



Aundre Bumgardner

**GROTON CONSERVATION ADVOCATES QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE CITY OF GROTON  
MAYORAL AND COUNCIL ELECTION**

Please fill in your answers directly on this questionnaire. When complete, email it to [groconadv2017@gmail.com](mailto:groconadv2017@gmail.com) anytime but no later than midnight February 15<sup>th</sup>.

**1. Plastics reduction:**

The United States is by far the world's largest generator of plastic waste—it produced about 46 million U.S. tons in 2016. The U.S. ranks as high as third among coastal nations for contributing litter, illegally dumped trash and other mismanaged waste to its shorelines. Plastic in our waters is killing fish, birds, and sea mammals; and microplastics are getting into the food chain, up to and including humans, with unknown consequences. The City of Groton includes substantial coastal acreage that is contributing to this problem. In August 2021, Connecticut will begin enforcing a ban on single-use plastic bags. Maine has passed a state-wide ban on Styrofoam carry-out items. But that is just the beginning of what we need to do. Plastic straws, stirrers, bottles and Styrofoam remain a serious problem. Until we achieve comprehensive statewide plastic waste reduction, cities and towns will need to pass their own ordinances to reduce their plastic waste stream.

Do you support Groton City joining the Town of Groton in banning the following?

A. Single-use plastic bags?

**Yes. As a Town Councilor, I voted for the plastics reduction ordinance.**

B. Plastic straws and stirrers?

**Yes. I strongly pushed to include this provision in the final town ordinance. Plastic straws and stirrers cause irreversible damage to local habitats and coastal ecosystems.**

C. Styrofoam cups, plates and clamshells?

**Yes. I would extend the ban to all styrene products. The pollution and contaminants generated by the breakdown of these plastics will be greatly reduced by the city-wide ban on these products.**

Small liquor bottles called nips, usually plastic, are littering Groton's roads, roadsides, open space areas and parks and going through storm drains into Long Island Sound.

Would you support state legislation to ban nips?

**Yes.**

Would you support state legislation to put a 25-cent deposit requirement on nips?

**Yes.**

**2. Climate Change and Sea Level Rise:**

Sea level is rising faster than once thought. It is now predicted that the Connecticut coast will see a 20-inch rise by 2050. Groton City, as a coastal town, will feel the brunt of this change in

several areas. Predicting the impacts and designing resiliency or mitigation measures will take considerable resources. Federal funds and state funds are likely to become available for towns to achieve mitigation measures for the coming high water.

A. Would you support the City of Groton hiring a staff person, perhaps sharing such a staff person with the Town of Groton, to work full-time on developing both short- and long-range strategies, as well as raising funds, primarily grants, to address local climate change impacts, including sea level rise? If yes, what priority tasks would you give this person?

**As mayor, I will seek council approval to establish a full time resiliency and sustainability coordinator. They will focus on 3 key projects, including: 1) Diverting organics (food scraps, yard clippings, etc.) to a city-operated anaerobic digester facility to convert waste into biofuel and compost; 2) Developing a multi-modal transportation network (supporting expanded train service, bike/ped infrastructure, and enhanced bus service); 3) Implement coastal resiliency plan.**

**Additionally, I will seek council approval to establish a Groton Utilities “General Manager” position focused on sustainability and resilience. I would like that person to lead the utility’s effort to fully decarbonize the grid.**

B. i. Current FEMA 100-year flood maps do not account for the expected 20-inch sea level rise by 2050. Raising the level of buildings in the flood zone will save countless millions of dollars in damage from future floods. Do you support more stringent regulations for new buildings in the 100-year (now more like the 10-year) flood zone, such as Rhode Island has, requiring an additional 2-3 feet in height (freeboard) from the ground?

**Yes, I will support regulations requiring new buildings to be built 2-3 feet above base flood elevation. I will continue advocating for this as a member of the City Planning & Zoning Commission as well as a member of the City’s Coastal Resiliency Working Group.**

ii. How can the City of Groton do a better job of educating the public about the economic risks of sea-level rise?

**I will hold town hall meetings and workshops on coastal resilience and sustainability initiatives, publish data regularly through a city web portal.**

### **3. Climate Change and Energy Efficiency:**

The cheapest way to reduce our carbon footprint and reduce greenhouse gases is through energy efficiency. It also saves considerable money for the City over time.

A. Do you support putting solar panels on Groton City-owned buildings? How would you make that happen?

**Yes, because the City owns Groton Utilities. We will harness the energy of the sun by solarizing commercial and residential rooftops in the GU electric service area.**

B. Accepting specialty vehicles and trucks, do you support moving the City vehicle fleet to all hybrid, while also including some electric vehicles and placing charging stations in the City? How would you make that happen?

