



City of Groton, Connecticut

**Committee of the Whole
Minutes**

Monday, April 26, 2021

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

**Council Chambers/
Zoom**

6:00 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 6:00 p.m.

I. ROLL CALL

Present: Mayor Keith Hedrick, Deputy Mayor Gweneviere Depot, Councilors Lisa McCabe, Paul Norris, Stephen Sheffield, Rashaad Carter, Finance Director and City Clerk Debra Patrick

Mayor Hedrick introduced Graham Geitzen who read the letter he sent to Mayor Hedrick and Town of Groton Mayor Granatosky about food allergies. He asked that both the City of Groton and Town of Groton officially declare May 9-15, 2021 Food Allergy Awareness Week. (See attached letter) Mayor Hedrick read a proclamation proclaiming May 9-15, 2021 Food Allergy Awareness Week in the City of Groton.

Mayor Hedrick announced that this is the last meeting for this Council with the election May 3rd and swearing in May 10th. He said for 1 person, City Clerk Deb Patrick, this is her last meeting as she is retiring after serving 22 years and thanked her loyal and faithful service. He read the inscription on a plaque to be presented to her.

He asked if the Councilors wished to say anything.

Deputy Mayor Depot thanked Clerk Patrick for her guidance to the Council to ensure they followed procedures.

Councilor Carter said in his estimation Clerk Patrick is irreplaceable and that with time her replacement will learn the job though maybe not to the extent Clerk Patrick has in 22 years. He noted that as an elected official and a paid employee it speaks volumes to what she has brought to the City.

Councilor McCabe said she appreciated the guidance Clerk Patrick has given to her over the 2 years she has served on the Council.

Councilor Sheffield said he wasn't sure what they will do without Clerk Patrick and thanked her for her dedicated service and said they will miss her.

Councilor Norris said he has known Clerk Patrick for about 20 years and thinks she is an awesome person.

Mayor Hedrick called a 5 minute recess at 6:17 p.m.

Mayor Hedrick resumed the meeting at 6:25 p.m.

II. REFERRALS:

**REFERRAL ITEM #690 CITY BUDGET PRESENTATIONS
PARKS AND RECREATION**

Parks & Recreation Director Mary Hill said her budget is broken into 2 parts. The recreation portion is up 4.77% with the Farmers market driving most of it now that it has been moved into her budget. She said they have a market master and a line item for supplies in a stand-alone account

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and they budgeted for the winter markets with the success of the markets this past winter. She said the costs for beach supervisors staying later are also driving the increase and contractual wage increases as well.

There was some discussion on the increases due to minimum wage going up as well, the positive feedback on the Farmers Market, increases in office supplies related to the farmers market and that when Parks & Recreation took over the market it thrived under the market master.

Councilor Norris asked if maintenance is done at the beach off season.

Ms. Hill said that would be addressed in the Maintenance portion of the budget.

There was discussion on the expansion of programs in the past, how Covid impacted programs and once the new school is up and running they will get back to offering more.

Councilor Norris asked if they were able to serve the same number of participants in the summer playground program last year.

Ms. Hill said they were prepared with a second site but there were only 85 participants signed up out the 200 plus they usually have.

MAINTENANCE

Ms. Hill said this portion of her budget is up 6.61% with contractual wage increases and capital projects. She said the facilities are maintained year round including the beach.

Deputy Mayor Depot asked if there is a timeline for the press box in the capital improvement budget.

Ms. Hill said they went out to bid last year and costs were much higher than anticipated so she put funds in this year in order to be able to get the project done for field #1.

BUILDING AND ZONING

Building & Zoning Official Joe Summers said there is an overall reduction of 9.91% due to the EB SYAB project and noted funding for this will decrease over the next 2 years. He gave an overview of the areas where reduction within the department have been made and that he will be preparing for the revisions in State Building Codes.

There was discussion on the streamlining of the permitting process, permit fees, Certificate of occupancy, when the projects will show up on the tax rolls and how the reductions help keep taxes level.

NON-DEPARTMENTALS

Finance Director Ron Yuhas said this is for items not in a specific budget such as general insurance, pay adjustments, debt service bonds and contingency.

REFERRAL ITEM #773 PARKS AND RECREATION MEMORIAL BENCH FOR RICHARD WEISS

Ms. Hill said Mr. Weiss lived in the City for many years and was a Navy veteran. His daughters feel this is the best way to honor him having a bench at the place he loved to walk and watch the submarines.

There was discussion on how many spaces are left, how inventory is being taken, of how many are there and the cost to family for a bench.

Deputy Mayor Depot moved Councilor McCabe seconded a motion to move Referral Item #773 Memorial Bench for Richard Weiss to the May 17, 2021 Mayor and Council meeting. Motion

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carried.

ACCEPT SANDBOX DONATION

Ms. Hill said the Sandbox Foundation would like to upgrade the volleyball court at Washington Park and the cost would be \$5,646.00. She said they will do the work and train the staff how to maintain it.

Deputy Mayor Depot moved Councilor McCabe seconded a motion to move Referral Item #773 Sandbox Donation to the May 17, 2021 Mayor and Council meeting. Motion carried.

HONKERS

Ms. Hill said this is to control the geese at the facilities and we have contracted with them for several years and she looked into another vendor but they were out of Greenwich and didn't service our immediate area.

