



# City of Groton, Connecticut

## Mayor and Council Meeting Minutes

Monday, October 17, 2022

City Municipal Building  
295 Meridian Street  
Groton, CT 06340

Council Chambers

7:30 PM

Mayor Keith Hedrick, Deputy Mayor Gweneviere Depot, Councilor Rashaad Carter, Councilor Lisa McCabe, Councilor Paul Norris, Councilor Christine Piazza, Councilor Stephen Sheffield, City Clerk Edward Jacome

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Mayor Keith Hedrick called the meeting to order at 7:31 p.m.

### I. ROLL CALL

**Present:** Mayor Keith Hedrick, Deputy Mayor Gweneviere Depot, Councilor Rashaad Carter (Via Zoom), Councilor Paul Norris, Councilor Stephen Sheffield and City Clerk Edward Jacome

**Excused:** Councilor Lisa McCabe, Councilor Christine Piazza and Finance Director Ron Yuhas

### II. SALUTE TO THE FLAG

### III. RECOGNITION, AWARDS AND MEMORIALS

There was a moment of silence for the two Bristol Police Officers who lost their lives on duty.

### IV. RECEIPT OF CITIZEN'S PETITIONS/COMMENTS

Receipt of Citizens' Petitions is the portion of the Council meeting where the Council welcomes comments from citizens. To address the Council, please sign the sheet on the table at the front of the meeting room. When you are recognized, please approach the podium. Clearly state your name and address. Each presentation should be limited to five (5) minutes or less, and citizens should, if possible, submit emailed or written comments. Presentations should be related to matters pertinent to the City of Groton. City Councilors will only ask questions in order to clarify the speaker's presentation and can respond during the Responses to Citizens' Petitions portion of the meeting.

**Michael Boucher, 16 Hillside Avenue** – expressed his support for the default option being voted on. He expressed many concerns with the numerous health violations going unfixed for many years. He asked why the city has not provided the Rental Housing Complaint Form or Ordinance 97 Rental Housing Code in Spanish. He also stated the city needs to have a plan.

**Marilyn Monagas, 242 Branford Avenue** – stated her concerns with Branford Manor regarding mold, brown water and rodents.

**Rick Deciloram, 174 Branford Avenue** – stated his concern about possible eviction notices to individuals speaking at council meetings. He also expressed his concerns about rodents and the lack of progress made on remediation.

**Valarie Levy, 159 Branford Avenue** – stated her concerns about the lack of accessibility to participate in citizen's petitions/comments through Zoom. She stated her concerns with Branford Manor living conditions and possible retaliation to those speaking up about the issues.

**Christine Santos, Building 44 Branford Avenue** – Submitted for the record:

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My name is Christine Santos and I live in apartment 268 Branford Ave -building 44. I am one of the families that continues to be out of my home now well over 3 months. To say I have been living a nightmare would be an understatement. I have had to uproot my life along with my children moving from hotel to hotel. I live with the fear every day of whether this is the day I'm going to be homeless because there has not been any progress on remediating my home and I'm being told that a multi-billionaire is running out of money to continue paying for my hotel. My teen has been depressed because she has been away from the friends/neighbors who have become family to her. Branford has stuck us all the way out in New London! Anyone who knows my daughter knows she is a bubbly, outgoing person and these past few months she has lost all drive to do anything. My three year old son who is autistic has had night terrors, loss of appetite and has resorted to aggressive behaviors because he doesn't know how to communicate the frustrations he is feeling. My 2 year old ask me every day when does he get to go home that he misses his toys and his bed. He too has had night terrors where I have to console him in the middle of the night because he wakes up screaming hysterically. I am now 3 months pregnant and I can't even walk into my apt because any time I do I am sick for days with congestion so bad I literally can't breathe! I am so disgusted with Branford's complete disregard for human kind. They received numerous housing violations with my apt alone and have done nothing to fix the problems. They sent someone out to start patching up the chipping paint in my apt almost 2 months ago but they have not painted any of my apt and have had the time and permission to do so. They supposedly started remediation in my basement a week ago. It's been days since the contractors have been in my home. They have only removed a small portion of sheet rock but somehow have assured me they would be done in time and I could be back in my home by Tuesday 10/18/2022- the reality is they are NO WHERE close to being done. This is unacceptable; they need to be held accountable. They have known about all these problems but because they aren't physically living in these conditions it's not of an urgency to them. Please do not allow them to continue abating paying taxes when they know families have been suffering and someone lost their life due to their negligence. Don't let my life be next or of my children's.

