



Town of Groton, Connecticut

Town-Owned Property Evaluation Committee

45 Fort Hill Road
Groton, CT 06340

Town Manager: 860-441-6630

Town Clerk: 860-441-6640

Special Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, October 18, 2023

3:00 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room
1/Hybrid Virtual Meeting

134 Groton Long Point Road, Groton Visit
www.groton-ct.gov for Zoom details.

*Chairman John Burt, Mark Berry, Robert Boris, Paige Bronk, Larry Dunn,
Megan Granato, Greg Hanover, Deb Jones, Dee Morrison and Jon Reiner*

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman John Burt called the meeting to order at 3:01 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

All committee members were present.

3. CALENDAR AND COMMUNICATIONS

Town Manager John Burt confirmed that all had a copy of the Property Reuse Policy and announced that it is available on the Town Website under Government/ Policies/ Town Owned Property Re-Use Evaluation Process Policy.

https://www.groton-ct.gov/document_center/Policies/Town%20Owned%20Property%20Re-Use%20Evaluation%20Process%20-%20Adopted%202023.pdf

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

This is the first meeting so there are no previous minutes.

5. NEW BUSINESS

5.1. 2023-834 Former Groton Heights School Excess Property Disposition

Director of Planning and Development Jon Reiner reported he found an old referral, from July 21, 2021, regarding Groton Heights. A public hearing was held before the Town Council on December 1, 2020. An appraisal was done by Flanigan & Associates, effective date of June 5, 2018 and valued at \$367,000.00. It had been referred to the Planning & Zoning Commission on February 25, 2020. Commission had found that the sale of the property is consistent with the plan of conservation and development (POCD). The Town Council recommended the sale of the property and referred the matter to the RTM on April 6, 2021. The sale of the property was referred to the RTM for their May 12, 2021 meeting, and it was approved by the majority of the RTM. Phase 1 environmental surveys of the property have been done.

Manager of Community and Economic Development Paige Bronk stated the RFP was released several years ago. There were several submittals and ongoing communications with a company,

ThayerMahan. They had an executed letter of intent. And then Covid hit. Their intent was to convert that building into their world headquarters. Their intent was also had a second phase - building to the right of the existing building. There was a discussion of a land swap between the adjacent Bill Memorial Library and a future developer so the second phase would be feasible and the grassy swath of land between them and the Monument would be preserved. After Covid, ThayerMahan grew its numbers of employees but are mostly remote, and they have decided they are no longer interested in the project. A letter was sent to the Town Manager, who relayed the information to the Council. A revised RFP is being drafted.

Town Manager Burt said there is a strong desire to save the core of the building. Title work has been done on the property.

The Committee reviewed the evaluating properties questions.

The Committee asked questions regarding Groton Heights.

Director Reiner-suggested that the second step is when negotiations can happen and the Town should not limit themselves. There is a need for housing for the jobs that are growing here.

Town Manager Burt reviewed next steps and said the Attorney was recently consulted and doesn't believe anything has changed with the title search.

Director Reiner will reach out to Flanigan to get the appraisal updated. He will also check on the date of the Phase One Environmental Assessment that was done.

MOTION- To recommend to the Town Council that we sell Groton Heights and put it out to RFP.

Moved by: Reiner, Jon		Seconded by: Boris, Robert		
Committee Members	YES	NO	ABSTAIN	RECUSE
John Burt	X			
Mark Berry	X			
Robert Boris	X			
Paige Bronk	X			
Dee Morrison	X			
Greg Hanover	X			
Larry Dunn	X			
Megan Granato	X			
Deb Jones	X			
Jon Reiner	X			
APPROVED				

5.2. 2023-833 Former Pleasant Valley School Excess Property Disposition

Director Reiner found that a referral was sent to the Council in July 7, 2021 and a public hearing was held on April 6, 2021. An appraisal was done by Flanigan with an effective date of July 11, 2019 and posted on the town's website, valuing the property at \$5,700,000.00. It was referred to the Planning and Zoning Commission and reviewed at their February 25, 2020 meeting. The commission found that the sale of the property was consistent with the plan of conservation development. The Town Council authorized the sale of the school at their May 4, 2021 meeting and referred it to the RTM for consideration. The RTM approved the sale at their June 9, 2021 meeting.

