yuhas
Late Arrival: Councilor Rashaad Carter (6:02 p.m.) and Councilor Lisa McCabe (6:02 p.m.)

II. REFERRALS:

REFERRAL ITEM #1 APPOINTMENTS

Edward Jacome (City Clerk)

Mayor Hedrick reviewed the City Clerk position opening and read an excerpt from the Charter. Edward Jacome introduced himself and provided an overview of his resume. He is also a member in of the RTM.

Councilor Sheffield thanked Edward for attending the meeting and his willingness to serve. He inquired where Edward grew up. Edward responded to being a lifelong Connecticut resident and residing in the City for twelve and a half years.

Deputy Mayor Depot asked if there would be any conflict with being a member of the RTM and the City Clerk. Edward noted that if a conflict arose he would recuse himself. He has received legal opinion and there is no issue.

Deputy Mayor Depot commented on the timeframe of Town Council elections and if he were City Clerk with three years left on the term, would he leave the position to take a seat on Town Council. Edward intends to stay the entire term of City Clerk.

Mayor Hedrick noted the start date would be the 16th of May.

Councilor Norris inquired what would be the biggest challenge in getting up to speed as the City Clerk.

Edward believes he will quickly adjust, facilitate and execute the needs of Councilors and Mayor. He is a quick learner and will leverage other employees.

Mayor Keith Hedrick requests a motion to move this to the May 2, 2022 Mayor and Council Meeting.

Motion made by Deputy Mayor Depot, second by Councilor Sheffield.

All in favor. Motion carried.

**REFERRAL ITEM #748 DONATION REQUESTS
GROTON MYSTIC FALCONS YOUTH FOOTBALL LEAGUE**

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Two board members of the Groton Mystic Falcons Youth Football League requested a donation from the Council to replace helmets. Conference bylaws indicate helmets needs to be replaced every 10 years. Each helmet is about \$125.00.

Councilor Carter appreciated the in person request for donations and asked for a recap of the impact COVID had on the league.

Keona Strickland (President of the Board) mentioned the increasing insurance costs and the missed 2020 season which impacted the financials. Lack of a financial foundation will increase the price of registration. There are many income restrictive families and the League does not like to turn players down because of the social outlet it provides.

Deputy Mayor Depot thanked them for coming and agrees to promoting outdoor activities. She asked Finance Director Yuhas if the Council has donated in the past and if Groton Utilities was also sought out for donations.

Finance Director Yuhas stated a \$450.00 donation was given in September 2019 and a \$600.00 donation was given in 2021. Out of the \$5,000.00 budgeted line for donations there is a balance of \$2,400.00.

Mayor Hedrick noted there are no other donations in the queue and unsure if Groton Utilities was solicited.

Deputy Mayor Depot recommends the maximum donation of \$1,000.00.

Keona Strickland has sent letters to the Town Council and stated they are not as benevolent as the City.

After extensive discussion, the Mayor and Council agreed to a \$1,000.00 donation to receive recognition and provide the most scholarships as possible.

Mayor Keith Hedrick requests a motion to move this to the May 2, 2022 Mayor and Council Meeting.

Motion made by Deputy Mayor Depot, second by Councilor McCabe.

All in favor. Motion carried.

REFERRAL ITEM #770 FIRE

ACCEPT GIFT CARD DONATION FROM HARBOR FREIGHT

Fire Chief Robert Tompkins informed the Councilors of a \$400 gift card available from Harbor Freight that one of the fire fighter researched. He intends to use it to purchase a large rolling tool box and some tools for the Eastern Point Station.

Deputy Mayor Depot gave kudos to fire fighter that found the available gift card.

Mayor Keith Hedrick requests a motion to move this to the May 2, 2022 Mayor and Council Meeting.

Motion made by Councilor McCabe, second by Deputy Mayor Depot.

All in favor. Motion carried.

VEHICLE REPLACEMENT

Fire Chief Robert Tompkins mentioned this at his budget presentation. He is requesting to replace

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two vehicles (G-1 and G-16) utilizing funds in CIP. The quotes are through the state bid. They would receive 2023 models with an anticipated delivery date of December 2022. Chief Tompkins answered the Councilors questions regarding equipment installed in the vehicles and staying on track to replace the fleet in appropriate timely manner.

G-1

Mayor Keith Hedrick requests a motion to move this to the May 2, 2022 Mayor and Council Meeting.

Motion made by Councilor Piazza, second by Councilor Sheffield.

All in favor. Motion carried.

G-16

Fire Chief Tompkins mentioned once the ARPA funds are discussed, there is a possibility to move the funding to replenish the CIP fund.

Mayor Keith Hedrick requests a motion to move this to the May 2, 2022 Mayor and Council Meeting.

