



Town of East Greenwich

Town Council Special Session Minutes

January 31, 2011

Location and Time: Swift Community Center, 121 Peirce Street, 6:00pm

Council Members: Michael B. Isaacs, President
Henry V. Boezi, Vice President
Jeffrey B. Cianciolo, Councilor
Mark Watkins Gee, Councilor
Michael S. Kiernan, Councilor

Staff Members: William Sequino, Jr., Town Manager
Leigh A. Botello, Town Clerk
Col. Thomas Coyle, Chief of Police
Joseph Duarte, Public Works Director (absent)
Wendy Schmidle, IT Director (absent)
Kathy Raposa, Finance Director (absent)
Lisa Bourbonnais, Planning Director (absent)
Catherine Bradley, Parks and Recreation Director
Erin McAndrew, Human and Senior Services Director (absent)
Peter Clarkin, Town Solicitor (absent)

Others: School Committee Members (Winters, Durant, Gifford, Green, Sommer)
Dr. Vincent Mercurio, Superintendent
Jay Gowell, School Building Committee Chair
Jon Winikur, Strategic Building Solutions

6:00 PM – EXECUTIVE SESSION as per RIGL §42-46-5 (a) (6) to discuss prospective business or industry locating in the State of Rhode Island.

VP Boezi moves to go in to Executive Session as per RIGL §42-46-5 (a)(6) to discuss prospective business or industry locating in the State of Rhode Island, seconded by Councilor Gee. Council votes: Isaacs, aye; Boezi, aye; Cianciolo, aye; Gee, aye. The motion carries 4-0 with Councilor Kiernan being absent at this time.

Following the Executive Session, VP Boezi moves to return to Open Session, seconded by Councilor Gee. Council votes: Isaacs, aye; Boezi, aye; Cianciolo, aye; Gee, aye. The motion carries 4-0 with Councilor Kiernan being absent at this time.

VP Boezi moves to seal the Executive Session minutes, seconded by Councilor Gee. Council votes: Isaacs, aye; Boezi, aye; Cianciolo, aye; Gee, aye. The motion carries 4-0 with Councilor Kiernan being absent at this time.



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VP Boezi moves to adjourn, seconded by Councilor Gee. Council votes: Isaacs, aye; Boezi, aye; Cianciolo, aye; Gee, aye. The motion carries 4-0 with Councilor Kiernan being absent at this time.

7:00 PM - CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE AMERICAN FLAG

President Isaacs calls the special session to order and leads the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag. Chairwoman Gifford then calls the School Committee to order.

1) COUNCIL LETTER IN SUPPORT OF COMMISSIONER GIST AND THE BOARD OF REGENTS

The letter is addressed to Governor Chafee and also supports the continuation and expansion of charter schools and mayoral academies. VP Boezi moves to approve, seconded by Councilor Gee. No discussion. Council votes: Isaacs, aye; Boezi, aye; Cianciolo, aye; Gee, aye; Kiernan, aye. The motion carries 5-0.

President Isaacs notes that items 2 and 3 will be considered together as one item.

2) SCHOOL BUILDING COMMITTEE UPDATE

Jon Winikur gives a brief update on the status of the construction project at the Middle School, which is on schedule and proceeding nicely. He offers Council the opportunity for a walk-through tour and will provide some dates for scheduling. The project is still on schedule to open in April 2011 for 7th and 8th graders. At the high school, re-roofing work is ongoing.

Chairwoman Gifford then gives an overview of the recommendations from the School Building Committee and approved by School Committee on the current building strategy. The recommendation is to allocate \$3.8 million from the Cole contingency fund on roof replacements at the high school, Frenchtown School, Meadowbrook Farms School and technology modernization at the high school. Council is only being asked to vote on spending \$3.8 million on these projects. Chairwoman Gifford then introduces further recommendations for the allocated but unspent funds in the amount of \$2.6 million. \$1.6 million is reserved for repairs at Meadowbrook (HVAC/floors) and the remaining \$1 million will be used for other projects at Eldredge, Hanaford and Frenchtown as prioritized by the Building Committee. A final recommendation is made to support further studies on the moisture problems at Meadowbrook and improvements to the high school library. In closing, she dispels the rumors that once the 6th graders are moved to Cole, there will be a capacity issue and the potential to close an elementary school. That is not the case.



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Dr. Mercurio gives a brief overview of the technology proposal at the high school, which is part of the recommendations of unallocated funds in the amount of \$665K. The improvements are modeled after the upgrades to technology at Cole that would enable teachers and students to have increased access to technology to support their needs throughout the district. Per NESDEC, elementary enrollment projections as of November 14, 2010 are significantly higher than the current prescribed square footage per student. District enrollment as of January 31, 2011 is 2,419 students.

Jon Winikur gives a summary of the roofing studies and their results from 2006 and 2009 that led to the recommendations presented by the School Committee. Infrared surveys were done at all facilities which show the saturation levels of the roofing membranes. The estimated cost of repairs/replacements at the high school, Frenchtown and Meadowbrook is \$3 million dollars. A summary of project spending including the original spending plan versus the current projections are explained in detail. These figures are based upon RIDE review meeting of August 6, 2010 and School Committee approvals of January 25, 2011.

