

TOWN OF GROTON FINANCE COMMITTEE

Monday, April 6th, 2015, Lost Lake Fire Station

185 Lost Lake Dr. Groton, MA, 7:00 p.m.

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

Absent: None

Also Present: Mr. Scott Harker, Mr. Russ Harris, Ms. Linda DeCiccio (4 Corners Neighborhood Association), Mr. Pierre Comptois (Groton Herald)

Documents available at the meeting: FY16 Town Operating & Capital Budget Proposals
2015 Spring Town Meeting Warrant – Draft of 4/02/15
Line Item/Reserve Fund Transfer Proposal Spreadsheet
Letters of Interest from Charter Review Cmte. Candidates
Draft Budget Report from the Finance Committee
Finance Committee Positions on Town Meeting Articles

Mr. Green called the Finance Committee meeting to order at 7:10 p.m.

Tri-Board Meeting Update – Mr. Robertson informed the members that the GDRSD expenses are currently tracking satisfactorily to their FY15 budget. The Superintendent and her team are beginning to work on a capital and long-term strategy, with an eye toward providing some FY17 projections in the fall. Enrollment is trending up, although slowly.

Article Assignments for Town Meeting – The Finance Committee briefly discussed which of their members would speak to particular articles should questions arise from the public during Town Meeting. These designations are noted on the FinCom Positions spreadsheet attached.

Articles 12 – 14: Four Corners Economic Development Initiative- Mr. Green said that representatives of Shaw's Supermarkets have been unwilling to take a stand on the sewer project one way or another. He noted that Town Counsel has included wording in the article that would make any construction spending contingent on receiving funds under a MassWorks Development Grant (a reimbursable grant). Because this grant is only awarded to "shovel-ready" projects, the Town Manager has proposed that the Town pay for the engineering up front, and recoup these costs through betterment assessments should the project move forward. There is a possibility that the Town of Ayer will participate as a co-applicant for grant funding, which will make the project more competitive. He reminded the group that should the Town fail in its attempt to win grant funding this year, re-application will be made over the next several years. Mr. Robertson asked about the plan for funding the engineering costs. Mr. Green replied that a short-term

note will cover costs in the interim, but the engineering costs will ultimately be rolled into the permanent bond for the Lost Lake Fire Protection project. Mr. Bacon felt this would be a good investment, as the status quo in the area is currently unacceptable. Mr. Manugian said that it may be the case that none of the businesses in the area want to be the first to go on record as approving this project. If the Town votes to support and begins doing the design work, it shows a willingness to commit on the part of the Town, and the businesses may then follow suit. Mr. Green noted that if the Town secures a sufficient level of grant funding, the businesses should be happy to support the sewer. Mr. Robertson said that the true risk to the taxpayers would become clear if they vote to fund the engineering costs, and then a lack of grant money prevents completion of the project. Mr. Pease was concerned that the language in the article does not make construction of the sewer contingent on the approval of the 4 Corners businesses. He was also worried that businesses (Ixtapa and Cravens) were being allowed to "opt out" as this may be perceived as manipulation of the proposed sewer district. Mr. Robertson would like the language in the article to specify the level of grant support that would permit the Town to move forward with construction. Mr. Manugian agreed that MassWorks Grants can vary in the amount of funding awarded to particular projects. Mr. Prest reiterated his position that the 4 Corners area was specifically set aside for commercial development, but the Town is losing tenants due to a lack of sewer capacity. This would be an important first step toward a future reduction of the residential tax burden. It is time for Groton to improve the public perception that the Town is anti-business. Mr. Pease cautioned that making bold statements about the need to increase commercial tax revenue could also be seen as "bad for business." He repeated that it is crucial to be certain that the businesses support the sewer project before the Town moves ahead with it. No one has come forward requesting this project, there are no proven economic indicators that suggest this will be profitable for the Town. He feels this is really just gambling with \$300,000 of taxpayer money. Mr. Green stressed that the Town is not forcing expensive betterments on any of the properties at this point. The sewer will be constructed only if grant funding is received, which will limit the betterment charges to engineering costs. He added that the 4 Corners area is particularly at risk for blight if tenants cannot be found and retained, which makes this gamble somewhat more palatable. Mr. Pease would like the Finance Committee to defer taking a position on these articles until the grant language is clarified, and a final map of the proposed sewer district has been received. The Finance Committee agreed to defer taking positions on Articles 12 through 14 until Town Meeting. Ms. DeCiccio would like to know what Groton has done to attract the types of businesses that do not require extra sewer capacity. She is concerned that the Town will invest \$300,000 for infrastructure that may not end up drawing new businesses. Mr. Prest replied that those businesses which have expressed an interest have not moved in due to lack of sewer.

Article 17: Add 'I Parking on Main St – Mr. Hargraves indicated that he wished to change the position he originally voted on this article.

