

February 23, 2010

The Stonington Board of Selectmen attended a special joint meeting with the Groton Town Council Committee of the Whole at 6:00 p.m. at the Groton Town Hall Annex, Community Room 1, 134 Groton Long Point Road, Groton, CT.

Present (from the Town of Groton):

Mayor James Streeter, Councilors Bruce Flax, Bill Johnson, Catherine Kolnaski, Deborah Monteiro, Frank O'Beirne, Jr., Deborah Peruzzotti, Paulann Sheets, Harry Watson Town Manager Mark Oefinger and Executive Assistant Nicki Bresnyan

Present (from the Town of Stonington):

First Selectman Edward Haberek, Selectman George Crouse and Selectman Glee McAnanly.

(The minutes of this joint meeting were recorded by the Groton Town Council's recording secretary and pertinent portions of the minutes have been copied for Stonington's records as follows).

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m.

New Business: Joint Meeting with Stonington Board of Selectmen

The Councilors and Selectmen introduced themselves. The first item of discussion was the reorganization of the Probate Court. First Selectman Ed Haberek provided background information on these efforts and encouraged a proactive approach to the consolidation. Mayor Streeter noted that the consensus is that the court will be located in Groton and the municipalities are working out logistics and budget issues.

The next item of discussion was mutual outside agencies (i.e. Mystic and Noank Library, Mystic River Ambulance). Mr. Haberek distributed a library funding analysis prepared by Stonington's Human Services Director. He expressed his desire to support outside agencies and noted that he had increased funding to previous levels in his First Selectman's budget. Mr. Haberek agreed that there is a disparity in funding levels between Stonington and Groton. Mayor Streeter noted receipt of a Mystic and Noank Library Newsletter containing an insert asking Groton patrons to urge greater funding by Groton. The insert including information on the number of library card holders in both Groton and Stonington, which show that Groton paid \$43.71 per card holder and Stonington paid \$18.57 per card holder. Mr. Haberek noted that his budget is subject to cuts by the Board of Finance. He added that he would be happy to participate in a shared services task force in the future.

Town Manager Oefinger stated that it is too late in the budget year to make big changes in the Mystic and Noank Library's budget. The newsletter insert unfortunately provided all of the information necessary for those people who want to cut the budget. The two towns should work together to figure out how to fund this library and develop and strategy to come to a more equitable funding arrangement. Councilor O'Beirne agreed that this situation cannot continue and he cited it is an example of why regionalism fails. Mr. Haberek agreed that there should be a meeting with the libraries and a commitment made to achieve parity and equity among the three libraries funded by Stonington. He noted that he will continue to advocate for restoration of funding.

Mr. Haberek expressed a desire to identify a quantitative, factual way to develop budget numbers. Selectman Crouse added that the process must also involve the RTM and the Board of Finance. Town Manager Oefinger noted the negative effect a significant decrease in Groton's contribution would have on the library. However, everyone must be on the same page going forward. He suggested developing

a five-year plan to wean the libraries off of government funding and bringing them to the table for those discussions. Mr. Haberek agreed with that approach.

With respect to Mystic River Ambulance, there is a nearly 50/50 split of ambulance calls between Groton and Stonington. Town Manager Oefinger reviewed past funding levels from both towns. Mr. Haberek stated that last year's contribution by Stonington was an anomaly and again, he looks forward to being able to fund them at the FY 08-09 level again.

Shared Services between the two towns include the pump out boat and emergency dispatch. The Town of Groton's contribution to the pump out boat is \$19,000. Mr. Haberek noted that Stonington is in the process of discussing establishment of pump out boat service on the Stonington side. The Town Manager provided background information on the issue. Discussion followed on the need for the program, along with the history and status of pump out service for Mouse Island.

Mr. Haberek expressed his desire to identify areas where the two towns can work together with shared services. Councilor O'Beirne asked why the Town of Groton would want to share services with Stonington when Stonington doesn't pay its fair share.

With respect to dispatch, there has been a fair amount of discussion over the last year about providing dispatch services to certain elements in Stonington. Mr. Haberek stated that he is continually looking at dispatch responsibilities, and if there is an opportunity for Groton to provide those services, he will look at it.

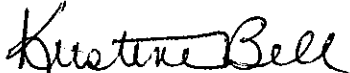
Mr. Haberek noted that with a population under 40,000, Stonington must look at joining a health district.

Town Manager Oefinger provided an update on the Mystic Streetscape Project and the impact of the bridge project. Nothing is currently happening with the Central Hall Building project. Mr. Haberek cited the Mystic Cooperative Task Force as a very successful example of Groton and Stonington working together.

Mr. Haberek provided an update on the Mystic Mobility Study. He then expressed his thanks to Barbara Strother, Economic Development Coordinator, for working collaboratively on economic development issues.

There was no further discussion. The meeting was adjourned at 7:22 p.m.

Transcribed from Town of Groton's minutes by:



Kristine Bell

Recording Secretary

for Stonington Board of Selectmen