



**Town of Groton, Connecticut**  
**Town Council Committee of the Whole**  
**Regular Meeting Minutes**

45 Fort Hill Road  
 Groton, CT 06340

Town Manager: 860-441-6630

Town Clerk: 860-441-6640

*Mayor Juan Melendez Jr., Councilor Portia Bordelon, Councilor Aundré Bumgardner, Councilor Melinda Cassiere,  
 Councilor Rachael Franco, Councilor Bruce Jones, Councilor David McBride, Councilor Juliette Parker and  
 Councilor Scott Westervelt*

**Tuesday, December 14, 2021**

**6:30 PM**

**Senior Center - Main Room/Virtual Meeting**

Meeting Location:

102 Newtown Road, Groton/

Broadcasted Live on GMTV & YouTube

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Melendez called the meeting to order at 8:24 p.m.

**2. ROLL CALL**

All councilors were present.

Also present was Town Manager John Burt, Town Clerk Betsy Moukawsher, Director of Planning Jon Reiner, Assistant Planning Director Deb Jones, Economic Development Manager Paige Bronk, Parks and Recreation Director Mark Berry, Town Attorney Eric Callahan, Town Attorney Eileen Duggan, Police Chief Louis Fusaro, and Attorney Katherine Rule.

**3. CALENDAR AND COMMUNICATIONS**

Councilors shared the meetings and events they attended and the correspondence they received.

Councilor Franco reminded the Council that communication outside of the Council via email and texting is prohibited during the meeting.

Town Manager Burt shared that he will inform the Council when the Town building tours will be held and provided that the new Human Resources Director will begin on December 29<sup>th</sup>; information to follow.

**4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

4.a. 2021-843 November 3, 2021 Special Meeting Minutes and November 9, 2021 Minutes

**MOTION:** To approve the Committee of the Whole Special Meeting Minutes of November 3, 2021 and the Committee of the Whole minutes of November 9, 2021.

Moved by: Parker, Juliette		Seconded by: Bordelon, Portia		
Committee Members	YES	NO	ABSTAIN	RECUSE
Juan Melendez, Jr.	X			
Portia Bordelon	X			
Aundré Bumgardner	X			
Melinda Cassiere	X			

Rachael Franco	X			
Bruce Jones	X			
David McBride	X			
Juliette Parker	X			
Scott Westervelt	X			
APPROVED				

5. NEW BUSINESS

5.a. 2021-799 National Opioid Settlement

Town Manager Burt provided that this is a lawsuit being brought against distributors and manufacturers by states and political subdivisions. The Town needs to determine if they would like to opt into the lawsuit by January 2<sup>nd</sup>. He shared that the award amount is unknown at this time and will most likely consist of a formula to determine the amount sent to each entity. It was made clear that 70% of the funds awarded will need to be allotted for Town opioid remediation efforts with no direction at this time on the remaining 30%. The Town has been recommended by the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM) to join the lawsuit as the Town will not incur any legal fess and has no commitment. Attorney Eileen Duggan provided that there is no disadvantage to opting into this lawsuit and the Town is able to withdraw at any time.

In response to Councilor Cassiere, Town Manager Burt provided that specific opioid remediation efforts have not been determined. Once an award amount is known, the Town Manager suggested a group should be formed to determine planned uses.

MOTION: To recommend a resolution to authorize the Town of Groton to become a Participating Subdivision in the Opioid Distribution Settlement.

Moved by: Jones, Bruce		Seconded by: Cassiere, Melinda		
Committee Members	YES	NO	ABSTAIN	RECUSE
Juan Melendez, Jr.	X			
Portia Bordelon	X			
Aundré Bumgardner	X			
Melinda Cassiere	X			
Rachael Franco	X			
Bruce Jones	X			
David McBride	X			
Juliette Parker	X			
Scott Westervelt	X			
APPROVED				

The Committee of the Whole recessed at 8:42 p.m.

The Committee of the Whole reconvened at 8:45 p.m.

5.b. 2021-840 Transit Climate Initiative (TCI) Support

MOTION: To recommend a resolution to encourage our State legislators to pass the necessary legislation to implement the Transportation and Climate Initiative Program was made by Councilor Parker, seconded by Councilor Bumgardner.

Town Manager Burt reviewed the background information and noted that he received

confirmation recently that legislation did not pursue this initiative. Former Mayor Granatosky had previously requested this item be considered before her departure.

The Council discussed if they should support this initiative as the governors for Connecticut, Rhode Island and Massachusetts have withdrawn their support.

Councilors Bumgardner and Bordelon shared their support for this initiative noting that the Town can still show the community is in support of resiliency and sustainability in our community.

Discussion began on whether the Town Council should support this initiative as a whole or as individuals with letters of support, questioned if taxes will be raised to fund this initiative and the need for more discussion with possible representation from the Save the Sound group.

Councilors Parker and Franco were not in support of moving this item forward.

Town Manager Burt clarified that the support for this initiative would be by way of resolution, not a letter of support signed by all Councilors. He also mentioned that the Council needs to determine what they would like local legislators to pursue in the future on their behalf.