On a motion by Mr. Bacon, seconded by Mr. Manugian, the Finance Committee voted unanimously to reconsider their voted positions on Article 17. The Vote: 7-0-0

On a motion by Mr. Hargraves, seconded by Mr. Manugian, the Finance Committee voted unanimously in support of Article 17. The Vote: 7-0-0

Proposed Line Item Transfers – Ms. Dufresne presented an update to the list of Line Item Transfers for Town Meeting. Mr. Green felt that as this list was going to continue to evolve in the weeks leading up to

Town Meeting, it would be best for the Finance Committee to defer taking a final position on this until the night of Town Meeting. The Finance Committee members agreed to reconsider their voted position.

On a motion by Mr. Pease, seconded by Mr. Hargraves, the Finance Committee voted to reconsider their previously voted position on Article 19: Current Year Line Item Transfers. The Vote: 7-0-0

On a motion by Mr. Prest, seconded by Mr. Bacon, the Finance Committee voted unanimously to defer taking a position on Article 19: Current Year Line Item Transfers. The Vote: 7-0-0

Charter Review Committee Interviews – Mr. Green informed the other committee members that Ms. Dodge, who had previously sought candidacy for the Charter Review Cmte, had withdrawn her name due to the long-term nature of the obligation involved. Mr. Harker was asked to provide an explanation of his interest in serving as the Finance Committee designee.

Mr. Harker said that as a long-time resident of Groton, he has served on a number of committees, attended many Town Meetings and successfully raised children in this community. He noted that the charter review and modification will be a major undertaking and will have to be addressed carefully to make sure that politics do not overwhelm the process. He would like the opportunity to help the FinCom define their role in Town Government going forward and to help eliminate the confusion that exists in certain places in the document. If he is selected, he plans to take a strategic role, but will ask the FinCom for their definition of what they want the role of their own committee to be. He briefly described the experience he brings with managing multi-million dollar efforts, negotiations and controls. He stressed that the qualities of logic and reason must retain the upper-hand in such an enterprise. He added that he is willing to be a part of the team process and can be available whenever the need arises. Mr. Hargraves would like to see meetings of the Charter Review Committee scheduled to accommodate as many interested residents as possible. Mr. Harker replied that he would support that effort. The group briefly discussed the benefits of the Finance Committee members being elected versus appointed. Mr. Harker said that the Finance Committee should give their two designees a strong argument for how they feel their committee should be structured. Mr. Green asked for some ideas on where the initial focus of reviewing the charter should be. Mr. Harker replied that the entire charter is out of balance, and many portions are difficult to understand. He cited the need for clarifying the roles of the Finance Committee, Finance Departments and Finance Team and their inter-relationships. He added that it may be useful for a FinCom member to be assigned as a resource to the Town Manager (during contract negotiations, etc.). Mr. Green asked what changes should be made to provide a better definition of scope and responsibility for the Finance Committee. Mr. Harker felt it would be useful to define the Town first as a business, and then to determine what sort of business it is. Defining the role of the various Town officials using widely-understood business designations would help bring clarity to the roles played by these individuals. It would also be interesting to explore the role of Town Meeting in this “business-defined” structure.

Mr. Harris opined that appointed committees deal more effectively with political situations. He felt that the FinCom should be appointed by the Moderator. It is the diversity of views, talents and opinions that makes for a strong committee. The Charter Review Committee would produce superior results if it is organized in this fashion. Regarding his background, he said that he, also, is a long-time resident of Groton. He has managed his business (The Groton Herald) and volunteered on a number of committees over the years. While he has no specific finance background, he has reported on Town finances, functions

and events, and has an understanding of how the municipality has changed over time. He has never hesitated to express his views and holds strong opinions on many issues. However, he appreciates the need to work cohesively with others and would like to see the Town Manager and the Board of Selectmen come to an agreement on their inter-relationship. Bringing some clarity to these powerful roles will help to end the kind of controversy that has recently occurred. He suggested adding a preamble to the Charter as other towns have done, as a way to set forth some basic principles and the purpose and role of Town government. Mr. Hargraves would like the FinCom to have a more active role in contract negotiations. Mr. Harris agreed that this would be a welcome change. He noted that the FinCom designee cannot work to achieve a particular interest for the FinCom; the designee should be someone who can cooperate with others to produce a good end product. Mr. Pease said that cooperation can occur among people working with strong opinions. Mr. Harris replied that this process is not ultimately about scoring a win for a particular group, but about building strengths. In his opinion, a three-member Board of Selectmen is inherently stronger than a five-member board. He added that Groton government used to be less formal, but more effective; the BOS truly listened to the public and took action. The new structure that includes a Town Manager has undermined the relationship that the BOS had with the public, which has been detrimental to the Town. Mr. Harris said that while local government is certainly becoming more complex, and day-to-day issues cannot be effectively addressed by the BOS, the BOS must assert themselves politically to a greater extent. Government should be an expression of the values in a community. Three of the BOS members are passive and allow the Town Manager a much greater role than is appropriate.

