

RTM Finance Committee

October 7, 2021 6:30pm

1. Call to Order - Chairperson Washington called the meeting to order at 6:33PM on Thursday, October 7, 2021. The meeting was held via Zoom.

2. To;; Call - In attendance were Reps. Casper, Flax, Chase, Kotowski, Powers and Washington. Also present were Moderator Ebbin, Town Manager John Burt, Director of Finance Cindy Landry, Director of Planning and Development Services Jonathan Reiner, Executive Director of SCCOG John Butler, Business Director for Groton Public Schools Kenneth Knight, Grants Coordinator for Groton Public Schools Shannon Weigle, and Superintendent of Groton Public Schools Susan Austin.

Absent - Rep. Foster

3. Unfinished Business - None

4. New Business

4.1. 2021-585-3 - SCCOG Navigator Position Funding Request

Rep. Chase made a motion that the RTM Finance committee recommends that the Town of Groton approves 1% of its American Rescue Plan Act County funds totaling \$56,364.06 to be paid in equal parts over four years and that the totality of the \$56,364.06 will be deposited in the Town's ARPA fund.

Seconded by Rep. Flax.

Discussion - James Butler, Executive Director of Southeastern CT Council of Governments told the committee that his organization is asking all SCCOG member municipalities for 1% of their County Allocation of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding over a four-year period (.25% per year) to support the creation of a Recovery Coordinator position at SCCOG. The yearly amount will be \$14,091.02. There are 22 municipalities. SCCOG would like to fund a position dedicated specifically to assist the 22 municipalities in their efforts to identify eligible activities in the administration of these funds and with grant writing and financial tracking. Municipalities are encouraged to develop multi-town(regional) projects. This will require approximately \$130,000 annually to fund salary (\$70,000) , plus benefits, and other expenses associated with the work of the person in this position. This is a temporary position only for 4 years which is the length of time municipalities have to expend ARPA funding. SCCOG did not receive any ARPA funds, so asking the membership to help fund this position which will help the region. The Town Council supports this request because it will help ensure other member municipalities are successful in using their ARPA funds. The Town is also planning to hire a person to help navigate expending ARPA funds within the guidelines of the U.S. Department of Treasury. This person will provide oversight of these funds for the Town.

Vote to approve the motion - Rep. Washington, Flax, Powers, Casper, and Chase, with Rep. Kotowski opposing.

4.2. 2021-675-2 - Extension of Appropriation for Groton 2020 School Facilities Plan

Rep. Chase made a motion that any portion of said appropriation which has not been expended or financed on the effective date of this resolution shall be extended and re-appropriated, provided that the total amount expended or financed as of the effective date of this resolution, pursuant to said appropriation under Ordinance No. 284, as amended by ordinance No. 291, plus the portion which is re-appropriated, shall not exceed \$184,500,000 and refer to RTM 6.5.3. Seconded by Rep. Flax.

Discussion - Director Landry stated in 2016 Groton voters approved by referendum Ordinance No. 284 the Groton 2020 facilities plan not to exceed \$184.5 million. That ordinance was later amended by Ordinance 291 when the Town made the change for the two elementary schools from renovate as new to build as new. Town of Groton debt policy and management of fiscal practices states that any project,

no matter the funding, not fully expended in 5 years lapses unless re-appropriated. The bond will end on Nov. 8, 2021 if not re-appropriated. This is common in bonding projects. The last time we did this was in 2017 for road project. Typically projects of this size are not completed in 5 years. We have 3 bond issues. Issued \$58 million in bonds already for this project. Director Landry anticipates 2 more. Takes a long time to find out our final cost. We have to finalize our expenditures and get audit from state to know our final cost. If we do not extend this no further expenditures or bonds can be sold to finalize this project. If we do not extend this, the rest of the money will have to come from the general fund. We have received some reimbursement money from the state already but not all. Debt policy says this will have to be extended for 5 years. Does not raise the dollar amount. Director Landry does not anticipate another five years. That is the way the debt policy reads that you have to extend for 5 years. Vote to approve motion passed unanimously.