**Ian Thomas, 24 Jefferson Drive** – thanked the city for scheduling a public hearing regarding the Nov/May election change. He stated his support for holding Branford Manor in default for their lack of acknowledgment on tenets living conditions. He also stated his support for the Zoom option for public comment.

**Portia Bordelon, 24 Jefferson Drive** – stated her support for a Zoom option for public comment. She disclosed that she is a Groton Town Councilor. She asked why the City of Groton has not reached out to the criminal prosecutor for the Housing Authority or the Attorney General's Office.

**V. RESPOND TO CITIZEN'S PETITIONS/COMMENTS**

**Deputy Mayor Depot** – stated her support for the Zoom option. She stated that retaliation from a landlord is illegal and should be reported to the City of Groton Building Department.

**Councilor Norris** – stated his support for the Zoom option.

**Councilor Carter** – stated that he was on the previous council and the notion that this has been happening over the past five years while the council knew is not correct. He stated if he would

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have known about any of these situations previously like we do now it would have been rectified.

Councilor Sheffield – stated his support for the Zoom option.

Mayor Hedrick – stated that on May 6, 2022 he met with residents at The Rock to hear complaints. On May 13, 2022 he met with Related Company representatives from New York and local management team to address the issues. Last week there was a meeting with Town Manager John Burt, Ledge Light, the City Building Department, Attorney Amity Arcott and Related management. Mayor Hedrick stated that the notion of the City of Groton doing nothing is not accurate. Mayor Hedrick stated that he has asked Related on multiple occasions for a mold remediation plan, schedule of events and a general plan to move forward. This has not been provided so far and as a result a recommendation of holding Related in default is necessary to encourage action to help those families in Branford Manor.

**VI. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Mayor and Council, October 3, 2022

Motion to approve made by Deputy Mayor Depot, second by Councilor Sheffield.  
All in favor. Motion carried. 6-0-0

Committee of the Whole Special, October 11, 2022

Motion to approve made by Deputy Mayor Depot, second by Councilor Sheffield.  
All in favor. Motion carried. 6-0-0

**VII. COMMUNICATIONS AND REPORTS**

Councilor Norris – None

Councilor Sheffield – None

Councilor Carter – None

Deputy Mayor Depot – The next food drive is scheduled for Friday, October 28, 2022 at St. Johns Christian Church from 12:30pm-2pm. Encouraged residents to submit comments for ARPA process on where money should be allocated.

Mayor Hedrick – If you cannot make the food drive and would like food delivered reach out to (860) 446-4103.

**VIII. COMMITTEE REFERRALS**

None.

**IX. NEW BUSINESS**

**R-22-10-117 RESOLUTION TO FIND BRANFORD MANOR PRESERVATION, LIMITED PARTNERSHIP IN DEFAULT OF THE AGREEMENT PURSUANT TO PARAGRAPHS B2(g), B7(a)(ii), AND ANY OTHER RELEVANT PARAGRAPHS OF THE AGREEMENT. THIS ACTION IS TAKEN WITHOUT PREJUDICE TO THE CITY’S ABILITY IN THE FUTURE TO MODIFY THE REASONS AND/OR SUPPORT FOR, OR LACK OF REASONS AND/OR SUPPORT FOR, ANY ONGOING**

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**DEFAULT (THROUGH ADDITION, MODIFICATION OR WITHDRAWAL OF REASONS AND/OR SUPPORT FOR);**

**TO PROVIDE BRANFORD MANOR PRESERVATION, LIMITED PARTNERSHIP WITH A THIRTY (30) DAY CURE PERIOD, BEGINNING FROM THE COMPLIANCE DATES SET FORTH BY THE CITY AND OR LEDGE LIGHT HEALTH DISTRICT (AS THOSE COMPLIANCE DATES MAY BE AMENDED FROM TIME TO TIME). IN THE EVENT OF FURTHER NOTICES OF VIOLATION FROM THE RENTAL HOUSING CODE AND OR PUBLIC HEALTH CODE, THE CITY MAYOR MAY AMEND, IF NECESSARY, THE DEFAULT REASONS, SUPPORT FOR AND CURE PERIODS CONSISTENT WITH THE AGREEMENT.**