Mr. Harker and Mr. Harris left the meeting at this time.

The Finance Committee discussed the relative strengths and weaknesses of the two candidates. Mr. Pease suggested that his own candidacy be put forward once again. The group felt that, as the Finance Committee had set a submission deadline of March 31st, the process would be better served if he submitted his candidacy through the Board of Selectmen. Mr. Green noted that while both candidates spoke of the need to define responsibilities, neither had very specific ideas as to what changes they would advocate for in the charter document. Mr. Robertson said that he was not concerned that the candidates had not yet taken specific positions on charter changes. The Finance Committee can inform its designees about where it feels changes are appropriate; the designees will then work with the Charter Review Committee to determine what is right for the charter and for the Town. He felt that appointing a diverse group would get the job done. Mr. Bacon expressed concern regarding one candidate's desire to reduce the power of the Town Manager, as this position is responsible for making the difficult day to day operational decisions. The group noted Mr. Harris's reputation for "hard-hitting" editorials. The members felt that both candidates would work toward establishing a consensus on the new committee. Mr. Pease was impressed with Mr. Harker's ability to visualize an improved organizational framework for the Town. He felt that Mr. Harker would work toward a goal in the best interests of the Town with integrity, and would support an overall collaborative effort on behalf of the committee. Mr. Green distributed ballots, on which the members voted their first choice to fill the open committee seat. Mr. Harker received 4 votes (Mr. Pease, Mr. Prest, Mr. Green and Mr. Bacon), and Mr. Harris received 3 votes (Mr. Manugian, Mr. Hargraves and Mr. Robertson).

Reserve Fund Transfer Requests – The group briefly discussed the need for additional funding for the Mechanical Inspectors salaries (due to increased inspection activity as well as the decision to raise the

fees to the public). Mr. Hargraves felt it is more appropriate for such fees to be raised at the beginning of a subsequent fiscal year, so as not to impact currently voted budgets.

On a motion made by Mr. Hargraves, seconded by Mr. Manugian, the Finance Committee voted unanimously to transfer \$7,000 from the Reserve Fund to Mechanical Inspectors Salaries for FY15. The Vote: 6-0-1.

Ms. Dufresne explained that higher than usual unemployment claims have put that budget in danger of deficit by year end. These claims (worth potentially \$30,000) have been identified as pending by the Town's unemployment insurance consultant, though they have not yet been billed to the Town. Mr. Green suggested deferring a vote on this transfer request until later in the year when the actual obligation will be clearer.

Finance Committee Report to the Town Meeting Voters- The Finance Committee discussed the changes they were recommending be made to their report to the voters (changes discussed included removing or adding specific subtotals, switching the order of certain sections of the report, and punctuation/spelling changes). Mr. Robertson suggested noting that the FinCom currently has no impact on wage negotiations, but plans to explore ways to improve this process going forward.

On a motion by Mr. Hargraves, seconded by Mr. Manugian, the Finance Committee voted unanimously to approve the Budget Report from the Finance Committee as amended. The Vote: 7-0-0

Approval of Meeting Minutes –

On a motion by Mr. Hargraves, seconded by Mr. Pease, the Finance Committee voted unanimously to approve the meeting minutes of March 3rd, 2015. The Vote: 7-0-0

On a motion by Mr. Hargraves, seconded by Mr. Pease, the Finance Committee voted unanimously to approve the meeting minutes of March 23rd, 2015. The Vote: 7-0-0

Mr. Green officially adjourned the meeting at 9:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Dufresne, Recording Secretary

Spring Town Meeting (April 27, 2015)

Finance Committee Positions on Articles (votes taken 3/16, 3/23, 3/31, 4/06/15)

Article #	Description	Dollar Amount	Moved	Seconded	Gary G	Bob H	Dave M	Bud R	Barry P	Art P	Mark B	Total Vote	Presenter
1	Hear Reports											No Position	
2	Elected Officials Compensation	80,989	Bud	David	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	6-0	Barry
3	Wage & Classification Schedule Citizens' Petition Town Manager		Mark	Bud	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	6-0	Bud
4	Contract											No Position	
5	OPEB Trust Fund Authorization		Mark	Bud	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	6-0	Bud
6	OPEB FY16 Contribution	200,000	Art	David	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	6-0	Bud
7	Cable Enterprise Creation		Barry	David	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	6-0	David
8	FY16 Operating Budget	33,298,830											
8a	General Govt	1,926,434	Bud	Mark	Y	Y	Y	Y	A	Y	Y	6-0-1	Gary
8b	Land Use	422,912	Bob	Bud	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	7-0-0	David
8c	Protection of Persons/Ppty	3,561,983	Bob	Art	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	7-0-0	Bob
8d	Schools	18,862,805	Bud	Art	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	7-0-0	Bud
8e	Public Works	2,094,007	Bob	David	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	7-0-0	David
8f	Library & Citizens Services	1,539,710	Barry	Mark	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	7-0-0	Barry
8g	Debt Service	1,383,590	Bob	David	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	7-0-0	Gary
8h	Employee Benefits	3,507,389	David	Art	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	7-0-0	Bud
8i	Water Enterprise	997,545	David	Bob	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	7-0-0	David
8j	Sewer Enterprise	662,154	David	Barry	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	7-0-0	David
8k	Cable Enterprise	265,458	Bob	Mark	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	7-0-0	David
9	FY16 Capital Budget	716,045											
Item 1	Swap Loader	105,000	Bud	Mark	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	6-0	David
Item 2	Fire Chief's Vehicle	46,900	Barry	Mark	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	6-0	David