**Yes. I support converting the entire municipal vehicle fleet to electric, or hybrid (biofuel). We will do this by leveraging federal and state grant programs.**

C. What would be your priorities for energy conservation in the next two years?

**Through Groton Utilities, I would like to establish more microgrids throughout the city. Any future power purchase agreement must include a considerable amount of energy generated by wind power and other renewable sources. As I mentioned earlier, solar energy will be the driving force to fulfilling my pledge to commit the City to 100 percent renewable energy by 2030 - five years before the Green New Deal target.**

**Expand watershed investment.**

#### **4. Trees and Open Space:**

It is well known that tree cover is a great benefit to communities. Especially in heavily developed areas like Groton City, trees provide cooling shade and can reduce the heat radiating from streets, sidewalks and roofs. In short, trees make our quality of life significantly better. While Groton City dedicates approximately 15% of its land to open space, virtually all of it is in sports fields, golf courses or otherwise treeless.

A. i. Would expanding tree cover in the City be a priority for you?

**Yes, expanding tree canopy in the City of Groton is critical to health and wellness of residents and wildlife.**

ii. Would you support an assessment of tree cover in Groton City with a report on recommendations as to tree replacement and expansion?

**Yes. I will complete this assessment in my first 100 days.**

B. Would you support an ordinance requiring expanded tree planting in Groton City based on such an assessment and recommendation? an ordinance requiring that trees lost to development be replaced by a ratio significantly larger than 1:1 (to be determined by the City)?

**I support this ordinance. I would like the City to adopt a tree ordinance where this provision is included. Under my leadership, the city will prioritize street tree planting to mitigate the "urban heat island effect," in densely developed areas. I will work closely with our partners on the city and town Conservation Commissions, Planning & Zoning Commissions, and Coastal vulnerability working group.**

C. The Colonel Ledyard School in Groton City is presently being sold for development. Approximately a third to a half of that property is forested, an unusually large forest tract for the City. Would you support protecting the forested portion of the Colonel Ledyard School property as a public benefit? How would you make that happen?

**My opponent supports the sale of this property. If the development moves forward as proposed, they will remove about 4+ acres of forested land...the largest undeveloped tract of land west of Route 349. I would like that land to be deeded to the City for to be conserved in perpetuity. I take no issue with the school building being repurposed for housing.**

D. A forested 35-acre portion of the King property located along the eastern border of the City in the Blueberry Hill area became protected public open space in 2018. The Town of Groton, which owns the property, is currently working with volunteers to design and build a forest trail through this beautiful property. Would you be willing to invest City staff time and dollars to support efforts to link the King property to nearby open space including Crystal Lake and Washington Park?

**Yes I will direct staff to support efforts linking the King property to surrounding city and utility-owned open open spaces, the green belt and the town's updated open space plan.**

E. What other ideas do you have to expand passive (walking, bike riding) recreational opportunities in Groton City?

**I support the Eastern Shoreline path and narrowing Eastern Point Road to two lanes with protected bike lanes. Mayor Hedrick opposes this. I support the Tri-Town trail linkage at the Reservoir. Mayor Hedrick opposes this. I have been the staunchest advocate for coastal public access on the Groton Town Council.**

## 5. Clean, Safe Drinking Water

Undeveloped land and especially wetlands all increase filtration of storm water drainage, reduce runoff and recharge ground water. By protecting watershed lands around our reservoirs and their feeder streams, we help our local utility provide clean drinking water and keep treatment costs down. In recent years Groton Utilities has reported that our reservoir water quality is deteriorating, a cause for significant concern.

A. What ideas do you have to require Groton Utilities to strengthen protections for our drinking water supply serving both the City and the Town, and other Southeast CT communities?

**The city currently uses a mix of sand and salt when clearing roads. Sand has a very negative impact on habitat and wetlands. We must consider more environmentally friendly alternatives.**

B. How can the City and Town work together better to protect our drinking water?

**Acquire land surrounding the watershed to protect GU's water supply. We will invest 5x more in open space acquisition.**

6. What other environmental action is needed in the City that we have not mentioned in this questionnaire?

**As a State Rep and Town Councilor, I have been a champion for enhancing environmental quality here in Groton. I have enjoyed supporting legislation and policies that make our community more resilient and sustainable. In addition to some of the ideas I already presented above, I would like to explore establishing a e-bike rebate program. I would also like to deploy bioswales, rain gardens, and other methods that divert stormwater. Lastly, we must require charging stations at surface parking lots and become a SMART city.**