



City of Groton, Connecticut

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

**Committee of the Whole
Minutes**

Zoom

Monday, February 22, 2021

6:00 PM

In response to State of Connecticut Executive Order No. 7B "Protection of Public Health and Safety During Covid-19 Pandemic and Response – Further Suspension or Modification of Statutes", dated March 14, 2020, suspending in-person open meeting requirements, all public meetings will be closed to the public at this time. Public Meetings will be available on Groton Municipal Television Channel 2 in real time or on Zoom at

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

I. ROLL CALL

Present: Mayor Keith Hedrick, Deputy Mayor Gweneviere Depot, Councilors Lisa McCabe, Reginald Stanford, Stephen Sheffield, Finance Director Ron Yuhas and City Clerk Debra Patrick
Excused: Councilors Rashaad Carter and Minerva Ortiz

II. REFERRALS:

REFERRAL ITEM #1 APPOINTMENTS

James Streeter (Board of Ethics)

Mayor Hedrick said the board has 2 vacancies and Mr. Streeter has applied to serve on the commission. He said the commission rules allow for someone to serve 2 consecutive terms. The other vacancy will be addressed in the near future.

Deputy Mayor Depot thanked Mr. Streeter for being willing to serve in an important volunteer position.

Councilor Stanford concurred with what Deputy Mayor Depot said.

Councilor Sheffield thanked Mr. Streeter for his past years of service and for continuing to serve. Mr. Streeter said he looks forward to serving.

George Mathanool (Groton Utilities)

Mayor Hedrick said Paul Duarte resigned from the commission after nearly 11 years of service. Mr. Mathanool thanked the Mayor and Councilors for the appointment and looks forward to serving.

Christine Cabral (Beach and Parks Committee)

Mayor Hedrick said Ms. Cabral is very active in the community and will be a good addition. Ms. Cabral said her 4 children have participated in the many programs offered and is excited to be given the opportunity to be part of the process.

Barry Tuohy (Beach and Parks Committee)

Mr. Touhy said he was approached by P&R Director Mary Hill about serving and thought I would be a good fit for him having gone through the programs growing up in the City and having his children go through them as well. He said this is his time to give back.

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William Gaynor (Reappoint Harbor Management)

Mayor Hedrick said Mr. Gaynor has served since 2017 and is willing to continue.

Councilor Stanford moved Deputy Mayor Depot seconded a motion to move Referral Item #1, Appointments, to the March 1, 2021 Mayor and Council meeting. Motion carried.

**REFERRAL ITEM #748 DONATION REQUESTS
THAMES RIVER HERITAGE PARK**

Mayor Hedrick said the City has supported this endeavor since 2016.

Amy Perry, Executive Director gave an overview of the support from the City of Groton since 2016, the increases in ridership prior to the pandemic, how the pandemic impacted their numbers and the historic and group tours they have implemented to augment the use of the water taxis. She noted how they will follow all regulations related to Covid in the upcoming season and are planning to add some historic tours. She said the support from the municipalities, the City of Groton, the City of New London as well as the Town of Groton is critical to their future to keep this momentum growing and the partner sites have started to learn how to rely on them to support them, to advocate for them, as well as to augment their marketing messages or their events. She said in one more year, we will have a dock at the Nautilus, which will increase our ability to bring more people to the area, it'll increase our ability to bring people from the Nautilus Museum down to Fort Trumbull and Fort Griswold on Fridays, Deputy Mayor Depot said we've donated money previous years, so she wanted to ask Finance Director Yuhas to confirm what amount we donated last year or the last time we donated and what account that come out of.

Director Yuhas said the City and Groton Utilities have donated \$10,000.00 each year 2016-2020. He said the City's contribution comes from the Community Development Account.

There was discussion that the donation should be made prior to the start of the season and that the additional tours helped to create more revenue stream for them.

Councilor McCabe moved Deputy Mayor Depot seconded a motion to move Referral Item #748 Donation Requests, to the March 1, 2021 Mayor and Council meeting. Motion carried.

GROTON MYSTIC FALCONS FOOTBALL LEAGUE

Jackie Darigan, Vice President Groton Mystic Falcons Youth Football League thanked the Mayor and Councilors for their past support and gave an overview if the ages that participate in playing football and cheerleading for the league. She said the goal is to promote a positive experience in sports. She said last year was difficult with having to cancel the season due to the pandemic and still having expenses related to the league and its viability. She is hopeful they will have as normal a season as is possible and gave an overview of the expenses they incur to ensure the players have the safest experience by following all the safety guidelines for the equipment. She said they have done a few fundraisers and will continue to do so to raise the funds necessary for the season.

Keona Strickland, President Groton Mystic Falcons Youth Football League echoed Ms. Darigan's comments noting it all about the safety of the kids.

Councilor Stanford thanked them for being there and is glad to see the kids will get back out there

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bringing normalcy to families again.

Councilor Sheffield echoed Councilor Stanford's sentiments and noted he played Pee Wee Football and would like to see them out there playing again.