Article #	Description	Dollar Amount	Moved	Seconded	Gary G	Bob H	Dave M	Bud R	Barry P	Art P	Mark B	Total Vote	Presenter
Item 3	Dump Truck	180,000	Barry	David	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	6-0	David
Item 4	IT Infrastructure	50,000	Barry	Bud	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	6-0	Barry
Item 5	HVAC Upgrade Town Hall	30,000	Bud	Mark	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	6-0	Bud
Item 6	Building Security Upgrade	30,000	Barry	David	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	6-0	Bud
Item 7	Bobcat/Utility Loader	35,000	David	Bud	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	6-0	David
Item 8	Carpet Replacement Library	22,645	David	Bud	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	6-0	Mark
Item 9	Field Improvements Parks	45,000	Barry	Mark	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	6-0	Barry
Item 10	Playground Improvements	50,000	David	Art	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	6-0	Barry
Item 11	Police Cruisers	85,000	David	Bud	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	6-0	Art
Item 12	Rough Mower - Country Club	10,000	Bud	Barry	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	6-0	Bud
Item 13	Golf Carts	20,000	Bud	Mark	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	6-0	Bud
Item 14	Boom Sprayer - Country Club	6,500	Bud	Mark	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	6-0	Bud
10	Joint Radio Project	650,000	Bud	David	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	6-0	Art
11	Lost Lake Fire Protection	1,972,200	Barry	David	N		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	5-1	Art
12	Establish 4 Corners Sewer Dist											Deferred	
13	Design/Construct 4 Corners Sewer	3,000,000										Deferred	
14	Auth IGA with Ayer											Deferred	
15	Est 4 Corners as an E.O.A.		Art	David	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	7-0-0	Gary
16	GDRSD Stabilization Fund Auth.		Bud	Mark	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	6-0	Bud
17	Add'l Parking on Main St.		Barry	Bud	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	7-0-0	Bob
18	Purch Sta Ave Parking Lot		Barry	Bud	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	7-0-0	Barry
19	Current Year Line Item Trfs		David	Bob								Deferred	
20	Offset to Snow/Ice Deficit	175,000	Bob	Barry	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	7-0-0	Bud
21	Water Enterprise Transfer E&D		Barry	Mark	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	6-0	David
22	Sewer Enterprise Transfer E&D		Barry	Mark	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	6-0	David

Article #	Description	Dollar Amount	Moved	Seconded	Gary G	Bob H	Dave M	Bud R	Barry P	Art P	Mark B	Total Vote	Presenter
23	Prior Year Bills	715	Barry	Bob	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	7-0-0	Gary
24	Replace Voting Machines	22,000	Barry	Mark	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	6-0	Gary
25	Deficit Grant Balances FY13	1,884	Barry	David	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	6-0	Gary
CAP item 5	HVAC Upgrade Town Hall	60,000	Bud	Mark	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	6-0	Bud
26	Fund Trf to LL Watershed Cmte	17,639	Art	Bud	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	6-0	Art
27	Rezone 73 Pepperell Rd		Art	Mark	Y		abstain	defer	defer	Y	Y	3-0-1 (2 defer)	Art
28	Sale or Lease of Tarbell School		Art	Mark	Y		abstain	defer	defer	Y	Y	3-0-1 (2 defer)	Art
29	CPA Funding Accounts	677,500	David	Bob	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	7-0-0	Gary
30	CPA Funding Recommendations:												
A	Accessible Trail Project	24,932	Art	David	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	7-0-0	Art
B	Conservation Fund Cash	200,000	Barry	Mark	N		N	N	N	N	N	0-6	David
C	Old Meetinghouse Rehab	203,333	Barry	Bob	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	7-0-0	Bob
D	Basketball Court Repairs	109,000	Art	Dave	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	7-0-0	Bud
E	ADA Park/Open Space Study	6,000	Bob	Barry	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	7-0-0	Barry
F	Housing Coordinator Salary	49,509	Mark	Barry	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	7-0-0	Gary
G	Milestone Engraving	17,000	Bob	Barry	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	7-0-0	Barry
31	Zoning Amendment 218-25											No Position	
32	Zoning Amendment 218-33C											No Position	
33	Citizens' Petition 152-158 Boston Rd Rezone											No Position	
34	Acceptance of MGL 55 sec 18B Ballot Question Summary											No Position	
35	Home Recycling Revolving Fund	10,000	Barry	David	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	6-0	Gary
36	Apply for Grants		David	Barry	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	6-0	Gary
37	Surrenden Farms Debt Svc	480,000	Barry	Mark	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	6-0	Gary
38	Stormwater Revolving Fund	10,000	Barry	David	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	6-0	Gary
39	Cons Comm Revolving Fund	50,000	Barry	David	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	6-0	Gary

