

Board of Education/Town & City Council/RTM Liaison Committee
Meeting Minutes
October 5, 2023 @ 5:00 p.m.
Zoom

PRESENT

Central Office – Susan Austin

BOE – Kim Shepardson Watson, Matthew Shulman

Town Council –Juliette Parker, Bruce Jones

City Council – Absent

RTM – Kathy Chase, Gary Welles

State Representatives: Senator Heather Somers, Representatives Chris Conley and Aundre Bumgardner

1. Call to Order - B. Jones called the meeting to order at 5:02 p.m.
2. Approval of 2023
3. June 1, 2023 Meeting Minutes – Motion was made J. Parker and seconded by K. Chase - Approved

Chairperson Watson set the stage for the meeting to include the BOE, TC, CC, RTM and State Reps to one meeting as an informational meeting/dialogue.

4. Board of Education Report - S. Austin
 - CAPS (CT Association of Schools Superintendents) and Southeastern Regional Group -need to know about any new legislations to make sure it comes to fruition, several legislative breakfast meetings in the area and state level, reached out to our own for understanding. Thanked Rep. Conley for the legislative brief (includes new acts and grants)
 - New legislation: child must be 5 to enter kindergarten, screening process;
 - Transition K program September to January 1 of the following year
 - only 2/3 of the population
 - Sustainability of certifications for teachers;
 - Groton 1/2 million dollar grant (Learn, Children First Groton, Riverfront and TVCCA) other opportunities
 - New mandate: Graduation requirement of financial literacy - 1 teacher currently teaches
5. State Representatives
 - Sen. Somers stated:
 - LOR puts out briefs posted online (condensed version)
 - Financial Literacy - Edward Jones does online curriculum - free of charge (accredited)
 - Distressed municipalities off the list - does not mean the poverty level has changed.

- Are entitled to more funding for ECS and grants
 - Appropriation is looking at the \$163.7 million for 169 towns. Would like to see a special formula for Groton due to being the military town.
 - Rep. Conley
 - ESC funding next year
 - This year \$163.7 million dollars were added for school funding; working on distributing across the municipalities that have schools
 - While we have 165 not all of them are k-12 system; not all schools have the same of amount of students; equity in that
 - Started the process for next year's budget beginning July 2024
 - Will provide updates
 - Towns who had over funding will be held harmless and the towns who are in that Alliance District
 - As of today, we are not a distressed municipality from DECD. We do not qualify for funding from that right now. We were removed from the list due to the low employment rate.
 - Mediation services (new program) for Special Ed.
 - State Department of Transportation is going to set up safe driving through the Vision Zero bill raising awareness for distracted driving and wrong-way driving, may be able to access it for free for high schoolers free cost to the municipalities
 - Grants - reach out to all delegates as they can provide letters of support
 - Reduced funding for when not a distressed
 - Rep. Bumgardner
 - Grace period about 5 years
 - Qualify for a host of grants
 - Privileged to work with you all; happy to be a resource; commended Superintendent Austin
 - 2024-2025 school year must turn 5 by September 1st. Parents can submit letter if believe 4 year old can handle
 - Grants - through ECE
 - \$40,000 dual credit courses
 - HVAC (ARPA funds being used)
 - S. Austin informed group that have submitted twice, estimated \$7 million, 50% reimbursement. Any information would be helpful.
 - S. Austin - we now have a food pantry at Groton Middle School. Thanked Jill Rusk and United Way. School social workers pick it up and distribute the food in backpacks.
 - Sen. Somers stated that Groton could advocate for the pool of money for the HVAC system to be larger than what it is.
 - Impressed with Ernie!
 - S. Austin will be sending the template of grants awarded in the newsletter. Kudos to the Team (S. Wiegel, admins and teachers)
 - Grant writers - if get a full-time to review all grants

6. Town Council - B. Jones

- Property Re-use Policy
 - Help release town buildings for RFPs
- Grants
 - Climate Action (Resiliency Dept.)
- Opioid Crisis
 - Passed money to different places
- Open Space
 - Approved GOSA to apply for a grant for Center Groton for 89 acres off of 117
- Tree warden appointed
 - Starting tree survey; some trees are under disease right now.
- Groton Age Friendly plan going into effect
- Positions - openings (competing
 - Technology
 - Town Clerk Supervisor
- Cannabis Tax Distribution
- Veterans War Committee - thanked Jim Streeter for highlighting all the memorials
- Pilot Fund
 - Changed from 18% to 50% to Fire districts - PB district on taxes
- National School Lunch Program
- DoDEA grant
- Appointed money for Groton Sail moving forward
- Test with Bulky Waste
- Positions: Parks & Rec Open Space Manager and Human Resources job descriptions
- USWA Collective Bargaining Agreement - Steelworkers union

7. City Council - Not Available

8. RTM- K. Chase

- July meeting canceled
- August meeting approved \$15,000 for the Groton Bike track
- Accepted the Climate Action grant
- September meeting was discussion only

9. New Business

- Next meeting - every 3 months, January meeting (budget time) - early in the month - January 4, 2024 City Council
- Hired a new Fitch principal, Matt Brown. Did focus groups, leadership profile completed
- New business manager Dave Fleig
- K. Chase - brought a question from RTM - asked a lot in the news lately about evidence based reading curriculum based on phonics instead of the recent trend of

teaching using queuing and contextual clues. What is the reading curriculum? If not evidence based, is Groton going in that direction?

- S. Austin already moved. Groton has a strong phonics program. Have a program looking at letters and sounds. Groton has been asked to be cohorts for science of reading. Reading Consultant's presentation at a recent BOE meeting

➤ J. Rusk thanked K. Shepardson Watson for all her work.

10. Adjournment – Meeting adjourned at 5:54 p.m. by K. Chase seconded K. Watson

Respectfully submitted,

Juliette Parker
Town Councilor Liaison