



City of Groton, Connecticut

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

**Committee of the Whole
Minutes**

Council Chambers

Monday, August 23, 2021

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 Megan Peters**

Meeting was called to order at 6:05pm by Mayor Keith Hedrick.

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 Megan Peters

II. REFERRALS:

793 AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT

7/26/21

-SOUTHEASTERN CT COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

8/23/21

Executive Director Jim Butler joins the Council to discuss the allotted American Rescue Plan Act Funds. Jim Butler explains to the group what his team had done for the municipalities since COVID started and the support that they will continue to give throughout these times. He further explains that after discussion, they have decided to create a new position, Regional Recovery Coordinator, who will be dedicated to assist the municipalities plan and decide on how they will spend this money. He is asking for 1% of the funding from each group, equaling \$4,300 from the City of Groton, in contribution to help fund this position.

Councilor Stephen Sheffield inquires as to the timeline of this position.

Jim Butler states that currently this is temporary (4 years) until the fund run out unless the SCCOG decides that they would like to continue funding this position for other use.

Deputy Mayor Gweneviere Depot clarifies that this is \$4,300 per year for four years to assist with the management and use of the ARPA funds. She feels that this is a beneficial position based upon the dedication that person will have to the funds and it would alleviate any additional workload for the city.

Councilor Paul Norris inquires as to the assistance we will get with or without the requested contribution.

Jim Butler will support the city with or without the funding.

Mayor Keith Hedrick explains how beneficial this would be to the city to assist with the spending and navigating the terms of the ARPA funds.

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Councilor Lisa McCabe voices that she is in favor of this idea as it may spark new ideas for the funding based upon what other towns are doing.

Jim Butler clarifies that although SCOGG will continue to support all towns regardless of funding, if we do not contribute we will not be provided with the services that the position provides including financial reporting, etc.

Councilor Paul Norris clarifies that although he knows the value of our partnership is important, he would like to have specific examples and items that we would receive with this funding.

Jim Butler states that as a new position it is difficult to quantify those items at this time.

Councilor Paul Norris states that he supports this proposal.

-LEDGE LIGHT HEALTH DISTRICT

8/23/21

Director Stephen Mansfield joins the Council via Zoom to propose a request from Ledge Light Health District to allocate 1% of the total ARPA funding, equaling approximately \$26,000, to continue to support efforts with the fight against the pandemic.

Councilor Stephen Sheffield inquired as to whether this funding will be to fund new positions within LLHD.

Stephan Mansfield states that yes, it is for funding of positions but not technically new positions. He directs the Council to his proposal spreadsheet that includes the ways that this funding will benefit the LLHD including the overview of all the positions that this funding will support and the need for them.

Councilor Paul Norris requests clarification on the functions of an epidemiologist and how this position would benefit the city.

Stephen Mansfield explains that an epidemiologist studies disease and public health and will access the community as a whole for any public health concerns.

Councilor Paul Norris asks whether this position will be temporary or a more permanent position.

Stephen Mansfield states that it will be a contracted position short-term and therefore if they find it needs to be permanent they could move towards that in the long-term.

Councilor Paul Norris would like to know what specifically the city will get for the requested \$26,000.

Stephen Mansfield explains that throughout the pandemic they have been providing support with some outdated equipment, and therefore this funding would allow them to update the necessary equipment needed to continue the efforts against COVID. He also explains that this funding will provide better and more communication in regards to the pandemic for the community.

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Councilor Paul Norris inquires as to the total amount of money that they are receiving directly from the ARPA, not including what they are requesting from municipalities.
Stephen Mansfield states that LLHD is not receiving any direct ARPA funds.

Councilor Paul Norris lastly inquires as to what we will lose if we do not contribute or approve this request.

Stephen Mansfield states that the city will not technically lose anything if we do not choose to contribute, but this money is necessary to maintain and update LLHD equipment and does need to be done to continue with the best possible care from LLHD.

