



City of Groton, Connecticut

**Special
Committee of the Whole
Minutes**

Monday, April 12, 2021

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

**Council Chambers/
Zoom**

6:30 PM

Public Meetings will be available in person, on Groton Municipal Television Channel 2 or on Zoom

Mayor Hedrick called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

I. ROLL CALL

Present: Mayor Keith Hedrick, Deputy Mayor Gwenenviere Depot, Councilors Paul Norris, Stephen Sheffield, Finance Director Ron Yuhus and City Clerk Debra Patrick.

Via Zoom: Councilors Lisa McCabe and Rashaad Carter.

Excused: Councilor Minerva Ortiz

II. REFERRALS

HUMAN RESOURCES

Linda Avedisian Human Resources Director gave an overview of her proposed budget noting some reductions and an increase to provide laptops and docking stations for her staff. She said one would be added this FY and the other next FY. She went over the incentive program for employees and the information system she would like to implement for HR. She said the new system would allow the employee information to be input just once and then it can be moved within the system as needed and that it would be more efficient. She said she is working with the IT General Manager regarding the current system they work to see if there is a way to get the same results with it. There were some questions regarding the wage increases and whether it is across the board, that unions increases are used as a benchmark for non-union and healthcare costs and how they are divided within the budget.

PLANNING

City Planner Leslie Creane gave an overview of her budget noting that she crafted it with an expectation of a normal year. She noted the increase is to help fund a Resiliency Officer the Town of Groton will hire and the City will fund 25% and the person will dedicate 1 day a week to the City.

Mayor Hedrick said resiliency has been discussed for some time and a study is being done now.

Deputy Mayor Depot asked if the \$25,000.00 is fully loaded to include benefits.

Mayor Hedrick said we will be contracting the person and they will be a Town employee.

There was discussion as to whether at some point they may ask for more funding for the position, that the City can't justify a full time position at this time and that at some point GU may have someone.

Ms. Creane said she will be making some changes to the zoning regulations and it will be done in house so no funding is needed.

SPECIAL COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
MINUTES
MONDAY, APRIL 12, 2021

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic Development Specialist Cierra Patrick gave an overview of the budget and the scope of some of the projects being developed.

Councilor carter asked when we would begin to see implementation.

There was discussion on whether the expenses are a one time or continuing expense, whether the increases are sustainable, how enterprise zones work, whether we will see implementation of any projects or more studies and surveys.

Councilor Sheffield asked if we would have access to funds from the American Rescue Plan for the City.

There was discussion on utilizing grants as much as possible and how the American rescue Plan will work.

Councilor Norris said he would like to see the implementation phase where possible but understands there may be a few obstacles.

**REFERRAL ITEM #690 CITY BUDGET PRESENTATIONS
GENERAL GOVERNMENT**

Mayor Hedrick gave an overview of the budget noting any changes.

Finance Director Yuhas said under the commission line the driver is for the actuary for the Retirement Board.

Deputy Mayor Depot said that a beautification cleanup has been announced and will there be any materials provided from the Beautification line.

Mayor Hedrick said they would provide some supplies.

There was a discussion on whether City Day provides any profit, that it doesn't generate a profit but there is an offset on some of the costs to provide the event for residents.

There was discussion on what the line Recording of Legal documents is and what the increase in General Support is for.

Councilor Carter questioned why an incoming City Clerk would be paid more than the retiring City Clerk with more than 20 years of experience. In his opinion a reduction would be in order, not an increase. He asked Mayor Hedrick if it is the practice at the City of Groton to bring in new people at a higher salary than the one who vacated the position.

Mayor Hedrick said a new employee isn't necessarily hired at a reduced salary of their predecessor. There was some discussion on the experience of the incoming City Clerk over some others who were interested in the position.

Councilor Norris asked about the budget decrease from FY19-20 and the increase from FY 21-20 for the Office Supplies and Advertising line.

Mayor Hedrick said the Executive Orders from Governor Lamont allowed us to put legal notices on the City website rather than in the newspaper which saved a great deal of money. Once the EO ends in May we may have to start advertising in the newspaper again.

FINANCE

Finance Director Ron Yuhas gave an overview of his budget. He noted an increase to bring his employees to the next step in their collective bargaining contract. He said a position has been left

SPECIAL COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
MINUTES
MONDAY, APRIL 12, 2021

open due to Covid and there were 2 retirements that caused moves to other positions within the department.

He said there are increases for health insurance and pensions across the board. He said there is a reduced interest rate assumption which will increase the City's contribution. He noted the mortality table change increasing life expectancy, that the life insurance is based on wages and workman's comp costs have gone up.

Councilor Norris asked what some examples of contractual services are.

Mr. Yuhas said the cost of an audit, costs for the Town of Groton to collect taxes and an extra audit if needed.

Councilor Norris asked what the medical insurance costs were per person or for families.

Mr. Yuhas said it is self-funded with Anthem administering it.

Councilor Norris asked if that is why there are variations in costs by department.

Mr. Yuhas said yes, it would depend on whether it is the PPO or HDP noting they did a true up a few years back and it may be to do it again.

Councilor Norris asked if Covid related expenses are covered by departments or Finance.

Mr. Yuhas said by departments and reimbursements would go back to them except for the costs for building maintenance such as hand sanitizer dispensers then it goes back to the General Fund.

III. ADJOURNMENT

Deputy Mayor Depot moved Councilor Sheffield seconded a motion to adjourn. Motion carried.

Mayor Hedrick adjourned the meeting at 7:52 p.m.

ATTEST:

APPROVED:

**Debra Patrick
City Clerk**