

Groton Cable Advisory Committee
via Internet Conference

Meeting Minutes for: 10/23/23

In Attendance:

Cable Committee Members: John Macleod, Eric Fischer, Janet Sheffield,
& Neil Colicchio

Other:

Town Manager - Mark Haddad

Assistant Director of Finance, Town Accountant - Patricia Dufresne

Program Director - Ashley Doucette

Called to Order At: 4:32 PM

Discussion with the Town manager & Assistant Director of Finance/Town Accountant about the Future of the Cable Enterprise Fund:

Town Manager Mark Haddad and the Assistant Director of Finance/Town Accountant Patricia Dufresne came to the meeting to discuss the financial status of the Cable Enterprise fund and what the future of the department could look like.

They discussed the current spending trends against the trends of Charter and Verizon payments, how much has been pulled from the Excess & Deficiency fund to cover the yearly deficits - all leading to the calculations on how long things could continue operating at the current level of staffing and services.

With the potential of funding coming from the State level to be paid by streaming service providers on the horizon, it was suggested that the department could remain as an enterprise fund and be subsidized by the General Fund until that revenue source kicks in. Based on the timeline of the bill and the possibility that it may still fail to pass, it was recommended that the best solution may be to dissolve the enterprise fund and becoming a full Town department which would be funded by receipts reserved for appropriation.

It was suggested by Mark that the Town may be able to fund a majority of the first fiscal year, should there be some money available to do so, in order to build up the receipts reserved for future years.

The Committee expressed some concern with how operations may be altered or affected by this change.

The Committee was asked to come up with a recommendation for the Town Manager to pass along to the finance committee - who still may not choose to move forward with the suggested plan.

After much discussion and reviewing Ashley's work on the budget and provider payment trends, they decided to move closer to recommending the plan to be a town department funded by receipts reserved for appropriation dependent upon a plan to host a public hearing to allow for a chance to hear from residents.

VOTE: John moved to recommend dissolving the enterprise fund and to create a receipts reserved for appropriation entity - contingent upon approval by the Finance Committee, Town Manager, Select Board and after holding a public hearing.

Janet seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Action Item: Ashley will work with Mark Haddad and the Committee to schedule a Public Hearing.

General Updates:

- The Groton's Channel participation in Grotonfest and booth setup was reviewed.
- Town Meeting will be held on Saturday, October 28th. Volunteers still needed.

Purchase Request - Bluehost Website Domain Renewal

With The Groton Channel website domain being up for renewal, prices were discussed - both for a regular plan and for a "privacy and protection" plan. Length of plan/ subscription was also discussed.

Janet moved to approve an amount of up to \$75 to renew our website domain subscription with the added "privacy & protection" plan for a total of 2 years. Neil seconded and the motion passed by a vote of 3-0, with Eric having left the meeting.

Meeting Minutes:

Neil made a motion to approve the minutes of 8/16/23. Janet seconded and it passed by a vote of 3-0, with Eric having left the meeting.

Janet made a motion to approve the minutes of 9/20/23. Neil seconded and it passed by a vote of 3-0, with Eric having left the meeting.

Discussion Item: 2024 Cable Access Survey

The double-sided draft of the proposed 2024 Cable Access Survey was reviewed.

The question, regarding the streaming bill, which was still up in the air after previous discussions was finalized.

Next meeting, a Public Hearing on the Enterprise Fund, is planned for Wednesday 11/15/23 at 7:00 PM on Zoom.

Meeting Adjourned at: 6:32 PM