



City of Groton, Connecticut
Mayor and Council Special Meeting
MINUTES

City Municipal Building
295 Meridian Street
Groton, CT 06340

Monday, May 10, 2021

**Auditorium
and Zoom**

8:00 PM

**Mayor Keith Hedrick, Councilor Rashaad Carter, Councilor Gweneviere Depot, Councilor Lisa McCabe,
Councilor Paul Norris, Councilor Christine Piazza and Councilor Stephen Sheffield
City Clerk Megan Peters**

Mayor Keith welcomed everyone to the ceremony.

I. SALUTE TO THE FLAG

Salute to the flag was introduced by Mayor Keith Hedrick and lead by Grandson Bruno Lowe-Remiesiewicz.

II. INVOCATION - PASTOR JOSEPH COLEMAN, ST. JOHN'S CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Mayor Keith Hedrick introduced Pastor Joseph Coleman to the stage to lead the group in a prayer to open the ceremony.

III. WELCOME FROM MAYOR HEDRICK

Mayor Keith Hedrick thanked the pastor and the people of the audience for joining us this evening. He continued by congratulating the newly elected councilors and clerk. He welcomed and thanked all the dignitaries and town councilors who joined us for the evening. Lastly, he thanked and acknowledged recently retired Clerk Debra Patrick for her many years of service to the city.

IV. REMARKS FROM LT. GOVERNOR SUSAN BYSIEWICZ

Lt. Governor Bysiewicz started out her remarks by thanking the following; the candidates who ran in this election, the men and women who serve our country in the military and the family members of those elected officials. During her remarks she asked that all people who are recognized to stand and be recognized for their service. Lt. Governor Bysiewicz goes on by commending the elected officials of Connecticut who have contributed to the fight of COVID-19 and the progress we have made through the pandemic. Lastly, she acknowledged the diversity of our council.

V. OATH OF OFFICE FOR MAYOR

MAYOR KEITH HEDRICK

Lt. Governor Bysiewicz administered the oath of office to Mayor Keith Hedrick.

VI. OATH OF OFFICE OR COUNCILORS

COUNCILOR GWENEVIERE DEPOT

Gweneviere Depot is sworn in by Lt. Governor Bysiewicz.

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COUNCILOR RASHAAD CARTER

Rashaad Carter is sworn in by Lt. Governor Bysiewicz via Zoom.

COUNCILOR LISA MCCABE

Lisa McCabe is sworn in by Lt. Governor Bysiewicz.

COUNCILOR CHRISTINE PIAZZA

Christine Piazza is sworn in by Lt. Governor Bysiewicz.

COUNCILOR PAUL NORRIS

Paul Norris is sworn in by Lt. Governor Bysiewicz.

COUNCILOR STEPHEN SHEFFIELD

Stephen Sheffield is sworn in by Lt. Governor Bysiewicz.

VII. OATH OF OFFICE FOR CITY CLERK

CITY CLERK MEGAN PETERS

Megan Peters is sworn in by Lt. Governor Bysiewicz.

VIII. REMARKS FROM MAYOR HEDRICK

Mayor Hedrick thanked Lt. Governor Bysiewicz for coming to swear in the group. He continues to thank all staff members of the City of Groton and all commissions and their community volunteers for all that they do. He then proceeded with his official remarks-

"Tonight I want to talk about the historic significance of the past four months. For four months all eyes were on the City of Groton. We have conducted a Primary and a General Election. It has been 30 years since a primary was conducted against an incumbent Mayor in the City of Groton. There has never been a write-in candidate in the City of Groton. The only other successful write-in candidacy in Connecticut was in 2005 when, the Waterbury Mayor was successful. Additionally, there was tremendous voter turnout for both candidates.

After the primary loss, my wife and I talked about the past and the future and whether or not to continue in politics.