Motion made by Councilor McCabe, second by Councilor Sheffield.

All in favor. Motion carried.

REFERRAL ITEM #794 PUBLIC WORKS

TRIMBLE

Director of Public Works William Robarge requests approval for GIS mapping for the stormwater system. Phase 1 would capture the current CAD and excel files to digitize map/drawing that will identify where all the assets are located. Phase 2 in FY2023 will incorporate the Trimble piece with Cityworks that captures costs and work orders. Trimble is already established in Groton Utilities.

Mayor Keith Hedrick requests a motion to move this to the May 2, 2022 Mayor and Council Meeting.

Motion made by Councilor McCabe, second by Councilor Sheffield.

All in favor. Motion carried.

REFERRAL ITEM #655 DEPARTMENT PRESENTATIONS

VISIONING THAMES STREET PRESENTATION

Economic Development Specialist Cierra Patrick introduced consultant Maria Gonzalez with Interface Studios.

Maria Gonzalez thanked the Councilors for their time and stated this has been a six month process by listening to community concerns, ideas and visions for shaping Thames Street.

Economic Development Specialist Patrick noted there is a display of the entire report in the Municipal foyer with comment cards.

After a lengthy discussion, the presentation will be available on the City website, a condensed version with before and after photos available, and ideas on how to attract people to Thames View Park. The Mayor and Councilors were appreciative of Cierra's dedication and hard work on the project.

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION PHASE 2 MOU

Economic Development Specialist Patrick informed the Council that they have approved phase 1 and approved funding for phase 1 and phase 2.

Mayor Hedrick stated capacity and capability is lacking with the limited internal staff.

Mayor Keith Hedrick requests a motion to move this to the May 2, 2022 Mayor and Council Meeting.

Motion made by Councilor Norris, second by Deputy Mayor Depot.

All in favor. Motion carried.

REVISE THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GRANT PROGRAM POLICY & PROCEDURES

Economic Development Specialist Patrick presented a revised Economic Development Grant Program Policy and Procedures highlighting an increase of a grant award to up to \$2,500.00, some clarification in the admin roles, added some required documentation, clarified property owners are included in the program and clarification of one property owner but multiple tenants. She also mentioned the increase of \$10,000.00 for grants in the proposed FY2023 Budget.

Deputy Mayor Depot likes the flexibility and revisions. She would like an info sheet on the program to advertise.

Economic Development Specialist Patrick will look into creating one.

Mayor Keith Hedrick requests a motion to move this to the May 2, 2022 Mayor and Council Meeting.

Motion made by Councilor Norris, second by Deputy Mayor Depot.

All in favor. Motion carried.

PROCLAMATION FOR CITY OF GROTON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT WEEK MAY 9TH-13TH

Economic Development Specialist Patrick stated this is an opportunity for each municipality to showcase what has been implemented in the community. Councilor Sheffield inquired if there are any events for Councilors. Economic Development Specialist Patrick believes there will be some virtual videos she can share.

Mayor Keith Hedrick requests a motion to move this to the May 2, 2022 Mayor and Council Meeting.

Motion made by Councilor Norris, second by Councilor Sheffield.

All in favor. Motion carried.

REFERRAL ITEM# 690 CITY BUDGET PRESENTATIONS PLANNING

City Planner Leslie Creane presented the Planning Budget. She noted an increase in office supplies and advertising due to a new large plotter already in use that requires a monthly fee. Contract service accounts were consolidated although there is no way to predict. City Planner Creane reminded the Councilors she is prudent with spending and believes her experience minimal need to

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contact attorneys. In response to Deputy Mayor Depot inquiry on the actual spend of contract services below budget. City Planner Creane noted an ongoing litigation with ZBA. Director of Finance Yuhas will need to confirm the contract services in ZBA budget and City Planning budget to provide the Councilors with actuals. Councilor Norris inquired how the vehicle operations/supply funds are expended. City Planner Creane commented on gas for using a city vehicle.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic Development Specialist Patrick reviewed the administrative portion of the budget. Funds were re-allocated amongst the existing accounts. She has taken over some duties that used to be contracted out leading to a reduction in the contract services budget line. Deputy Mayor Depot would like more details in the highlight section of the budget, this is where Economic Development Patrick could highlight the financial awards of \$118,096.49 received. Councilor Norris agrees the budget does not give a good description of all that Economic Development has achieved.