Deputy Mayor Depot said she had a question for the Finance Director regarding the amount we gave last year and how much is left in the account.

Director Yuhas said they gave \$450.00 last year and after a few donations made this year to other organizations there is \$2,200.00 in the account.

Deputy Mayor Depot said she would be agreeable to raise it to \$600.00 this year.

There was some discussion as to whether the Platinum sponsorship or \$120.00 child scholarships for City children would be best.

Ms. Darigan said the platinum sponsorship would be more beneficial overall for the league as it could be spread out to cover costs for a number of things.

Councilor McCabe moved Councilor Stanford seconded a motion to move Referral Item #748 Donation Requests, to the March 1, 2021 Mayor and Council meeting. Motion carried.

REFERRAL ITEM #781 USI INSURANCE SERVICES, LLC RISK MANAGEMENT SERVICE PROPOSAL

Finance Director Yuhas said this is for risk management and we have been contracted with them for a few years now. He said the contract is up for renewal and will be for 3 years.

Chris Wardrop, Senior Vice President, USI gave an overview of his company, their products and the clients they represent. He said they review yearly and have offered a \$5,000.00 reduction that will carry over to the next 2 years as well.

Deputy Mayor Depot said risk management is important and a valuable asset to have the resources to help prevent issues.

Councilor McCabe said it rare to have fees reduced.

Mr. Wardrop said municipalities have many challenges and he thanked the Council for their validation.

Councilor McCabe moved Councilor Stanford seconded a motion to move Referral Item #781, to the March 1, 2021 Mayor and Council meeting. Motion carried.

REFERRAL ITEM #758 POLICE MUTUAL POLICE ASSISTANCE COMPACT

Chief Michael Spellman noted that CGS 7-277a allows towns to enter into mutual agreements and the towns of Groton, Ledyard and Stonington would like to enter into an agreement for traffic unit reconstruction. He said accidents in each community would stay under the jurisdiction of where it occurs. He will have an officer go through the training which will be an asset for the City.

Councilor Sheffield said it will allow the City to get assistance when needed.

Deputy Mayor Depot said collaboration with neighboring towns is a great idea.

Councilor Sheffield moved Councilor McCabe seconded a motion to move Referral Item #758 Police, to the March 1, 2021 Mayor and Council meeting. Motion carried.

PURCHASE RADIOS FOR STATE RADIO SYSTEM

Chief Spellman said this is to provide additional radios for big events such as fireworks and for a major incident. He said it would 100% funded by the grant.

Deputy Mayor asked if there was partial funding need by the city.

Chief Spellman said at most \$430.00 and they would be getting more than \$12,000.00 worth of equipment.

Councilor Sheffield moved Councilor Stanford seconded a motion to move Referral Item #758 Police, to the March 1, 2021 Mayor and Council meeting. Motion carried.

**REFERRAL ITEM #779 BUILDING AND ZONING
MUNICIPAL PERMITTING PROGRAM**

Joe Summer, Building & Zoning Official said he began looking at this when he was first hired. He said this software will allow them to cut down on paper and allow for department plan review online rather than having to send papers. He went over the numbers for permits and the cost based on those numbers. He said there is no data conversion.

Councilor McCabe asked if the \$10.00 per permit would be passed on to the applicant, if \$2,500.00 is the contractual cost and that there is no data conversion.

Mr. Summers said it would be and it will allow them to link older permits as well to track them, the \$2,500.00 is the annual cost and the data conversion would be done in house.

Councilor McCabe said she appreciated him looking for better ways to communicate with applicants and cut back on foot traffic.

Deputy Mayor Depot asked if the all permits would increase by \$10.00.

Mr. Summers said that is still being worked out.

Deputy Mayor Depot asked if other vendors had similar fee structure.

Mr. Summers said there were higher set up fees and annual fees.

Deputy Mayor Depot noted we usually get 3 quotes.

There was discussion that the policy for bidding and quotes is a \$10,000.00 threshold, this falls under that amount, that it is the best package for the City and that this company services many towns in CT and MA.

Councilor Sheffield moved Councilor McCabe seconded a motion to move Referral Item #779 Building & Zoning, to the March 1, 2021 Mayor and Council meeting. Motion carried.

SCANOPTICS

Mr. Summers said he got a quote to scan the large documents and files and \$87,000.00 is a conservative estimate. He said staff is reorganizing what is in the vault and would like \$25,000.00 to begin the project.

Mayor Hedrick said this began in 2017 in an effort to make records more accessible to the public and staff. Mr. Summers said Pfizer and EB have agreed to provide electronic files.

Deputy Mayor Depot asked if it would cost less to hire a temp to do it.

Mr. Summers said they don't have the equipment required to scan the larger documents.

There was discussion on leasing equipment versus having an outside vendor, the speed at which the

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vendor can scan and index for greater search ability and be compliant with FOIA regulations.

Deputy Mayor Depot asked if we had the capacity to store the records.

Mr. Summers said they would be stored in the cloud and IT Director Sue Blanchette was part of the discussion.

There was further discussion on the fess for cloud storage.

