

TOWN OF GROTON FINANCE COMMITTEE

Minutes of Regular Meeting Held October 20, 2014

GDRMS Cafeteria (344 Main St) 6:30 p.m.

Present for Finance Committee: R. Hargraves (Vice Chair), M. Bacon, B. Pease, D. Manugian, A. Prest, G. Green (Chair), B. Robertson, P. DuFresne (Town Accountant, Recording)

Absent: None

Guests: None

Documents available at the meeting: 2014 Fall Town Meeting Warrant & Motions

Mr. Green called the Finance Committee meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Article 2: FY15 Budget Amendments – The committee members briefly discussed the protocol for making changes to employee rates or hours of work during the Fall Town Meeting. Mr. Robertson said that he saw no reason why these sorts of adjustments could not be made at this time and offered to speak on Article 2, Motion 1 during Town Meeting.

Article 10: Sale or Lease of Prescott School –

On a motion by Mr. Hargraves, seconded by Mr. Robertson, the Finance Committee voted unanimously to reconsider their position of support (originally voted on 9/22/14) for Article 10: Sale or Lease of Prescott School. The Vote: 7-0-0

Mr. Robertson informed the members that he had attended the Tri-Board meeting with the School Committee and Dunstable and Groton local officials in September. At that time, the School Superintendent had made it clear that the district is in need of space now and those needs will most likely grow in the coming years. Given this information, he feels that the Town would benefit by retaining ownership of the building for the next three to five years. This will allow the Town flexibility in dealing with district needs while keeping an eye on enrollment numbers. He added that the costs of maintaining the building are known, and are unlikely to change significantly in the short term.

Mr. Hargraves noted that the Prescott building is “grandfathered” as long as its function remains educational. Once that purpose is abandoned, options become more limited as costs to meet code requirements accrue. He noted that there is space to install an elevator shaft should that ever become necessary. Mr. Hargraves said that given the information available at this time, he plans to vote against the sale of the building.

Mr. Green summarized his findings that the maintenance costs are approximately \$31,000 annually, with an additional \$17,900 for custodial services. Due to the school budget crisis last year, the Town agreed to pay for 50% of the maintenance costs. However, he has been given to understand that if the school district retains tenancy of the building, they are now prepared to pay these costs in full. Mr. Green confirmed Mr. Robertson's information saying that the school district is currently considering a long-term lease at Prescott, and may be interested in occupying additional space (potentially for special education services). He added that the latest census figures indicate that younger families are moving in to Groton; this may lead to an upward trend in enrollment. Mr. Pease noted that any lease that the school district signs would have to be "assumable," to allow for conveyance of the property if Town Meeting votes in favor of selling. Mr. Green listed the improvements that have been made to Prescott recently: new windows (2006), new roof (2006) and new boiler (2010), all of which are still under warranty. Substantial renovation of the building would entail installation of a sprinkler system for fire protection, but he stressed that there is no need for the Town to undertake such a project immediately. Mr. Robertson felt that the Town could consider building a parking lot on the site independently of Mr. Yenchenko should the sale be voted down; the DPW Director could most likely implement a cost effective solution. Mr. Green added that a number of projects ongoing at the moment may alter traffic patterns and parking needs on Main Street (i.e. Boynton Meadows and the Groton Inn) making it difficult to tell what the real character and needs for the center of Town will look like a few years from now.

On a motion by Mr. Hargraves, seconded by Mr. Manugian, the Finance Committee voted against supporting Article 10: Sale or Lease of Prescott School. The Vote: 0-5-2 (Mr. Prest & Mr. Pease abstained).

On a motion by Mr. Pease, seconded by Mr. Bacon, the Finance Committee voted unanimously to reconsider their position of support (originally voted on 9/22/14) for Article 11: TIF Plan for Prescott School. The Vote: 7-0-0

On a motion by Mr. Hargraves, seconded by Mr. Manugian, the Finance Committee voted unanimously against supporting Article 11: TIF Plan for Prescott School. The Vote: 0-7-0

Approval of Meeting Minutes – On a motion by Mr. Hargraves, seconded by Mr. Prest, the Finance Committee voted unanimously to approve the regular meeting minutes of September 29th, 2014 as drafted. The Vote: 7-0-0

Mr. Green officially adjourned the meeting at 6:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Dufresne, Recording Secretary