



City of Groton, Connecticut

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

**Committee of the Whole
Minutes**

Council Chambers

Monday, October 24, 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
City Clerk Edward Jacome**

Mayor Keith Hedrick called the meeting to order at 7:14 p.m. following the public hearing.

I. ROLL CALL

Present: Mayor Keith Hedrick, Deputy Mayor Gweneviere Depot, Councilor Rashaad Carter, Councilor Lisa McCabe, Councilor Paul Norris, Councilor Christine Piazza, Councilor Stephen Sheffield and City Clerk Edward Jacome

Excused: Finance Director Ron Yuhas

II. NEW BUSINESS OR REFERRALS:

A. Informational Presentation by Michael Belfonti of Belfonti Companies, LLC regarding Groton Estates

Michael Belfonti gave a presentation on the Groton Estates apartment complex. He stated Belfonti Companies has owned the property for over 20 years and has put millions of dollars into the property for things like new heating systems, windows and roofs. He stated there has been demand for a clubhouse to include a community room and gym. He then went in depth on the site plan review. He concluded by stating this would be great for the community and the grand list without costing the city anything, and asked the council to consider entering into a purchase and sale agreement.

Economic Development Specialist Cierra Patrick gave a brief overview of the Birch Plane Creek trail including the possible easement from Groton Estates.

Councilors inquired on the date and sample size of the survey presented.

Deputy Mayor Depot inquired if there would be any rent change based on this project.

Michael Belfonti stated there would not be a rent change solely based on this project.

There was further discussion from the council on the easement, parks and Birch Plane Creek.

There was no action taken on this item at this time.

B. Economic Development - Minor Façade Improvement Application Packet for Ritchard A. Fox
Economic Development Specialist Cierra Patrick alongside 112 and 116 North Street Property Owner Richard Fox and Economic Development Commission Chairman Nishant Sahoo presented the first Minor Façade Improvement Application. She stated that once the applications are completed it is reviewed by the Economic Development Commission where they refer their decision to the City Council for consideration.

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Motion to move to Mayor and Council Meeting November 7, 2022 made by Deputy Mayor Depot, second by Councilor Piazza.

All in favor. Motion carried. 6-0-0

C. Public Works - Purchase of ELGIN Sweeper

Mayor Hedrick deferred this item to the November Committee of the Whole.

D. Fire Department – Truck Repairs

Fire Chief Robert Tompkins informed the council that the G11 truck transmission broke and was sent to a local vendor to be fixed. However, due to the total being \$13,289.31 it requires council approval.

Deputy Mayor Depot inquired if this is one of the main fire trucks.

Chief Tompkins stated that it was a frontline engine.

Council Piazza asked if there was a warranty on this truck.

Chief Tompkins stated that they will be purchasing an additional warranty for four years.

Motion to move to Mayor and Council Meeting November 7, 2022 made by Councilor Norris, second by Councilor Sheffield.

All in favor. Motion carried. 6-0-0

E. May/November Election

There was a lengthy discussion amongst the council both in support and against the election change from May to November. The councilors discussed items such as putting a questions on the ballot, logistics, voter turnout and the possibility of future changes by the council or voters.

Motion to move to Mayor and Council Meeting November 7, 2022 made by Deputy Mayor Depot, second by Councilor McCabe.

Motion carried. 4-2-0. Opposed: Councilor Carter and Councilor Sheffield.

F. PPA Increase

Mayor Hedrick stated six months ago there was a purchase power adjustment passed which was to be reviewed after six months.

General Manager of Business Development Aaron Brooks gave a discussion on whole sale electricity market that influences the purchase power adjustment (PPA) increase. He stated if the PPA was left at its current levels the rate stabilization fund would fall below the minimum requirements which is eight million dollars. He stated Groton Utilities would like to maintain three months' worth of their power bills in this fund at twelve million dollars and a maximum boundary of twenty four million dollars. He then stated there will be a purchase power increase in January of 1.6¢ per KWh increase which impacts customers by \$11.21 per month on average or a 9% increase. He also stated with this increase Groton Utilities remains one of the lowest electricity providers in the state \$29.00 less than Eversource today.