In the days that followed, hundreds of people came to us and asked me to run in the general election. They were unaffiliated, independent, democrat and republican voters. I had no money, no campaign committee, no plan but I had the will of the people at the grass roots level to run. My wife gave her support to my decision to run and for that I thank her.

I met with a couple of trusted advisors to discuss whether or not to continue. I was asked "how would you feel the day after the swearing in if you did not at least give it a chance". In the end, we formed a committee and set out to educate voters on how to fill out the ballot for a write-in candidate. The challenges to this task were huge. Not only did I have to earn the vote but I had to teach the voter how to complete the ballot. My analogy was like pushing wet rope up a hill. In the end we were successful. I want to publicly thank those on my team for your support and your courage to go against mainstream politics. Most importantly I want to thank the grass roots efforts of the voters that allowed me another term to continue to move the City of Groton forward.

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This election revealed some differences in vision and in the fundamental governance of the City. This election did not have to be one ideology over the other. We can embrace green initiatives and still balance the budget through a phased approach and use of federal and state resources to help us meet goals. I hear the cries for equity and parity in our community. I am committed to the healing of our community to make us stronger in the end. I ask for your help in bringing our diverse community together.

For those of you who were first time voters, congratulations. Please don't let this be a one and done. I need your help in uniting the City of Groton. Stay involved in your community. Join a Board or Commission, tutor/mentor our youth, volunteer at the library, coach youth sports. Be the one who brings unity to our community. Let your passion for our neighborhoods bring the City of Groton together.

I serve all of the residents of the City of Groton; those who voted for me, those who voted for my opponent and those who did not vote.

If you have questions or concerns about what the City of Groton is doing please reach out to me at mayor@cityofgroton-ct.gov or 860-446-4103. Facebook and Twitter are convenient outlets and may make you feel better but they are not legislative tools. Stay informed by watching or attending meetings.

What does the future bring? I will briefly discuss some key areas for the future of the City of Groton.

COVID-19: *We continue to operate under COVID-19 protocols. The Municipal building and Groton Utilities are open for business. We have kept both employees and the general public safe using COVID protocols. We were able to have the beach open last year and this year we will bring back the concession stand and relax many of the restrictions put in place to keep us safe. We conducted Concerts in the Park last year and will continue to do so this year. Our parks are open and little league is happening this year. As we move forward, we will slowly get back to a new normal. We have been successful with COVID Vaccination Clinics at the Municipal Building and a couple of weeks ago we brought the vaccinations to Branford Manor and will continue to expand vaccines to all populations.*

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: *Economic Development is essential to growth in the City of Groton as well as establishing a sense of place and a sense of space for its residence. We are studying the development options on Thames Street and Five Corners. Five Corners development is currently at the Planning and Zoning Commission. Thayer Mahan should expand into the Groton Heights schools in the near future. The Colonel Ledyard property developer has started talks with the City Planner. We are in discussions with a developer regarding development on Thames Street across from the Garbo Lobster property. I am awaiting official notification of a \$649K grant for the rebuilding of the docks at the Thames View Park. These will be eight 26 foot docks with a handicapped accessible kayak boat launch. Additionally, three properties are for sale on Thames Street. We are continuing discussions with property owners on repurposing residential properties for mixed use development to allow small businesses on Thames Street.*

POLICING: *During the Black Lives Matter protest last June, Chief Spellman and I were at the Municipal Building. We encouraged people to speak and we listened. Several one-on-one meetings occurred from this and we organized the Police and Community Together (PACT) Committee. This committee is a group of concerned citizens, advisory in nature, to help bridge the gap between the police and community. The focus is on the youth of our community and the diverse community itself. In December, the PACT handed out 500 backpacks to students who needed them. Recently, PACT members helped with the handing out of over 3000 packages of food at Washington Park and Saint John's Christian Church. We have found that this approach is the right approach for the City of Groton.*

Our police officers are equipped with body cameras and we recently joined the state radio system to ensure complete radio coverage over all of Groton and the region. We have conducted de-escalation training and we have the states only certified Autism & Law Enforcement Education Coalition (ALEC) Trainer on staff. Our police department is a reflection of our diverse community. Officers practice

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Community Policing as a philosophy and have for many years. They will continue to work together with our community to bring positive outcomes to the City of Groton.

