



City of Groton, Connecticut

Committee of the Whole
Special Minutes

Monday, November 29, 2021

City Municipal Building
295 Meridian Street
Groton, CT 06340

Council Chambers

6:00 PM

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

Meeting was called to order at 6:02pm by Mayor Keith Hedrick.

I. ROLL CALL

Present: Mayor Keith Hedrick, Deputy Mayor Gweneviere Depot, Councilor Rashaad Carter, Councilor Lisa McCabe, Councilor Christine Piazza, Councilor Stephen Sheffield, Councilor Rashaad Carter (late arrival), Finance Director Ron Yuhas and City Clerk Megan Peters

Excused: Councilor Paul Norris

II. REFERRALS:

773 PARKS AND RECREATION

7/27/20

-MEMORIAL BENCH (ROBERT J GOLDEN II)

11/22/21

This is a request for a memorial bench at Griswold Point located on Shore Avenue in the City of Groton.

No discussion.

Motion made to move this to the Mayor and Council Meeting of December 6, 2021 by Councilor Stephen Sheffield, second by Deputy Mayor Gweneviere Depot. All in favor, 4-0-0. Motion carried.

800 SANITATION VEHICLE

11/22/21

Public Works Director William Robarge requests the purchase of a new sanitation vehicle to replace one of the two older trucks which are becoming more and more difficult to find parts for and requiring more frequent maintenance. Director Robarge reached out to neighboring towns to research the vehicles they are using and what has and has not worked for them.

Councilor Rashaad Carter enters the meeting at 6:10pm.

Councilor Rashaad Carter speaks to his time working with Public Works and states that from experience, this type of truck will benefit the Public Works staff.

Deputy Mayor Gweneviere Depot inquired on the years of our older trucks, the last time we purchased a new truck and what we paid at that time. She also inquired about the bid and the availability of trucks.

Director Robarge mentioned that there is a delay in getting trucks and they generally take one year at the very least, most commonly 18 months to 3 years to build and receive. This specific truck is available as it was built for another town that fell through with the purchase. It is being modified to fit our specific needs and those extras are built into the quote and budget.

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Deputy Mayor Gweneviere Depot inquired about the truck and the toting capability.

Director Robarge states that the toting capability is a great feature for the Public Works staff who complete the job. Totes are not required for use, but are available through the City of Groton for purchase if wanted by residents.

Deputy Mayor Gweneviere Depot suggests that we do a video to advertise the available totes so residents know that they are available for their purchase.

Deputy Mayor Gweneviere Depot then inquires about the timeline and savings plan for another new truck which we are in need of.

Director Robarge states that he has a 3-year plan to save the money and possibly replace our other older truck.

Councilor Christine Piazza inquired about the safety of the newer vehicles to our Public Works staff. She also inquires about the rear backup system and the undercoating of the truck.

Director Robarge states that the vehicles are much safer than older vehicles and he does not feel that the lack of undercoating to the truck will not be an issue as the fleet is very well cared for and washed down after each run.

Councilor Rashaad Carter states that the tote availability can alleviate some of the labor of what is currently a very labor intensive job.

Mayor Keith Hedrick will work to advertise the totes better so the residents are aware of this offering.

Deputy Mayor Gweneviere Depot states that the available truck is white versus our orange trucks. Do we have a plan to change the color to orange to avoid confusion with our residents?

Director Robarge is exploring the many options of making the new truck orange to match our current fleet.

Councilor Stephen Sheffield mentions the chance to recoup money from a trade in.

Councilor Christine Piazza inquires about payment plans for the totes.

Unfortunately we do not have payment plans at this time for the totes.

Motion made to move this to the Mayor and Council Meeting of December 6, 2021 by Deputy Mayor Gweneviere Depot, second by Councilor Christine Piazza. All in favor, 5-0-0. Motion carried.

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655 DEPARTMENT PRESENTATIONS 10/17/17
-GROTON UTILITIES CUSTOMER SERVICE 11/22/21

General Manager Customer Service, Tina Daniels, comes to the council to present her department, Customer Service, Groton Utilities, to the Council. She gives a brief overview of the department as well as the many energy assistance programs available to Groton Utility customers. Groton Utility Customer Service is always available and happy to assist its customers with any assistance programs that may be available to them.

-HUMAN RESOURCES

Director of Human Resources, Linda Avedisian, gives a brief overview of the City of Groton's Human Resources Department and their many responsibilities.