MOTION: To postpone to a time definite to January 25, 2021 was made by Councilor Bordelon and seconded by Councilor Cassiere.

AMENDED MOTION: To postpone to a time definite to January 11, 2021

Moved by: Bumgardner, André		Seconded by: Bordelon, Portia		
Committee Members	YES	NO	ABSTAIN	RECUSE
Juan Melendez, Jr.	X			
Portia Bordelon	X			
Aundré Bumgardner	X			
Melinda Cassiere	X			
Rachael Franco		X		
Bruce Jones	X			
David McBride	X			
Juliette Parker			X	
Scott Westervelt	X			
POSTPONED				

5.c. 2021-788 New CIP Appropriation - Athletic Field Development

Director of Parks and Recreation Mark Berry provided that this is a new CIP for Athletic Field Development. He explained that in the 2021 CIP Athletic Field Development 4E, the amount of \$100,000 was set aside for the irrigation and reconstructing of a sports field at the Groton Community Center. The budgeted amount needed for completion is \$162,750. To make up the \$62,750 difference the P&R Department is proposing \$29,750 be moved from a Special Revenue Fund that collects fees for use of the athletic fields. He is proposing the other \$33,000 be moved from the Capital Reserve Fund once the FYE2020 CIP 4I Open Space Improvements unexpended balance of \$42,700 is returned to the Capital Reserve Fund unassigned fund balance to offset this difference.

Town Manager Burt explained that this has been discussed with Finance Director Cindy Landry and the remaining money from the closed Open Space CIP will be used towards the

Wolfebrook property.

It was clarified that the athletic field at the Groton Community Center is used for youth soccer, lacrosse and the special needs programs. Director Berry provided that field is in poor shape and needs to be resolved. It was noted that this field is adjacent to Route 1 of the former Fitch Middle School building.

Town Manager Burt shared that this item would be brought before the RTM as well for approval.

MOTION: To recommend a resolution to close FYE2020 CIP 4I Open Space Improvements and return the unexpended balance of \$42,700 to the Capital Reserve Fund unassigned fund balance as an offset and appropriate \$33,000 to the new FYE2022 CIP Athletic Field Development.

Moved by: Melendez, Jr., Juan		Seconded by: Bordelon, Portia		
Committee Members	YES	NO	ABSTAIN	RECUSE
Juan Melendez, Jr.	X			
Portia Bordelon	X			
Aundré Bumgardner	X			
Melinda Cassiere	X			
Rachael Franco	X			
Bruce Jones	X			
David McBride	X			
Juliette Parker	X			
Scott Westervelt	X			
APPROVED				

5.d. 2021-805 Groton Ambulance Update

MOTION: Groton Ambulance will be postponed until January 25, 2021.

Moved by: Parker, Juliette		Seconded by: Cassiere, Melinda		
Committee Members	YES	NO	ABSTAIN	RECUSE
Juan Melendez, Jr.	X			
Portia Bordelon	X			
Aundré Bumgardner	X			
Melinda Cassiere	X			
Rachael Franco	X			
Bruce Jones	X			
David McBride	X			
Juliette Parker	X			
Scott Westervelt	X			
POSTPONED				

5.e. 2021-839 Groton Ambulance Lease Extension

MOTION: Groton Ambulance will be postponed until January 25, 2021.

Moved by: Parker, Juliette		Seconded by: Cassiere, Melinda		
Committee Members	YES	NO	ABSTAIN	RECUSE
Juan Melendez, Jr.	X			
Portia Bordelon	X			
Aundré Bumgardner	X			
Melinda Cassiere	X			

Rachael Franco	X			
Bruce Jones	X			
David McBride	X			
Juliette Parker	X			
Scott Westervelt	X			
POSTPONED				

The Committee of the Whole recessed at 9:20 p.m.

The Committee of the Whole reconvened at 9:25 p.m.

5.f. 2021-841 Lawsuit Claim Settlement (Potential Executive Session)

Town Manager Burt shared there is a lawsuit against officers from the Town and City of Groton and City of Norwich related to an incident that occurred while serving on a statewide taskforce. He provided that the State is representing the officers and there is also a Monell claim against the municipalities. The Council will be discussing a proposed settlement for the case in executive session.

MOTION: Move that the Town Council Committee of the Whole, along with the Town Manager John Burt, Police Chief Louis Fusaro, and Attorney Katherine Rule, go into executive session pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes § 1-200 (6) (B) for discussion of a pending claim and/or litigation related to a Monell claim.

Moved by: Melendez, Jr., Juan		Seconded by: Parker, Juliette		
Committee Members	YES	NO	ABSTAIN	RECUSE
Juan Melendez, Jr.	X			
Portia Bordelon			X	
Aundré Bumgardner	X			
Melinda Cassiere	X			
Rachael Franco	X			
Bruce Jones	X			
David McBride	X			
Juliette Parker	X			
Scott Westervelt	X			
APPROVED				

The executive session began at 9:28 p.m.

The executive session ended at 9:55 p.m.

Town Manager Burt shared that the settlement amount is \$5,000.