Deputy Mayor Depot inquired if this presentation was given to the Groton Utilities Commission (GUC). She asked if this increase can wait until after the winter season. She also inquired if this

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increase would need to be voted on to move forward.

Manager Brooks clarified that it was presented at the GUC meeting and received consensus to move forward. He stated they could not hold off the increase for the winter season as there would be a six million dollar draw for just this winter. He also clarified this is informational only and does not require a vote by the council as this is a business mechanism under the tariff.

General Manager of Customer Service Tina Daniels gave a brief overview on assistance programs.

Councilor Piazza stated for the record that she did not vote for the previous Groton Utilities rate increase.

Councilor Carter left at 9:51pm

This was informational only. No action was taken.

G. Groton Utilities:

1. 3 Phase

Director of Utilities Ron Gaudet stated the council has seen this previously as they have already cut a purchase order to the vendor. However, the vendor is unable to supply the steel that is bringing the wires into the Buddington Substation on time. So it was rebid with a new quote of \$206,566.63. He made clear we are not spending money twice.

Deputy Mayor Depot inquired if the cost will be the same. She also stated she would like to see the previous resolutions if items are changed.

Director Gaudet stated it was comparable based on the level of contingency available.

Motion to move to Mayor and Council Meeting November 7, 2022 made by Deputy Mayor Depot, second by Councilor McCabe.

All in favor. Motion carried. 6-0-0.

2. Barnhart Crane

Director Gaudet stated there is spare transformer sitting at the Operation Building which was purchased to be used at the Buddington Substation. The transformer will need to be transported for placement for a total of \$81,818.00.

The Mayor clarified the spare will replace a transformer at the Buddington Substation and the removed transformer will go through maintenance, and be an on-site spare.

Motion to move to Mayor and Council Meeting November 7, 2022 made by Deputy Mayor Depot, second by Councilor McCabe.

All in favor. Motion carried. 6-0-0.

3. Mountain LLC

Director Gaudet stated this is a company that does engineering work for Groton Utilities. He stated they are anticipating a work order from a customer to add a large amount of pole attachments to Groton

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utilities poles. Those wanting to use the pole attachments will be charged a fixed rate. The work order will create revenue into a job and that job will pay Mountain LLC to do the engineering and survey work on thousands of polls. He stated he could not disclose specifics due to confidentiality agreements. The total for this item is \$290,400.00.

Deputy Mayor Depot asked for confirmation that this is not an expense for ratepayers but rather for the third party paying Groton Utilities with approval from the council.

Director Gaudet stated she was correct.

There was brief discussion among the council on information not available due to confidentiality agreements and possible FOIA request on this information.

Deputy Mayor Depot inquired if the revenue from this project would appear in their budget under other revenue.

Director Gaudet affirmed it will show up in other income on their budget.

Motion to move to Mayor and Council Meeting November 7, 2022 made by Deputy Mayor Depot, second by Councilor McCabe.

All in favor. Motion carried. 6-0-0.

4. WPCA IGS Draft

Director Gaudet stated this is a security upgrade for installation cameras and physical access controls for the Wastewater Treatment Facility located at 311 Thames Street, Groton CT.

There was a brief discussion on trees being placed around the facility as extra coverage.

Motion to move to Mayor and Council Meeting November 7, 2022 made by Deputy Mayor Depot, second by Councilor McCabe.

All in favor. Motion carried. 6-0-0.

H. Groton City and Groton Utilities Financials

Mayor Hedrick stated Finance Director Ron Yuhas will go over financial at M&C Nov 7, 2022.

III. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn made by Councilor MaCabe, second by Councilor Piazza.

All in favor. Motion carried. 6-0-0

Mayor Keith Hedrick adjourned the meeting at 10:48 p.m.