Councilor Stephen Sheffield inquires as to the data that LLHD has to support the epidemiologist.

Stephen Mansfield confirms that they have a team and they do collect data.

Councilor Christine Piazza inquires as to the communication strategy and how they plan to communicate with those who seem to be difficult to communicate to, including the homeless.

Stephen Mansfield states that they have a team that goes out into the community to reach the homeless.

Mayor Keith Hedrick reminds the group of the relationship we have with LLHD and how supportive they have been throughout COVID to our community.

Councilor Paul Norris states that he would like tangible items that we get for the money rather than giving \$26,000 as an award to group because they are asking. He would like to know how not giving the money effects the city and what we will not get due to it.

Stephen Mansfield states that although you are able to opt out of this, he would like to state clearly that they are not just any group just asking for money, they are the City of Groton's health department.

No further discussion.

-RAIN GARDENS

8/23/21

Heidi Comeau, Public Works Services Coordinator, presents a proposed rain garden project that would fund a rain garden installation in the City of Groton to better our conservation efforts and storm water runoff. The project would cost about \$25,000.

Councilor Lisa McCabe inquires to the purpose of a rain garden.

Heidi Comeau explains the process of a rain garden.

Councilor Rashaad Carter inquired for further details on the project and how the project came to the

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table.

Heidi Comeau explained the importance of cleaning our waters and educating the residents of the benefits of this type of project.

Mayor Keith Hedrick explains the need for cleaning up our water sources.

Councilor Paul Norris inquires about the size of the project.

Heidi Comeau responds, 1500-1600 square feet of space, 6,000/2,000 square feet of drainage.

Councilor Paul Norris inquires to the timeline and the budget.

Heidi Comeau states that they would like to do this in the spring, if approved and Public Works budget actually belongs to Public Works as part of the roads and highways budget. We try to spend all of it with no give back. This project is not included in the roads and highway budget.

Councilor Paul Norris continues to inquire about the budget, the funding and the education and benefits of the project. He would like further explanation of why this project is necessary and beneficial to the city.

Mayor Keith Hedrick explains how he will determine bringing items to the council in regards to ARPA funds moving forward.

Deputy Mayor Gweneviere Depot appreciates the education side of this project and mentions that a plaque explaining the process may be a great tool for residents.

Councilor Lisa McCabe also likes the idea of a plaque and would love to participate in her yard as a resident. She also asks Mayor Keith Hedrick to further explain the funds.

Mayor Keith Hedrick explains the distribution of the funds and explains his thinking when it comes to the funding.

Councilor Christine Piazza inquires about continued maintenance with the project.

Heidi Comeau explains that the project would be maintained by Parks and Rec.

Councilor Christine Piazza would also like to get the schools involved in this and use it as an educational tool.

Heidi Comeau agrees and has already started working on that.

Discussion begins on the process of choosing projects moving forward regarding to ARPA and deciding upon a plan to organize the incoming project requests.

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773 PARKS AND RECREATION

7/27/20

-POUR IN PLACE AT WASHINGTON PARK

8/23/21

Director Mary Hill, Parks and Recreation, explains the proposed project for the Washington Park playgrounds, the need and the positive impact for those playgrounds and the children who play on them.

Deputy Mayor Gweneviere Depot mentions that the feedback about the Pour in Place at the beach has received great feedback.

Mayor Keith Hedrick agrees, the feedback about the Pour in Place at the beach has been very positive.

Councilor Paul Norris questions Director Mary Hill on the cost of the project versus what is currently in her budget for the playgrounds.

Mayor Keith Hedrick provides some background on why the project was selected to be included in today's presentation.

Councilor Christine Piazza inquires on the safety of the surface.

Director Mary Hill confirms that it does impact the safety.

Motion made by Deputy Mayor Gweneviere Depot, second by Councilor Christine Piazza. Motion carried. All in favor, 6-0-0. This topic will be moved to the Mayor and Council Meeting of Tuesday, September 7, 2021.