MOTION: Move that the Town Council Committee of the Whole, upon review of the cost and benefits associated with the proposed settlement of Monell claims set forth in executive session, accept the proposed settlement.

Moved by: Melendez, Jr., Juan		Seconded by: Franco, Rachael		
Committee Members	YES	NO	ABSTAIN	RECUSE
Juan Melendez, Jr.	X			
Portia Bordelon	X			
Aundré Bumgardner	X			
Melinda Cassiere	X			
Rachael Franco	X			
Bruce Jones	X			

David McBride	X			
Juliette Parker	X			
Scott Westervelt	X			
APPROVED				

5.g. 2019-457 - 14 Excess Property Redevelopment - Update (Potential Executive Session)  
 Director of Planning Jon Reiner provided a brief history of the property. He explained that the preferred developer, PJ&A, signed into an option agreement with the Town in 2017 and they own adjoining properties totaling 17 acres. There are provisions in the purchase and sales agreement where PJ&A can work with a development firm (bona fide developer) on the project. The last two firms have withdrawn from the multi-family unit project due to the difficult site location. PJ&A is now looking to enter into an agreement with A&R Builders. A&R Builders has recently completed multi-family housing in Groton on Pleasant Valley and Gungywamp Road and has worked on a number of projects in the region.

The RFP process and timeframe of this project was clarified for the new Councilors. Director Reiner explained that these projects are given their due diligence and do take time. Since there is an option agreement in place, the Sale of Property Policy the Council is drafting will not apply in this case as the Town has entered into a legal agreement.

Town Manager Burt shared that he previously had sent a draft of the policy to the Council for feedback but will send it out again to compile suggestions and then return to the Council.

Discussion began on if a workshop should be held for the policy or whether suggestions should be compiled. It was the consensus of the Council to provide feedback to the Town Manager via email and the policy will be placed on a future agenda for discussion.

Discussion then began on the conceptual site plan from A&R Builders. It was shared that the developer has to follow the parameters set forth in the RFP for the site and the Council will have to the ability to approve of the conceptual plan before it moves forward.

Director Reiner shared that development is generally consistent with the concept plans as there is a legal agreement in place. A background check and vesting has been done on A&R Builders and they have developed other projects in Groton successfully. He reminded the Council that this will need to go through all the other regulatory bodies for approvals as well.

Attorney Eric Callahan confirmed that the Town has a binding contract with PJ&A and there is language in the contract that provides the rights to assign the contract to a bona fide developer. He provided that any modifications to the conceptual plan will need to be brought back to the Council for approval.

MOTION: For A&R Builders to be the new bona fide developer was made by Councilor Parker and seconded by Councilor Franco.

Discussion began on the ability for PJ&A to move forward with an agreement with A&R Builders without a vote from the Council as stated in the option agreement with the Town.

Councilor Parker withdrew her motion; Councilor Franco withdrew her second.

It was the consensus of the Council to continue the meeting at 10:44 p.m.

DISCUSSED
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5.h. 2021-141 - 9 Land Acquisition - Wolfebrook Property - Update (Potential Executive Session)

Director of Planning Jon Reiner shared that the Town has entered into a purchase and sales agreement for the 161-acre parcel. The Town has received \$352,000 in a grant toward the purchase of the property, Groton Open Space Association will donate up to \$210,000 and the remaining \$220,000 will be provided through other grants and/or fundraising. He provided that the boundary survey for the property will be completed in the next couple of weeks and that there have been changes in federal legislation that will be discussed in executive session concerning the purchase of the property.

MOTION: I hereby move that the members of the Town Council, Town Manager John Burt, Planning Director Jon Reiner and Assistant Planning Director Deb Jones go into executive session pursuant to CGS § 1-200 (6) (D) for the discussion of the selection of a site or the lease, sale or purchase of real estate by the state or a political sub division of the state concerning negotiations for the purchase of the Wolfebrook property.

Moved by: Melendez, Jr., Juan		Seconded by: Parker, Juliette		
Committee Members	YES	NO	ABSTAIN	RECUSE
Juan Melendez, Jr.	X			
Portia Bordelon	X			
Aundré Bumgardner	X			
Melinda Cassiere	X			
Rachael Franco	X			
Bruce Jones	X			
David McBride	X			
Juliette Parker	X			
Scott Westervelt	X			
APPROVED				

The executive session began at 10:48 p.m.

The executive session ended at 11:39 p.m.

6. OTHER BUSINESS

Councilor Bumgardner requested that a referral be made for selecting a Town Attorney through the RFP process. Councilor Bordelon supported his request.

7. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: To adjourn the meeting at 11:42 p.m.

Moved by: Franco, Rachael		Seconded by: Bumgardner, Aundré		
Committee Members	YES	NO	ABSTAIN	RECUSE
Juan Melendez, Jr.	X			
Portia Bordelon	X			
Aundré Bumgardner	X			
Melinda Cassiere	X			
Rachael Franco	X			
Bruce Jones	X			
David McBride	X			
Juliette Parker	X			

Scott Westervelt	X			
APPROVED				