Article #	Description	Dollar Amount	Moved	Seconded	Gary G	Bob H	Dave M	Bud R	Barry P	Art P	Mark B	Total Vote	Presenter
40	Affdbl Hsg Revolving Fund	50,000	Barry	David	y		y	y	y	y	y	6-0	Gary
41	Real Estate Tax Exemption Inc.		Mark	Barry	y		y	y	y	y	y	6-0	Gary
	Total Taxation	33,298,830											
	FY15 Free Cash Carryforward	400,358											
	Total Free Cash committed	84,599											
	FY15 Free Cash Bal Remaining	315,759											

y= Voted to Recommend

A= Abstained

N=Voted Against Recommendation

Voted 3-31-15

Voted 4-6-15

Voted 3-16-15

Voted 3-23-15

For fiscal year 2016, total available revenues are budgeted to increase 3.3% from \$34,969,325 to \$36,136,348. This includes the two and one half percent increase allowed by law and \$15 million in new growth. Other expected increases in revenue include a bump in state aid and \$100,000 in revenues from the local meals tax that town meeting approved last fall.

<u>Revenues</u>	<u>FY 2015</u> (Actuals)	<u>FY 2016</u> (Proposed)	<u>Inc/(Dec) \$</u> 2015-2016	<u>Inc/(Dec) %</u> 2015-2016
Property Tax	\$26,002,556	\$26,926,670	\$924,114	3.6%
State Aid	\$828,915	\$856,252	\$27,337	3.3%
Local Receipts	\$3,564,000	\$3,633,192	\$69,192	1.9%
Free Cash	\$150,000	\$-	\$(150,000)	(100.0%)
Other Available Funds	\$175,000	\$200,000	\$25,000	14.3%
Sub-Total Available Revenues	\$30,720,471	\$31,616,114	\$895,643	2.9%
Unexpended Tax Capacity	\$(464,488)	\$(100,000)	\$364,488	(78.5%)
Sub-Total Revenues	\$30,255,983	\$31,516,114	\$1,260,131	4.2%
Excluded Debt	\$2,433,390	\$2,290,932	\$(142,458)	(5.9%)
Stabilization Fund	\$-	\$-	\$-	0.0%
Capital Stabilization Fund	\$355,190	\$404,145	\$48,955	13.8%
Enterprise Funds	\$1,924,762	\$1,925,157	\$395	0.0%
Total Available Revenues	\$34,969,325	\$36,136,348	\$1,167,023	3.3%

The fiscal year 2015 Tax Rate has been certified at \$18.27. Based on the proposed Budget, the estimated Tax Rate in fiscal year 2016 is \$18.83, or an increase of \$0.56. In fiscal year 2015, the average Tax Bill in the Town of Groton (based on a home valued at \$400,000) is \$7,308. Under this proposed budget, that same homeowner can expect a tax bill of \$7,532 or an increase of \$224. The following chart shows a comparison between FY 2015 and FY 2016:

	<u>Actual</u> <u>FY 2015</u>	<u>Proposed</u> <u>FY 2016</u>	<u>Dollar</u> <u>Change</u>	<u>Percent</u> <u>Change</u>
Levy Capacity Used	\$25,538,071	\$26,826,670*	\$1,288,599	5.05%*
Tax Rate On Levy Capacity	\$16.68	\$17.35	\$0.67	4.02%
Average Tax Bill	\$6,672	\$6,940	\$268	4.02%
Excluded Debt	\$2,433,390	\$2,290,932	\$(142,458)	-5.86%
Tax Rate On Excluded Debt	\$1.59	\$1.48	\$(0.11)	-6.92%
Average Tax Bill	\$636	\$592	\$(44)	-6.92%
Final Levy Used	\$27,971,461	\$29,117,602	\$1,146,141	4.10%
Final Tax Rate	\$18.27	\$18.83	\$0.56	3.07%
Average Tax Bill	\$7,308	\$7,532	\$224	3.07%

*Includes anticipated new growth of \$15 million.