A lengthy questions and answers session follows clarifying much of the information presented. RIDE will still reimburse at 40% even though the total project cost decreased by almost \$6 million because of lower bids. The reimbursement and approval process with RIDE for roofing projects is discussed. There is no time limit for RIDE to approve and the town retains the bonding authority. The high school technology proposal is explained in detail by Dr. Mercurio. Grant opportunities are being explored. Professional development opportunities are being looked at through a partnership with New England Institute of Technology at no cost to the district. VP Boezi and Mr. Winikur engage in a lengthy discussion regarding roof repairs/replacements and their costs and time line. Jon Winikur elaborates on the studies done at Meadowbrook done by SGH and the four different recommendations they made to fix the problems at this school. Estimated costs range from a minimum of \$1.5 million to a maximum of \$5.7 million. The intermediate recommendation's cost from SGH was \$1.8 million to \$4.1 million. Mr. Winikur presented a figure of \$2.9 million and estimates that it will cost \$70K to begin to design to develop alternatives to remedy the situation. It would take two months to get the project to the Building Committee. Jay Gowell adds that the repair of the Meadowbrook floor was part of the comprehensive plan. A year long study was done to identify exactly what the problem was and how to remedy it once and for all. He speaks briefly on the process of submitting the project to RIDE for reimbursement.

Councilor Kiernan feels more time is needed before a vote is taken and another \$3.8 million is spent. It is above and beyond the scope of the intent of the initial bond referendum. President Isaacs is also inclined to vote at the next Town Council meeting on February 14, 2011. Councilor Cianciolo agrees with Councilor Kiernan's concept that more thought should go into making this decision. Councilor Kiernan never said the School Committee's proposal is unreasonable. Per VP Boezi, another two weeks will not change anything. Roofs



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are a vital component to any structure. Councilor Gee has attended numerous meetings of the Building Committee and School Committee and does not find their recommendation is unreasonable. Many constituents that voted for the bond issue felt that the entire fix at Meadowbrook would be accomplished by this bond. For the record, Councilor Kiernan notes that he never said the School Committee's request was unreasonable. Chairwoman Gifford reads the actual language from the referendum question, which states "Shall the Town of East Greenwich issue General Obligation Bonds and/or Notes in an amount not to exceed fifty-two million dollars (\$52,000,000) for the purpose of financing the acquisition, construction, equipping and furnishing of a Middle School and the renovation, alteration, demolition, repair, improvement, equipping, furnishing and landscaping of, and/or additions to, public schools and school facilities in the Town and all attendant expenses including, but not limited to, engineering and architectural costs?" and forwards a copy to each Council member. Councilor Kiernan reiterates that the request goes above and beyond what was proposed. Mr. Durant adds that the language as written is general and does not earmark funds.

Councilor Kiernan moves to table the item until February 14, 2011, seconded by Councilor Cianciolo. Councilor Cianciolo supports what is presented but out of an abundance of caution, respectfully agrees with tabling for two weeks. Councilor Gee is ready to vote and is satisfied with what has been represented. VP Boezi concurs. Council votes: Isaacs, aye; Cianciolo, aye; Kiernan, aye; Boezi, nay; Gee nay. The motion carries 3-2.

3) VOTE ON ADDITIONAL SCHOOL BUILDING PROJECTS TO BE FUNDED FROM THE \$52,000,000 BOND

As noted above, this item is tabled until February 14, 2011.

4) RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN OF EAST GREENWICH APPROVING THE FINANCING OF THE ACQUISITION, CONSTRUCTION, EQUIPPING AND FURNISHING OF A MIDDLE SCHOOL AND THE RENOVATION, ALTERATION, DEMOLITION, REPAIR, IMPROVEMENT, EQUIPPING, FURNISHING AND LANDSCAPING OF, AND/OR ADDITIONS TO, PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL FACILITIES IN THE TOWN AND ALL ATTENDANT EXPENSES INCLUDING, BUT NOT LIMITED TO, ENGINEERING AND ARCHITECTURAL COSTS AND APPROVING THE ISSUANCE OF BONDS AND NOTES THEREFOR IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$8,360,895 FINANCING OF THE ACQUISITION, CONSTRUCTION, EQUIPPING AND FURNISHING OF A MIDDLE SCHOOL AND THE RENOVATION, ALTERATION, DEMOLITION, REPAIR, IMPROVEMENT, EQUIPPING, FURNISHING AND LANDSCAPING OF, AND/OR ADDITIONS TO, PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL FACILITIES IN THE TOWN AND ALL ATTENDANT EXPENSES INCLUDING, BUT NOT LIMITED TO, ENGINEERING AND ARCHITECTURAL COSTS AND APPROVING THE ISSUANCE OF BONDS AND NOTES THEREFOR IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$8,360,895.