There was discussion on how often they patrol, that the vendor has a badge to identify herself and the dog as contractors and the possibility of looking into having Thames View patrolled as well.

Deputy Mayor Depot moved Councilor McCabe seconded a motion to move Referral Item #773 Honkers to the May 17, 2021 Mayor and Council meeting. Motion carried.

**REFERRAL ITEM #655 DEPARTMENT PRESENTATIONS
VISIONING THAMES STREET**

Economic Development Specialist, Cierra Patrick gave an overview of the projects for Thames Street, the grants awarded, consultant services and the status. She noted there would be a workshop coming up May 19th at 4:00 p.m. of surveys and projects.

Deputy Mayor Depot moved Councilor Sheffield seconded a motion to move Referral Item #655 to the May 17, 2021 Mayor and Council meeting. Motion carried.

**REFERRAL ITEM #742 GROTON UTILITIES
ELECTRIC BUDGET, WATER BUDGET and SEWER BUDGET**

Mayor Hedrick said the budgets were delivered to the Councilors to allow them time to review them before the May 24th Committee of the Whole meeting.

EARTHLIGHT WASHINGTON PARK

Groton Utilities Director Ron Gaudet said they will use RGGI funds for the lighting improvements, not taxpayer funds.

There was discussion on the existing locations would be used with new hardware and that it would improve the lighting in the park

Director Gaudet said this was Ms. Hill's idea and by using the RGGI funds they could remove it from the capital projects and save money.

There was discussion on how this would improve the lighting in the basketball court area, the timeline and the costs at \$254,000.00 including contingency.

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Councilor Sheffield moved Deputy Mayor Depot seconded a motion to move Referral Item #742, Earthlight, to the May 17, 2021 Mayor and Council meeting. Motion carried.

FIRST CHOICE SAFETY SOLUTIONS

Director Gaudet said this is a 5 year contract and 5 companies were interviewed. He said the cost is \$138,000.00 per year and when they did a cost breakdown to have in house safety consultants it came in at over \$160,000.00 per year. He said the safety committee agreed an outside contractor is the better option. He said this contractor has a large number of employees with a heavy interest in public utilities, parks and recreation and public works.

Deputy Mayor Depot asked what the current costs are.

Director Gaudet said about \$145,000.00.

Councilor McCabe moved Deputy Mayor Depot seconded a motion to move Referral Item #742, First Choice Safety Solutions, to the May 17, 2021 Mayor and Council meeting. Motion carried.

ENVIRONMENTAL PARTNERS

Director Gaudet gave an overview of the continuing work needed to remove the PCB's from the water plant and this contract will allow them to work with the EPA to complete the removal. There was discussion on the parts of the plant that had not been touched yet and would need to be, the costs, the sort/long term plans and what is being abated now.

Deputy Mayor Depot moved Councilor McCabe seconded a motion to move Referral Item #742 Environmental Partners, to the May 17, 2021 Mayor and Council meeting. Motion carried.

BLU ROC TRANSMISSION LINE LAND CLEARING

Director Gaudet said this is required by ISO and this company can allow better access to transmission towers. He said it is the first large purchase order for the project.

Councilor Sheffield moved Deputy Mayor Depot seconded a motion to move Referral Item #742, Blu Roc Transmission Line Land Clearing, to the May 17, 2021 Mayor and Council meeting. Motion carried.

BHI ENERGY – EB SOUTH YARD ASSEMBLY BUILDING

Director Gaudet said this is to install the lines to the EB SYAB using a contractor to assist and EB will pay the \$250,000.00.

Councilor Sheffield moved Deputy Mayor Depot seconded a motion to move Referral Item #742, BHI Energy – Eb South Yard Assembly Building, to the May 17, 2021 Mayor and Council meeting. Motion carried.

ELECTRIC RELIABILITY CERTIFICATE

Director Gaudet said this certificate was awarded for the reliability GU provides to its community and customers.

REFERRAL ITEM #561 GROTON UTILITIES FINANCIALS

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Finance Director Yuhas gave an overview of the electric, water and sewer financials for year to date.

There was discussion on the lower commercial revenue, the possibility that it is driven by Covid and whether increases and variants are standard year to year.

REFERRAL ITEM #698 CAFR OVERVIEW/AUDITOR PRESENTATION

Finance Director Yuhas said the CAFR has been posted online.

REFERRAL ITEM #748 DONATION REQUESTS

FITCH HIGH SCHOOL GRAD PARTY

Mayor Hedrick said that GU will donate to this.

Mr. Yuhas said at this time there is \$1,100.00 remaining in the fund for donations.

Mayor Hedrick asked for a 2/3 consensus suspend the rules to add an Executive Session to the agenda.

The Councilors were in agreement.

III. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Deputy Mayor Depot moved Councilor McCabe seconded to enter into Executive Session pursuant to CGS 1-200 (6)(A) to discuss personnel - Police Department to include the Mayor, Councilors, Chief Michael Spellman, Captain Erick Jenkins, Sergeant Trish Lieteau and HR Director Linda Avedisian. Motion carried.

Executive Session commenced at 7:58 p.m.

Executive Session ended at 8:51 p.m.

IV. COMMENTS FROM EXECUTIVE SESSION

None

V. ADJOURNMENT

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

Mayor Hedrick adjourned the meeting at 8:52p.m.

ATTEST:

APPROVED:

**Megan Peters
City Clerk**