Over the course of the budget cycle, as new information became available and projections became actuals, there were several minor adjustments made to the original budget submitted by the Town Manager. These changes are detailed in the appendix to this report.

Further Discussion of Selected Budget Areas

The proposed municipal operating budget (minus the schools) shows an increase of \$630,477 (4.6%) from \$13,805,548 to \$14,436,025. Some of these costs are of a contractual nature and require that we fund them in FY 2016, while other increases support improvements to the delivery of services to our students and citizens.

For a detailed explanation of the proposed budget, you should read the Town Manager's Budget Message and the budget itself as published in the Town of Groton Spring 2015 Town Meeting Warrant.

However, there are several areas in the fiscal year 2016 budget that the Finance Committee would like to highlight. These are areas that have had a greater impact on the overall budget.

Town Health Insurance

Nationally, insurance rates have been rising rapidly. Groton is not immune to this trend. The Minuteman Nashoba Health Group has increased the town's health insurance rates by 7.7%. Accounting for this rate increase as well as the potential for additional enrollment by existing town employees has led to an increase in the town health care budget of 9.98%. The increase in the proposed FY 2016 operating budget is \$142,799.

Middlesex County Pension Assessment

The town will see an 11% increase in our Middlesex County Pension assessment. The FY 2016 increase is largely attributable to new town employees whose state pension liability has temporarily transferred from their previous employment. The large increase in our assessment will be credited back in future years. For 2017, Groton's pension assessment has been set at 5.8% (below the system-wide target of 6.5%). The impact to the proposed FY 2016 operating budget is \$180,066.

School Resource Officer

The fiscal year 2016 operating budget contains funding for a school resource officer. The Massachusetts Task Force Report on School Safety and Security (July 2014) makes several recommendations including the recommendation that every secondary school in the commonwealth should have a school resource officer. This is the only new employee being added to the town's roles in fiscal year 2016. The impact to the proposed FY 2016 operating budget for this position is \$71,000 (including benefits).

Lost Lake Fire Protection

The 2013 Fall Town Meeting appropriated funding to develop a plan to address the shortage of water for firefighting purposes around Lost Lake. The resulting plan includes the installation of water mains, cisterns and dry hydrants. This project is expected to cost \$1.9 million. The impact to the proposed FY 2016 operating budget is \$42,750 for the first year of debt service.

Police and Fire Radio Upgrade Project

The Police Chief and Fire Chief have proposed a joint radio project to upgrade the town's radio system. This is a major upgrade. Currently the police and fire department radio systems are inadequate with major "dead" areas that are unacceptable and place personnel and citizens needlessly at risk. To fund the complete overhaul of the town's radio system, the town will seek to borrow \$650,000. The impact to the proposed FY 2016 operating budget is \$14,625 for the first year of debt service.

Sargisson Beach

The Sargisson Beach Committee was appointed by the Board of Selectman to develop an operating plan for the Sargisson Beach area. This was based on the desire of the Board of Selectmen to reopen Sargisson Beach to the community for the purpose of outdoor recreation. Although originally planned for fiscal year 2015, school budget issues caused funding to be withdrawn. As it is still a priority of the Board of Selectman, funding has been included in the fiscal year 2016 Budget. The impact to the proposed FY 2016 operating budget to open the beach is \$35,570.

Groton Country Club

For the last several years, the Finance Committee has requested a more strategic approach to operating the Groton Country Club. When the General Manager retired in June 2014, a portion of his salary was used to bring in a consultant to review club operations and recommend improvements that would increase long-term viability.

Over the course of the year, the Town Manager worked to decrease operational expenses by combining the administrative assistant function at the Country Club with the Highway Administrative Assistant in order to eliminate a position from the town payroll.

Further, the club employed a General Manager (\$75,000) and a Golf Pro (\$25,000). Moving forward, the club will have a combined position of General Manager/Head Professional at a salary of \$65,000. This position will have responsibilities for operations and marketing of the club and its programs in addition to performing the duties of Golf Pro.

Lastly, the fiscal year 2015 budget included \$68,400 for the operation of the function hall. However, the town did not take in enough revenues to offset operating expenses. Starting this fiscal year, the town has leased out the function hall.

In fiscal year 2015, the Town appropriated \$550,000 for the Country Club. As a result of the Town Manager's focus on creating a sustainable operating model for the club, the projected fiscal year 2016 budget for the Country Club is \$380,503 with projected revenues of \$416,000. The impact to the proposed FY 2016 operating budget is to reduce the country clubs appropriation by \$124,960.