**TO AUTHORIZE THE CITY MAYOR TO EXECUTE ANY DOCUMENTS TO NOTIFY BRANFORD MANOR PRESERVATION, LIMITED PARTNERSHIP OF THE COUNCIL'S DECISIONS TO FIND IT IN DEFAULT; TO SET THE CURE PERIODS OUTLINED ABOVE; AND TO STATE THAT THE COUNCIL RETAINS ITS RIGHT, UPON REVIEW OF THE STATUS OF THE DEFAULT AT THE END OF THE CURE PERIODS (AS THOSE PERIODS MAY BE AMENDED FROM TIME TO TIME), TO TERMINATE THE AGREEMENT EFFECTIVE AT THE END OF THAT CURE PERIOD IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE TERMS OF THE AGREEMENT.**

**Whereas**, in April and May 2017, the Town of Groton, City of Groton and Branford Manor Preservation, Limited Partnership executed a “Real Property Tax Incentive Agreement for the Improvement and Operation of a Low-Income Subsidized Rental Housing Complex”, namely Branford Manor.

**Whereas**, Paragraph B2 (g) of the Agreement requires that the Developer (i.e., Branford Manor Preservation, Limited Partnership) by itself and/or through the Management Company at all times maintain the Project (i.e., Branford Manor) in good order and repair and manage and operate the Project in accordance with provisions of all applicable federal state and local law, and this Agreement;

**Whereas**, since on or about, September 8, 2022, Ledge Light Health District has issued at least 16 Public Health Orders identifying violations of the State Public Health Code at Branford Manor, which to date have not all been cured, and Ledge Light is continuing to address complaints and inspect the premises for potential additional violation of the State Public Health Code; and

**Whereas**, since on or about September 26, 2022, the City of Groton has 37 open violations of its Rental Housing Code at Branford Manor, which to date have not all been cured, and the City continues to address complaints and inspect the premises for potential additional violations of the Rental Housing Code.

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**Whereas**, Default under Paragraph B7 (a) (ii) is subject to a cure period of not less than thirty (30) days, as set forth in Paragraph B7 (c); and

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:** The Mayor and Council finds Branford Manor Preservation, Limited Partnership in Default of the Agreement pursuant to paragraphs B2 (g), B7 (a) (ii), and any other relevant paragraphs of the Agreement. This action is taken without prejudice to the City's ability in the future to modify the reasons and/or support for, or lack of reasons and/or support for, any ongoing Default (through addition, modification or withdrawal of reasons and/or support for);

To provide Branford Manor Preservation, Limited Partnership with a thirty (30) day cure period, beginning from the compliance dates set forth by the City and/or Ledge Light Health District (as those compliance dates may be amended from time to time). In the event of further notices of violation from the Rental Housing Code and/or Public Health Code, the City Mayor may amend, if necessary, the Default reasons, support for and cure periods consistent with the Agreement. To authorize the City Mayor to execute any documents to notify Branford Manor Preservation, Limited Partnership of the Council's decisions to find it in Default; to set the cure periods outlined above; and to state that the Council retains its right, upon review of the status of the Default at the end of the cure periods (as those periods may be amended from time to time), to terminate the Agreement effective at the end of that cure period in accordance with the terms of the Agreement.

Motion to approve made by Councilor Norris, second by Deputy Mayor Depot.

Councilor Sheffield inquired on what would be remediated and at which times.

Mayor Hedrick clarified it would be based on the deficiencies identified by either Ledge Light Health District or the Building Inspector, and Related would have a certain amount of time to remedy if not then the thirty day default starts. If they are in the process of remedying the deficiencies they can request an extension and if granted they can continue remediate to the point where it is either completed or they are in default and the thirty days start for each of the deficiencies.

Councilor Sheffield inquired if extensions would come before the council.

Mayor Hedrick stated not necessarily, but as of right now it is with Ledge Light and with the Building Inspector. Town of Groton Town Manager John Burt and Mayor Hedrick will keep the councils informed.

All in favor. Motion carried. 6-0-0

**X. ADJOURNMENT**

Motion to adjourn made by Deputy Mayor Depot, second by Councilor Sheffield.

All in favor. Motion carried. 6-0-0

Mayor Hedrick adjourned the meeting at 8:36 p.m.