4.3. 2021-679-2- American Rescue Plan Act Near Term Funding Needs

Rep. Flax made a motion that the Town of Groton approves additional American Plan Rescue Act funding in the amount of \$357,757 be set aside for the following uses:

1. Town of Groton Navigator Position: \$100,000
2. Human Service's needs: \$150,000
3. Miscellaneous needs: \$107,757

and, be it, further resolved, that the Town of Groton refers the American Rescue Plan Act Near Funding Needs request to the RTM via 6.5.3. Seconded by Rep. Chase.

Discussion - Town Manager Burt lead the discussion stating that part of the purpose of the funds is to help people in need. He wants to have some flexibility in moving funds quickly if immediate needs arise. Some needs are needed more quickly than other needs. The Town has already received two Near Term Fund request, one from SCCOG and the other from LLHD. The cost of both of these is about \$142,000. We need the Navigator position quickly to review applications that will start coming in. Navigator salary includes benefits. This is a temporary position lasting 3 to 4 years. Also, as the moratorium for evictions expires the Town wants to make sure there is money for that in Human Services. Funds may also be needed for the business community. There will be oversight in the use of these funds to make sure they are being used appropriately. If the dollars are not needed in these line items the money can go back into the pot. Near term funding means it is a quicker way to get money sooner than later. Miscellaneous needs is like having fund balance. You identify the need when it occurs. Emergency uses - it just can't wait. This money will be under a microscope. You have to show proof of everything or pay back if something is deemed ineligible. Every expenditure has to make sense and be judged individually. There are strict guidelines for spending these funds.

Town staff will be vetting applications as well as a committee set up by TC to review applications. Multiple step process to review applications.

There was a question about how the Town would solicit input from the community on how the funds should be spent. Town Manager Burt stated that on October 19th there will be two public meetings. One in the daytime at Groton Municipal Building from 1 to 3. The other meeting in the evening at the Groton Senior Center from 6:30 to 8:30. There will also be direct mailings to homes. Another idea is to set up booths in the library and senior center.

Rep. Kotowski made a motion to move each individual expenditure separately. Seconded by Rep. Flax. Vote in favor of motion were Reps. Chase, Flax, Washington, and Kotowski. Oppose were Reps. Casper and Powers. Motion passed.

Rep. Kotowski made a motion to approve Town of Groton Navigator Position: \$100,000. Seconded by Rep. Flax. Vote to approve motion were Reps. Powers, Chase, Casper, Washington, and Flax. Vote to oppose motion was Rep. Kotowski. Motion passed.

Rep. Kotowski made a motion to move Human Service's needs: \$150,000. Seconded by Rep. Flax. Passed unanimously

Rep. Kotowski made a motion to move Miscellaneous needs: \$107,757. Seconded by Rep. Powers. Vote in favor of motion were Reps. Chase, Powers, Flax, and Casper. Oppose - Rep. Kotowski. Abstention- Rep. Washington. Motion passed.

4.4. 2021-707-2- Groton Public Schools DoDEA Grant

Rep. Flax made a motion that the Town Council authorizes the Superintendent of Schools Susan Austin to accept the \$750,000 DoDEA MCASP 2021 Education Resource Grant in the amount of \$750,000 and to execute any necessary paperwork to implement the grant and refer to the RTM 6.5.3. Seconded by Rep. Chase.

Discussion - Superintendent Austin stated that this is the fifth DoDEA Grant that the Groton School System has received since 2014. It is a five-year grant. Superintendent Austin is very excited about this grant because it is a military connected academic and support programs resource grant. The title of the grant is "Pathways to Success Preparing Military Students in Careers in Health Science and STEM." This grant ties everything together. It gets students to think about how they can go to work in the future. GPS will develop a K-12 career pathway program to improve student readiness for college and careers. All DoDEA grants help all students. All Groton schools are filled with military students. This grant will help our students be workforce and career ready. The grant encourages interdisciplinary studies especially in reading and writing. Grant is for students from K to 12th grades. Grant will help provide professional development and externships for teachers. Also, internships for students. The grant connects with the manufacturing pipeline. GPS has partnered with the Sub Base, EB, Mystic Art Center, Pfizer, Mystic Seaport, and Project O. This grant does not require any continual obligation from the town. Like with any grant a lot of attention to detail. They will track students. Vote in favor of motion- passed unanimously.

5. Rep. Powers made a motion to adjourn. Seconded by Rep. Chase. Passed unanimously. Meeting was adjourned at 8:33PM.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Rep. Washington