OPEB Liability Trust Fund

Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) are benefits *other than pensions* that the town is responsible to provide after an employee has retired or left town service. For more information on OPEB, please see the Town Manager's Message as printed in the Town of Groton Spring 2015 Town Meeting Warrant. Based on the Government Accounting Standards Board (GASB) recommendations and discussions the town's finance team has had with credit rating agencies, the Finance Committee believes it is prudent to establish an "Other Post-Employment Benefits Liability Trust Fund". As allowed for by law, the Trust can be only used to pay current retiree health insurance. For fiscal 2016, the budget uses any monies paid into the trust to pay current retiree liabilities resulting in no impact to the proposed FY 2016 operating budget.

Contractual Obligations to Town Employees

The Town Manager, in order to promote fiscal stability and provide predictability to the budgeting process, reached out to all town employee collective bargaining units (i.e. unions) and asked them to consider entering negotiations prior to the 2016 budgeting cycle. All seven unions agreed to early collective bargaining that concluded successfully with new three-year agreements that run from July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2018.

The following shows the cost of each union agreement in FY 2016:

Groton Supervisors Union (2% Adjustment in FY 2016)	\$13,383
Groton Patrolmen's Union (0% Adjustment in FY 2016 – 40 Hour Work Week)	\$55,201
Groton Superior Officers (0% Adjustment in FY 2016 – 40 Hour Work Week)	\$20,856
Groton Firefighters Association (2% Adjustment in FY 2016)	\$10,578
Groton Communications Union (2% Adjustment in FY 2016)	\$10,920
Groton Town Hall/Library Union (2% Adjustment in FY 2016)	\$34,664
Groton DPW Union (2% Adjustment in FY 2016)	\$20,070
Total Cost	\$165,672

Regional School Districts

Due to the fact that the districts do not finalize their budgets until March, it has been the practice of the Town Manager to prepare his budget assuming a 2.5% increase in assessments. This allows him to present a balanced budget in December as required by the Town Charter.

This year, the GDRSD School Committee shared budgeting information much earlier in the process with a board of people that have been meeting regularly to discuss the financial status of the district. The board consists of representatives from Groton including the Town Manager, a member of the Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee as well as similar officials from the Town of Dunstable. This was very much appreciated and resulted in more accuracy in the Town Manager's budget proposal.

At the conclusion of the district's budgeting process, the GDRSD School Committee approved Groton's assessment at \$17,097,405. This final number was very close to the number that was communicated early on and translates into an increase of 3.48%. The impact to the proposed FY 2016 operating budget is \$575,598.

Due to steady enrollment numbers for Groton students, the Nashoba Valley Technical High School (NVTHS) School Committee voted an assessment to the Town of Groton of \$596,609, which translates to an increase of 4.16% in FY 2016. The impact to the proposed FY 2016 operating budget is \$23,834 for the first Groton's share of the total assessment.

The Town Manager, Board of Selectman and Finance Committee will continue to work closely with our regional school districts to make sure they have the resources required to effectively educate our students.

Areas of Focus for Future Year Budgets

There has been a lot of discussion in town regarding the growth in the municipal budget. The Finance Committee would like to thank the citizens of the town who have taken the time to work with us to explore contributing factors.

It is important to understand that the town is in solid financial shape. This viewpoint has been validated over and over again as Standard and Poor's upgraded the town's bond rating to AA in 2010 and again to AA+ in 2013. During this last upgrade, the press release stated the following:

"The upgrade follows a review of the town's financial policies and practices, which we have determined are strong, well embedded, and likely sustainable," said Standard & Poor's credit analyst Victor Medeiros.

Additional factors in support of the rating include Groton's:

- Primarily residential tax base, with access to jobs in and around the deep and diverse Boston employment base;
- Very strong wealth and incomes and low unemployment;
- Stable budgetary performance and strong financial reserves; and
- A moderate overall net debt burden, low debt service carrying charge, and manageable long-term liabilities.

In addition, the Town's financial practices and procedures are reviewed periodically by <insert name here>. After the last audit, the <insert name here> reported Groton's

So if credit rating agencies and external auditing indicate that Groton is in fine shape, does the Finance Committee have any concerns? The answer is yes, we do.

Looking at the numbers below, it becomes apparent that there is a limited set of financial levers to use to limit the growth of the Town's operating budget. Groton is not unique in that companies, organizations and government entities of every type are all struggling with the same growth patterns in wages, salaries and benefits.

The total of wages, salaries and benefits for the Town of Groton accounts for just under 80% of the municipal operating budget (not including debt). Whereas the overall operating budget is growing at 5.4%, wages, salaries and benefits is growing at 7%. In fact, the rest of the budget decreased from fiscal year 2015 to 2016.

There are no obvious answers to these trends, but the finance committee is committed to working with the Town Manager, the town's finance team, the Board of Selectman and

concerned citizens to look for possible ways to decrease the rate of growth in town wages, salaries and benefits.