OTHER ISSUES: *Three years ago we started evaluating resiliency in general and the impact of sea level rise specifically in the City of Groton and Groton Utilities. We currently have a study ongoing to help us determine the impacts to sea level rise and the procedures, policies and protocols needed to address this. Zoning will require evaluation regarding expanded flood zones and freeboard requirements for building. The identification of infrastructure strengthening will allow us to use federal funds which will become available in the future years.*

We installed our first electric car charging station at Washington Park and will install a second station at Eastern Point Beach later this year.

We are also continuing to strengthen our relationships with Electric Boat and Pfizer to help strengthen our community and to help them with the forecasted growth expected in the future.

In closing, the future looks good for the City of Groton and I look forward to leading us into this future. Again, thank you for your confidence in me and your support.”

IX. ROLL CALL

Keith Hedrick called Clerk Megan Peters for roll call to start the meeting. Newly sworn in City Clerk Megan Peters performed roll call. Present included Mayor Keith Hedrick, Councilor Rashaad Carter via Zoom, Councilor Gweneviere Depot, Councilor Lisa McCabe, Councilor Paul Norris, Councilor Christine Piazza, Councilor Stephen Sheffield and City Clerk Megan Peters

X. NEW BUSINESS

R-21-5-72 RESOLUTION SELECTING GWENEVIERE DEPOT AS DEPUTY MAYOR OF THE CITY OF GROTON

WHEREAS, under the provisions of Article III, Section 1 of the City of Groton Charter, the Council will choose, by a majority vote, at the first meeting following the regular election, a Deputy Mayor of the City of Groton;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that by a majority vote of the City Council, Gweneviere Depot is selected as Deputy Mayor of the City of Groton to serve until the next regular election.

Councilor Lisa McCabe read the above resolution R-21-5-72 to nominate Councilor Gweneviere Depot as Deputy Mayor for the present term.

Councilor Lisa McCabe made a motion to move resolution and Councilor Gweneviere Depot seconded to approve resolution R-21-5-72.

Councilor Rashaad Carter then spoke to make a motion to amend the resolution R-21-5-72 to select Councilor Stephen Sheffield as Deputy Mayor. Councilor Stephen Sheffield seconded the amended resolution.

Discussion occurred, Councilor Rashaad Carter and Councilor Stephen Sheffield spoke in favor of the proposed amended resolution and both Councilor Gweneviere Depot and Councilor Lisa McCabe followed to speak in favor of the originally proposed resolution.

Council votes on the amended resolution as proposed by Councilor Rashaad Carter.

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In favor are Councilor Rashaad Carter, Councilor Stephen Sheffield and Councilor Christine Piazza. Opposed are Councilor Gweneviere Depot and Councilor Lisa McCabe. Councilor Paul Norris abstained. The vote is 3 in favor, 2 opposed and 1 abstained, the motion does not carry. The Charter is referenced for clarity and confirmation.

Council then proceeds to vote on the original motion. In favor are Councilor Lisa McCabe, Councilor Gweneviere Depot and Councilor Paul Norris. Opposed are Councilor Rashaad Carter, Councilor Stephen Sheffield and Councilor Christine Piazza. Outcome is a tie, Charter is yet again referred to for clarity and confirmation. In the event of a tie, the Mayor has the deciding vote. Mayor Keith Hedrick voted in favor of the original resolution. Outcome is 4-3-0, resolution passed and Councilor Gweneviere Depot is named the Deputy Mayor.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Keith Hedrick moved to make a motion to adjourn. Councilor Lisa McCabe made motion to adjourn. Councilor Gweneviere Depot seconded the motion to adjourn. Motion carried. Meeting concluded at 8:40pm.

FINAL