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Mr. Sequino states that the issuance amount of the bonds has changed from \$300K to \$500K. The intent is to renew the existing notes and add an additional \$500K for a total of \$33,500,000. These one-year notes will be sold at Town Hall on Tuesday, February 8, 2011 in \$1K denominations. Councilor Cianciolo moves to approve, seconded by Councilor Gee. Council votes: Isaacs, aye; Boezi, aye; Cianciolo, aye; Gee, aye; Kiernan, aye. The motion carries 5-0.

5) DISCUSS DRAFT OF SCHOOL FIELDS MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

President Isaacs notes that this draft is a product of discussions that have taken place regarding shared services and consolidation between the Town Manager and the Superintendent. The intent is to specify who is doing what and for how much money. Mr. Sequino outlines the three main issues which are control of Town property including land and water conservation easements, shared expenses for field maintenance and the establishment of a maintenance fund from revenues collected from the athletic facility. President Isaacs would like more specifics on shared expenses and fee structure.

Mary Ellen Winters moves for the School Committee to adjourn, seconded by Jack Sommer and after a 5-0 vote, the motion carries. The School Committee stands adjourned.

The Town Council takes a brief recess.

6) TOWN COUNCIL GOALS

Mr. Sequino introduces the item and gives an overview of the current financial setting in the Town including the tax levy, maintenance of effort for School Districts, Caruolo legislation and fiscal projections from the General Assembly. The following areas are presented for discussion:

Financial Sustainability Study would employ an outside consultant to determine where the Town should be in order to meet its public service mission. Councilor Cianciolo suggests the consultant is from outside of the state. Councilor Gee is unsure what this study would tell us that we do not already know. Presidents Isaacs can see the value but would be interested in more details and the costs associated with this type of project.

Charter Review may be useful to make changes affecting consolidation and efficiencies. President Isaacs would like to see a review of the charter to address governance, operational, management issues.



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Town Council/Fire District Merger Study would explore opportunities to implement shared services and consolidation where appropriate with the schools, the fire district and other communities, especially North Kingstown. Currently, the fire district is not favoring these ideas. Councilor Cianciolo wants to add the consideration of bringing the Fire District into the Town.

Capital Improvements Plan has been frozen for the last three years. The plan provides for Council review of a vehicle replacement schedule as well as a facility maintenance plan.

Cost Allocation would allow Council to adopt a policy of charging for services rendered to other public agencies to reflect the actual cost of doing business.

Bond Ratings should be maintained or increased with Moody's or Standard and Poor.

Commuter Rail will not come unless the Town pursues it. The state is conducting a study of commuter rail opportunities including East Greenwich. If Council is supportive, an advocacy committee should be established to work with the state and pursue this option. The site area is tight and runs between Rocky Hollow Road and the American Legion.

Affordable Housing requirements have been difficult for East Greenwich to meet due to a lack of land and money. A plan should be developed with the Affordable Housing Committee and Housing Authority to look for land and money to devote to affordable housing.

River Sand and Gravel Site, also known as the McHale site, would help develop a site that either adds additional playing fields to the Town's inventory or develop it as a recreational facility encompassing walking trails and playgrounds. Access is still unknown.

New England Institute of Technology has been collaborating with the School Department. The Town should seek to maximize our relationship for employee training and education.

Concession Building (high school) could be constructed at the new athletic facility using DPW crews and funding from development impact fees.

Road Program funding for resurfacing is dependent upon the completion of the road improvements approved at the most recent election.

Development Impact Fees could help cover residential and commercial development that provides for increased funding opportunities.

Early Retirement Incentive would entice employees who are eligible for retirement to retire prior to the start of the fiscal year budget.



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Police Station Firing Range would require funding to complete the installation of the firing range as long as it can be shown that the payback is less than four years for such an investment. It would eliminate complaints from neighbors near the existing range on Bear Swamp Road at the highway garage.

The Town Council will need to determine the priorities and if there are other issues to be considered. Previous accomplishments by Town Council include: supporting the School Committee in the building of a new middle school and improvements at the high school; sewer extensions east of Route 2, new police station, road resurfacing, capped landfill with wildlife habitat, community/senior center, five day per week site for seniors, compliance with SB3050, accessible government and updating the comprehensive plan for community growth.

Councilors are encouraged to review the list and bring their comments to the Town Manager.

President Isaacs reminds Council that a retirement reception for Senator J. Michael Lenihan is being held on Saturday from 1-3pm at the Fireman's Hall. The Town Clerk's office has prepared a resolution for ratification at a later date. Interviews for Boards and Commissions will be scheduled based on Council's availability over the next couple months.

The Town Council wishes the Town Manager well on his knee surgery tomorrow.

Councilor Gee moves to adjourn, seconded by Councilor Cianciolo. Council votes: Isaacs, aye; Boezi, aye; Cianciolo, aye; Gee, aye; Kiernan, aye. The motion carries 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,
Leigh A. Botello
Town Clerk

APPROVED BY TOWN COUNCIL FEBRUARY 28, 2011