This presentation sparks conversation to better diversify the workforce at the City of Groton and the conversation will continue to brainstorm ideas to better notify minorities in our community the opportunities available with Groton Utilities.

742 GROTON UTILITIES 2/21/19
Groton Utilities Director Ron Gaudet presents the below purchase requests to the Council.

-MEDICI LOBBYING SERVICES 11/22/21

Director Ron Gaudet requests payment of the annual renewal for Medici Lobbying Services. Medici Lobbying Services is an asset to the City of Groton in obtaining grants and providing additional services to Groton Utilities.

Deputy Mayor Gweneviere Depot inquires of last year's process versus this year's prices.

The price has not changed.

Motion made to move this to the Mayor and Council Meeting of December 6, 2021 by Councilor Stephen Sheffield, second by Deputy Mayor Gweneviere Depot. All in favor, 5-0-0. Motion carried.

-NORTHSTAR – HARRIS 11/22/21

Director Ron Gaudet states that the Northstar software program is used by our Customer Service team daily to complete their job function. This is an annual fee for maintenance of the system.

No further discussion.

Motion made to move this to the Mayor and Council Meeting of December 6, 2021 by Councilor Stephen Sheffield, second by Deputy Mayor Gweneviere Depot. All in favor, 5-0-0. Motion carried.

-ELECTRIC TRUCK 11/22/21

Director Ron Gaudet explains that there is a minimum of a 2-year delay in obtaining trucks. This is a request for a routine replacement of the truck. They are replacing a 2012 Turbo diesel with over 100K miles on it.

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Deputy Mayor Gweneviere Depot inquired about the number of bids received for this purchase.

Director Ron Gaudet mentioned that they only received one bid as it has been difficult to receive bids and obtain trucks.

Deputy Mayor Gweneviere Depot states that based upon the information provided to them, the cost in repairing the truck versus the cost in replacing the truck, it is a reasonable ask to replace.

Motion made to move this to the Mayor and Council Meeting of December 6, 2021 by Councilor Christine Piazza, second by Deputy Mayor Gweneviere Depot. All in favor, 5-0-0. Motion carried.

-MUTUAL AID

11/22/21

Director Ron Gaudet explains the emergency decision to request mutual aid to come during Hurricane Henri in August where we were projected to be a direct hit of the storm. As the hurricane did change course while the mutual aid was on its way, Groton Utilities did cancel and turn the trucks around but a charge does remain for the travel that was done prior to the cancellation.

Deputy Mayor Gweneviere Depot inquired about our history with mutual aid and if we have ever needed mutual aid in the past. She also inquired if we would have received the direct hit, would we have been able to restore power to our customers on our own.

Director Ron Gaudet simply stated no, if we would have been a direct hit as projected, we would have not been able to restore power quickly to our residents without the assistance of mutual aid.

Mayor Keith Hedrick elaborated on the decision to reach out for mutual aid based upon the expectation of the storm and the impact it would have on our area. This was the best decision made based upon the information had at the time.

Councilor Stephen Sheffield inquired about the invoice and if payment had already been made.

Director Ron Gaudet explains that the invoice has already been paid. He further explains that during emergencies, the Emergency Purchasing Policy is in place that these type of purchases do not first go through the Council for approval. Emergency funds are used/paid and then the purchase is confirmed/acknowledged through Council.

Both Councilor Stephen Sheffield and Councilor Rashaad Carter hope that in the future any decisions and costs like this are run through the council prior making payment.

Councilor Christine Piazza inquires as to the Emergency Purchasing Policy and if it is laid out to include the Council. Councilor Christine Piazza understands policy but would like a copy of the Emergency Purchasing Policy to better understand the process.

Deputy Mayor Gweneviere Depot speaks to the cost being questioned and states that cost is non-negotiable with mutual aid, the outside aid are most likely unionized and most likely contracted for additional pay, meals, travel expenses, etc. She also mentions that something like this would have

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not been able to come to the Council prior to needing to make the request for aid. She concludes that she does not feel this is unreasonable.

Councilor Rashaad Carter inquires as to why the cost is being brought to the council for approval when the money has already been spent. He does not feel that the council should be voting upon something that has already been completed.

Councilor Stephen Sheffield inquired about the estimate and the timeliness of the bill.

Deputy Mayor Gweneviere Depot is satisfied with the items coming through council even though it was an emergency and paid. She feels it is important to have the option to review and the opportunity to ask the questions necessary for the residents to understand why the money was spent.