Councilor Stanford moved Councilor Sheffield seconded a motion to move Referral Item #779 Building & Zoning, to the March 1, 2021 Mayor and Council meeting. Motion carried.

**REFERRAL ITEM #742 GROTON UTILITIES
WASTE WATER FACILITY STUDY**

Mark Biron, General Manager GU Operations gave an overview of what they would like to cover in the study to allow them to determine the best way to run the facility and it is expected to take about a year.

Councilor Stanford moved Deputy Mayor Depot seconded a motion to move Referral Item #742 Groton Utilities, to the March 1, 2021 Mayor and Council meeting. Motion carried.

WASTE WATER CONTRACT DEEP FOR GRANT

Mr. Biron said will pursue this grant for the just discussed study.

Mayor Hedrick said by moving the sewer department from the tax base to fee based this allows them to pursue the grants.

Councilor Stanford moved Councilor Sheffield seconded a motion to move Referral Item #742 Groton Utilities, to the March 1, 2021 Mayor and Council meeting. Motion carried.

NAVY GENERATION SYSTEM IMPACT STUDY

Mr. Biron said this will be an engineering analysis of the merits taking/not taking from the Sub Base.

Deputy Mayor Depot asked if this would be paid for by rate payers.

Mr. Biron said it would not.

Deputy Mayor Depot moved Councilor Stanford seconded a motion to move Referral Item #742 Groton Utilities, to the March 1, 2021 Mayor and Council meeting. Motion carried.

DIAMOND LANDSCAPING LAWN MAINTENANCE

Mr. Biron said there were only 3 bidders, none were local and this was the best of the 3.

Deputy Mayor Depot asked about the 90% water/10% electric split to cover the costs.

Mr. Biron said the bulk of the property is the water department's so they will pay the higher percentage.

Deputy Mayor Depot asked if this is the same vendor as last year.

Mr. Biron said it isn't the owner of the company used last year passed away.

Councilor Stanford moved Deputy Mayor Depot seconded a motion to move Referral Item #742

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Groton Utilities, to the March 1, 2021 Mayor and Council meeting. Motion carried.

**REFERRAL ITEM #655 DEPARTMENT PRESENTATIONS
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY OUTREACH**

Cierra Patrick, Economic Development Specialist gave the Council an overview of the Planning & Economic Development site on the City of Groton web site. She went through the 8 categories saying they are updated as needed and noted the survey there asking the Councilors to look at it and participate.

Deputy Mayor Depot asked if the survey could be put on the City Facebook page to engage more people.

Ms. Patrick said it could be linked as she is looking for input from the community. She said there will be a series of discussions both virtual and in person when allowed. She said the first one is scheduled for March 17th from 4:00-5:00 p.m. virtually with some follow up mapping meetings. She said the JLUS Parking Management Plan done by SCCOG is on the site as well.

RESOLUTION AMENDMENT

Ms. Patrick said they have a contract with Milone & McBroom and they have merged with LSR International Corporation.

Mayor Hedrick said the costs remain the same and the same level of services will be provided.

There was discussion on the new firm and that it might be wise to get a little more information on them.

Deputy Mayor Depot moved Councilor Stanford seconded a motion to move Referral Item #655 Department Presentations to the March 1, 2021 Mayor and Council meeting. Motion carried.

REFERRAL ITEM #780 GATEWAY COMPANIES TREATED SALT

Finance Director Yuhas they began reaching out to other companies for salt and received a quote from Gateway for 200 tons.

There was a discussion on costs from other companies versus Gateway and some information would be gathered.

Councilor Stanford moved Deputy Mayor Depot seconded a motion to move Referral Item #780 Gateway Companies Treated Salt to the March 1, 2021 Mayor and Council meeting.

Motion carried.

REFERRAL ITEM #561 GROTON UTILITIES FINANCIALS

Finance Director Yuhas gave an overview of the electric, water and sewer financials YTD noting they were favorable.

REFERRAL ITEM #690 CITY BUDGET PRESENTATIONS

Finance Director Yuhas said most departments are on course through January 31st.

Deputy Mayor Depot asked about the civil Preparedness line and why it is over budget.

Mr. Yuhas said he would look into it but believes it may be an instance where something was miscoded.

Councilor Sheffield said it appears each department is using about 5% monthly

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Mr. Yuhas said that is fair to say on average.

III. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Deputy Mayor Depot moved Councilor Sheffield seconded a motion to enter into Executive Session pursuant to CGS 1-200 (6)(A) to discuss personnel – Fire Department to include Mayor, Councilors, fire Chief Robert Tompkins and Keith Nichols. Motion carried.
Executive Session commenced at 7:57 p.m.
Executive Session ended at 8:06 p.m.

IV. COMMENTS FROM EXECUTIVE SESSION

None.

V. ADJOURNMENT

Councilor McCabe moved Councilor Stanford seconded a motion to adjourn. Motion carried.

Mayor Hedrick adjourned the meeting at 8:07 p.m.

ATTEST:

APPROVED:

**Debra Patrick
City Clerk**

FINAL