Manager Bronk reported that there was a presentation by a preferred developer but later decided

they no longer had interest in developing at the property. There had been other interested developers but the Town Council at that time decided to revisit excess property.

Town Manager Burt said there is a lot of interest to keep some sort of playground park out there.

Chair of Conservation Commission Larry Dunn provided that there is about four acres of forest out there and the intent for sustainability is to maintain as much old growth and forestry as possible.

Director Reiner commented that on one hand the Town wants to preserve the canopy, but there are limited sites that have access to water and sewer lines that are zoned for high density housing. If there is a limit on development on this site, will there be pressure put on other greenfield sites that are completely forested for other future development? When reissuing the RFP, the Town should consider the availability of adjacent land, doing their best in their design to preserve tree cover, and the community's need for recreation space in this area.

Assistant Director of Planning and Development Deb Jones provided the information that this property is in a RM Multi Family Zone, but it's also in the Water Resource Protection District. There is a requirement to keep 20% of land in its natural state, so that is a zoning regulation outside of whatever this committee decides.

Director of Parks and Recreation Mark Berry says it is ideal to have a park within a 10-minute walking distance. That section of the community does not have a park anywhere close. In looking at the demographics, there is a high percentage of Hispanic and that is an underserved group. The Town needs to look through a recreation lens as they are deciding what to do with this particular parcel.

Chair of Economic Development Robert Boris states that minimum parking requirements are going to drive a lot of the decision makers of the developers to get involved here because of those constraints. It will shape what they are looking to do. For example, if they put housing in, they are going to need a certain amount of parking per unit.

The Committee reviewed the evaluating properties questions.

Town Manager Burt requested that the appraisal should be updated. A title search and a Phase One Environmental Assessment were done for this property.

Motion- To recommend to the Town Council that we dispose of the Property, that we note in the RFP for the sale of the property that this land is in the Water Resource Protection district and our zoning regulations require a set aside of land, in addition we want to reference the Town of Groton Recreation Master Plan and the drastic need for recreation in this section of the town and that be incorporated in the RFP.

Moved by: Reiner, Jon		Seconded by: Dunn, Larry		
Committee Members	YES	NO	ABSTAIN	RECUSE
John Burt	X			
Mark Berry	X			
Robert Boris	X			
Paige Bronk	X			
Dee Morrison	X			
Greg Hanover	X			
Larry Dunn	X			

Megan Granato	X			
Deb Jones	X			
Jon Reiner	X			
APPROVED				

5.3. 2023-835 Former S.B. Butler School Excess Property Disposition
 Town Manager Burt conveys that there is no history on this property as it was recently given to the Town control, and the utilities are still on. The Council has some interest in having a park there.

Director Reiner will check on title work and appraisal. There may be a survey of this property on file.

The Parks department is maintaining the property and the Little League is using the field according to Director Berry.

Town Manger Burt suggests allowing public comment at the next meeting to gather information from neighbors.

Director Reiner has received emails asking for status update on this property, and from local developers that want to buy the property and turn it into small housing, cottage type development. They understand there is a need to keep a neighborhood scale.

At this Committee’s next meeting, documents for this property and previous survey information, environmental work, appraisal, and anything else that has been done. It will then be put it on the agenda that the Committee is accepting public comments.

Director Reiner will talk to the OPDS to see if the Greater Groton platform can be utilized to get some feedback from the neighbors.

The next meeting- will be held on November 15, 2023 at 5:00 p.m. to allow for public comment.

7. ADJOURNMENT

Motion: to adjourn at 4:00 p.m.

Moved by: Dunn, Larry		Seconded by: Boris, Robert		
Committee Members	YES	NO	ABSTAIN	RECUSE
John Burt	X			
Mark Berry	X			
Robert Boris	X			
Paige Bronk	X			
Dee Morrison	X			
Greg Hanover	X			
Larry Dunn	X			
Megan Granato	X			
Deb Jones	X			
Jon Reiner	X			
APPROVED				