Councilor Rashaad Carter states that he does not feel he should be voting on something that is already complete as he feels his vote does not matter in this decision. He would like the policy to be reviewed moving forward.

Councilor Stephen Sheffield feels that something needs to be done in order to prevent this from happening again.

Councilor Lisa McCabe states that a policy is important but in this situation, we employed these services and the funds need to be paid.

Councilor Stephen Sheffield agrees with Councilor Lisa McCabe that we will pay for the services but he is dissatisfied with the timing of the bill.

Finance Director Ron Yuhas clarifies the bill and explains the timeline of the billing process.

Councilor Christine Piazza associates this instance with her past medical career. Whether she is needed medically or called upon to be there "in case" needed, that medical professional is getting paid whether she is used or not. She would like to refer back to the policy on emergency spending and the correct process.

Deputy Mayor Gweneviere Depot compares her previous comment to the mentioned example from Councilor Stephen Sheffield. She appreciates that the emergency spending comes to the council and requires a vote rather than being brought for informational only, non-voting.

Mayor Keith Hedrick is going to move forward with a review of the emergency policy and move on to the next item on the agenda.

Motion made to move this to the Mayor and Council Meeting of December 6, 2021 by Councilor Christine Piazza, second by Deputy Mayor Gweneviere Depot.

Voting is 4-1-0. Councilor Stephen Sheffield opposed. Motion carried.

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-CARUS

11/22/21

Director Ron Gaudet explains that the solution, liquid blended chlorine, is used as a water treatment chemical, will have a pricing increase for the FY 2022 and therefore Groton Utilities is requesting an increase in the budget item.

Councilor Christine Piazza questioned the contract and the pricing. She would like to ensure that the contract allows the seller to increase the cost.

Councilor Stephen Sheffield inquires about inflation.

Deputy Mayor Gweneviere Depot points out the clause in the contract which mentions a hardship and increased pricing.

Motion made to move this to the Mayor and Council Meeting of December 6, 2021 by Deputy Mayor Gweneviere Depot, second by Councilor Christine Piazza. All in favor, 5-0-0. Motion carried.

-WESCO

11/22/21

Director Ron Gaudet states that this is a switch part that is necessary for an upgrade.

Motion made to move this to the Mayor and Council Meeting of December 6, 2021 by Councilor Lisa McCabe, second by Deputy Mayor Gweneviere Depot. All in favor, 5-0-0. Motion carried.

-EMSPEC 38 KV HOOKSTICK DISCONNECT SWITCHES

11/22/21

Director Ron Gaudet states that the three below items work in tandem with each other. This item is the low voltage gear for the transmission upgrade project.

Motion made to move this to the Mayor and Council Meeting of December 6, 2021 by Councilor Christine Piazza, second by Deputy Mayor Gweneviere Depot. All in favor, 5-0-0. Motion carried.

-EMSPEC 123 KV DISCONNECT SWITCHES

11/22/21

This item is the high voltage gear for the transmission upgrade project.

Motion made to move this to the Mayor and Council Meeting of December 6, 2021 by Councilor Christine Piazza, second by Councilor Stephen Sheffield. All in favor, 5-0-0. Motion carried.

-SIEMEN ENERGY BREAKERS

11/22/21

This item is the breakers for the Buddington Rd. substation which is also necessary for the transmission upgrade project.

Councilor Christine Piazza inquires about the higher than normal contingency attached to the quotes.

Director Ron Gaudet explains that based upon our timelines for approval we cannot hold a quote with the ever changing market and demand, therefore a contingency must be in place for the costs to

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rise while the project is approved for purchase.

Motion made to move this to the Mayor and Council Meeting of December 6, 2021 by Councilor Lisa McCabe, second by Deputy Mayor Gweneviere Depot. All in favor, 5-0-0. Motion carried.

561 GROTON UTILITIES FINANCIALS 9/24/15

Director of Finance Ron Yuhas gives a brief overview of Groton Utilities financials including the Electric Division, Water Division and Sewer Division.

690 CITY BUDGET PRESENTATIONS 4/6/18

Director of Finance Ron Yuhas gives a brief overview of the City budget financials.

III. ADJOURNMENT

Motion made by Councilor Lisa McCabe, second by Deputy Mayor Gweneviere Depot. All in favor, 5-0-0. Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned by Mayor Keith Hedrick at 8:57pm.