794 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GRANT

8/23/21

Mayor Keith Hedrick invites Cierra Patrick, Economic Development Specialist, to present to the group. Cierra Patrick introduces Priscilla, a new small business owner in the City of Groton. She explains the process of opening a new small business as well as the lengthy process that she experienced. She continues with giving details of the project, what they have done to this point, as well as what they have spent thus far.

Cierra Patrick, explains that this applicant is a consideration for the Soft Cost Grant. They have already been passed through the Economic Development Committee and would like to seek approval from the Mayor and Council on Tuesday, September 7, 2021.

Councilor Rashaad Carter inquired, if she was to go back knowing the process, would she still open a business in the city?

Priscilla stated that she most likely would not if based upon the length of time and the process.

Councilor Paul Norris thanks Priscilla for doing the process and for applying for the grant.

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

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carried. All in favor, 6-0-0. This topic will be moved to the Mayor and Council Meeting of Tuesday, September 7, 2021.

392 REVIEW OF CITY OF GROTON NON-UNION HANDBOOKS 9/24/10
-CHANGE IN PENSION CONTRIBUTIONS 8/23/21

Human Resources Director Linda Avedisian reviews the proposed changes for employee pension contributions.

Councilor Paul Norris confirms with Director Linda Avedisian whether the contribution is the employee or employer contribution.

Director Linda Avedisian confirms that it is the employee contribution.

Motion made by Deputy Mayor Gweneviere Depot, second by Councilor Stephen Sheffield. Motion carried. All in favor, 6-0-0. This topic will be moved to the Mayor and Council Meeting of Tuesday, September 7, 2021.

655 DEPARTMENT PRESENTATIONS 10/17/17
-FIRE DEPARTMENT 8/23/21

Fire Chief Robert Thompkins gives a brief overview of the Fire Department.

-PUBLIC WORKS 8/23/21

Director Bill Robarge gives an overview of his departments, Public Works and Facility Maintenance.

-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT 8/23/21

Economic Development Specialist, Cierra Patrick, gives an overview of her current visions for Thames Street projects.

742 GROTON UTILITIES 2/21/19

Director Ron Gaudet briefly reviews the below projects with the Council.

-SABRE INDUSTRIES 8/23/21

Motion made by Deputy Mayor Gweneviere Depot, second by Councilor Stephen Sheffield. Motion carried. All in favor, 6-0-0. This topic will be moved to the Mayor and Council Meeting of Tuesday, September 7, 2021.

-ATLANTIC FLUID TECHNOLOGY 8/23/21

Motion made by Deputy Mayor Gweneviere Depot, second by Councilor Stephen Sheffield. Motion carried. All in favor, 6-0-0. This topic will be moved to the Mayor and Council Meeting of Tuesday, September 7, 2021.

-STANTEC CONSULTING ENGINEERING AGREEMENT 8/23/21

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

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carried. All in favor, 6-0-0. This topic will be moved to the Mayor and Council Meeting of Tuesday, September 7, 2021.

-POQUETANUCK COVE BRIDGE PROJECT

8/23/21

Motion made by Deputy Mayor Gweneviere Depot, second by Councilor Christine Piazza. Motion carried. All in favor, 6-0-0. This topic will be moved to the Mayor and Council Meeting of Tuesday, September 7, 2021.

561 GROTON UTILITIES FINANCIALS

9/24/15

Finance Director Ron Yuhas reviews the Groton Utilities Financials.

690 CITY BUDGET PRESENTATIONS

4/6/18

Finance Director Ron Yuhas reviews the City Budget.

III. ADJOURNMENT

Motion made to adjourn by Councilor Lisa McCabe, second by Deputy Mayor Gweneviere Depot. All in favor, 5-0-0 (Councilor Rashaad Carter excused for the vote). Meeting adjourned at 9:51pm

ATTEST:

APPROVED:

**Megan Peters
City Clerk**