City Planner Leslie Creane presented the remainder of the Economic Development Budget. She is strongly in favor of the increase in salary and appreciates what the position entails. She continued to mention the job description for Cierra's position is based off of when it was a part time position in 2018 and does not depict Cierra's full time responsibilities. She commented on Cierra's education and capabilities and the cost of losing her would be greater than a salary increase. City Planner Creane presented salaries of similar positions in other municipalities. Deputy Mayor Depot recognized Cierra's hard work and does not think it is unreasonable to increase her salary since the job has evolved greatly. She believes happy employees work better as a team and individually and employees should be paid for what they are worth. Deputy Mayor Depot would like to see Cierra implement the plans she has collaborated on. The consensus of all Councilors are to review the salaries of non-union employees. Mayor Hedrick stated that Human Resources is reviewing salaries with an outside organization and recognizes it is an issue across the board.

NON DEPARTMENTAL

Director of Finance Ron Yuhas presented the non-departmental budget. He noted the areas of this budget is for General Insurance, Pay Adjustment, Debt Service and Contingency. Councilor Norris applauded staff on making appropriate budget cuts. Mayor Hedrick notes the Council must approve the budget on May 16th and the published budget for May 23rd.

**REFERRAL ITEM #742 GROTON UTILITIES
LEWIS TREE SERVICE**

Director of Utilities Ron Gaudet stated the Utility is currently using Asplundh Tree Service and their contract was up for bid. Lewis Tree Service was the lowest bidder including a full time supervisor overseeing Groton and Bozrah tree crews. Mayor Hedrick stated the need for a supervisor was from feedback from Commissioners. Deputy Mayor Depot inquired if any other municipality or utility recommends Lewis Tree Service. Director of Utilities Gaudet stated they are used in Western Connecticut by Eversource and UI.

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Mayor Keith Hedrick requests a motion to move this to the May 2, 2022 Mayor and Council Meeting.

Motion made by Councilor Norris, second by Councilor McCabe.

All in favor. Motion carried.

D&D POWER

Director of Utilities Ron Gaudet noted the replacement of poles and wire on Military Highway. D&D Power is a subsidiary of BHI in which we have a Master Service Agreement with.

Mayor Keith Hedrick requests a motion to move this to the May 2, 2022 Mayor and Council Meeting.

Motion made by Councilor Norris, second by Councilor Piazza.

All in favor. Motion carried.

PAR ELECTRIC

Director of Utilities Ron Gaudet stated this is part of the Transmission upgrade project and is 100% PTF, reimbursable. The wood poles are being replaced by steel poles. PAR is the contractor being used by Eversource.

Councilor Norris questioned the need for a 25% contingency.

Director of Utilities Gaudet said the contingency is to avoid coming back for additional approvals.

The purchase order is only issued for the approved amount not including the contingency.

Mayor Keith Hedrick requests a motion to move this to the May 2, 2022 Mayor and Council Meeting.

Motion made by Councilor Piazza, second by Councilor McCabe.

All in favor. Motion carried.

BURNS AND MCDONNELL

Director of Utilities Ron Gaudet noted this is for oversight and supervision of the Transmission Upgrade project providing frontline construction management.

Mayor Hedrick explained capacity and capability of the Utility.

Mayor Keith Hedrick requests a motion to move this to the May 2, 2022 Mayor and Council Meeting.

Motion made by Deputy Mayor Depot, second by Councilor McCabe.

All in favor. Motion carried.

GRANITE INLINER SOLUTIONS

Director of Utilities Ron Gaudet explained the infiltration of the sewer lines. Granite Inliner Solutions is a member of a buying cooperative with pre agreed to price.

Mayor Hedrick noted this is part of resiliency and protecting sewer plant capability and efficiency.

Councilor Piazza inquired if any other areas require this and if so, is there a phased map.

Director of Utilities Gaudet state a study was conducted and this is the next lowest area of the collection system.

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Mayor Keith Hedrick requests a motion to move this to the May 2, 2022 Mayor and Council Meeting.

Motion made by Councilor Norris, second by Councilor McCabe.

All in favor. Motion carried.

TRIMBLE

Director of Utilities Ron Gaudet explained the plan including the public works department. The Utility will pay the annual fee to turn on the module. This will put the assets into the system for the WWTF, WTP, and water meter department.

Mayor Keith Hedrick requests a motion to move this to the May 2, 2022 Mayor and Council Meeting.

Motion made by Councilor Norris, second by Deputy Mayor Depot.

All in favor. Motion carried.

AZTECA SYSTEMS

Director of Utilities Ron Gaudet stated this is the software for the assets.

Mayor Keith Hedrick requests a motion to move this to the May 2, 2022 Mayor and Council Meeting.

Motion made by Deputy Mayor Depot, second by Councilor McCabe.

All in favor. Motion carried.

III. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn made by Councilor McCabe, second by Deputy Mayor Depot.

All in favor. Motion carried.

Meeting was adjourned by Mayor Keith Hedrick at 9:30 p.m.