<u>Expenditures</u>	<u>FY 2015</u> <i>(Actuals)</i>	<u>FY 2016</u> <i>(Proposed)</i>	<u>Inc/(Dec) \$</u> <i>2015-2016</i>	<u>Inc/(Dec) %</u> <i>2015-2016</i>
Wages and Salaries	\$6,500,891	\$6,500,891		
Union Contracts		\$165,672	\$165,672	2.5%
New Hire		\$71,000	\$71,000	1.1%
Other Increases (Merit, hrs, etc...)		\$100,002	\$100,002	1.5%
Total Wages and Salaries	\$6,500,891	\$6,837,565	\$336,674	5.2%
Health/Life/Unemp. Insurance	\$1,580,701	\$1,736,300	\$155,599	9.8%
County Retirement	\$1,591,023	\$1,771,089	\$180,066	11.3%
Total Employee Benefits	\$3,171,724	\$3,507,389	\$335,665	10.6%
Total Wages, Salaries and Benefits	\$9,672,615	\$10,344,954	\$672,339	7.0%
Percentage of Municipal Budget	78.1%	79.3%	101%	
Other				
Country Club	\$262,650	\$127,239	\$(135,411)	(51.6%)
Sargisson Beach	\$950	\$35,570	\$34,620	3644.2%
Other	\$2,450,612	\$2,544,672	\$94,060	3.8%
Total Other	\$2,714,212	\$2,707,481	\$(6,731)	(0.2%)
Total Municipal Expenses (No Debt)	\$12,386,827	\$13,052,435	\$665,608	5.4%

Fiscal Year 2016 Budget Process

The Finance Committee, as required by the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law, always operates in posted open public meetings. However, those meetings are often sparsely attended. As a result, we feel it is important to outline the process that was undertaken to arrive at the budget that you have before you.

The 2016 fiscal year budget cycle started in early November of 2014 when the Town Manager met with department heads to review the budgeting process and provide spending guidelines. The process continued throughout November as department heads assessed priorities, evaluated spending levels and submitted individual departmental budgets.

In December of 2014, the Town Manager held multiple daylong meetings with participation by his finance team, department heads and individual Finance Committee members. In compliance with Article 6, Section 6-2, the Town Manager, submitted the proposed 2016 Operating Budget along with accompanying budget message and supporting documents on December 31, 2014.

Article 6, Section 6-2: Submission of Budget and Budget Message

"Within the time fixed by by-law, but not later than December 31 of the year immediately preceding the year in which the next spring town meeting is to convene, the town manager, after consultation with the board of selectmen, shall submit to the finance committee a proposed, balanced, operating budget for the ensuing fiscal year with an accompanying budget message and supporting documents. The town manager shall simultaneously provide for the publication of a general summary of the proposed budget

in a local newspaper and the town's website. The summary shall specifically indicate any major variations from the current operating budget and the reason for such changes. The notice shall further indicate the times and places at which the complete copies of the proposed operating budget are available for examination by the public. "

On January 5th, there was a joint session in open public meeting of the Board of Selectmen, the Finance Committee, the Town Manager and his finance team for a formal presentation of the proposed budget.

Following the presentation of the budget, as has become tradition, the Finance Committee held a daylong Saturday open public meeting on February 7th (after a two week snow delay) in joint session with the Board of Selectmen to begin an in depth analysis of each department's budget. This meeting provides the Town Manager, his finance team and department heads to thoroughly explain the proposed budget.

Throughout February and March, the Finance Committee assigned departmental liaisons to meet individually with department heads. Starting in January, the Finance Committee, as a whole, has met in open public meetings at least eight times. During these meetings we have reviewed departmental as well as various town committee's budget requests including detailed discussions with regard to salaries, wages and expenditures (with more meetings anticipated leading up to Town Meeting).

Article 6, Section 6-5: Action on the Budget

"The finance committee shall, upon receipt of the budget from the town manager, consider in public meetings detailed expenditures for each town department and agency and may confer with representatives of each town agency in connection with its review and consideration. The finance committee may require the town manager, or any town agency, to furnish it with additional information as it may deem necessary to assist it in its review and consideration of the proposed budget. The finance committee shall file with the town clerk, at least 14 days before to the first session of spring town meeting, a report containing its proposed budget and its comments or recommendations regarding differences between its proposed budget and the budget submitted by the town manager. The report shall also be made available to voters of the town by publication on the town's website and by leaving copies of the report at least 3 public places in the town at least 14 days before the first session of spring town meeting. Additionally, copies of the report shall be made available to voters at the first session of spring town meeting. The failure to timely file the budget report with the town clerk or to publicize the report by posting on the town's website or in 3 public places in the town shall not prohibit the town meeting from voting on the budget nor shall it affect the validity of any vote taken thereon at town meeting.

The finance committee's proposed annual town budget shall be presented to the town meeting by motions made by the finance committee, which shall also present its comments and recommendations with respect to the budget. The town manager or the board of selectmen, or both, shall also present their comments and recommendations, if any, at the town meeting with respect to the budget. The budget shall be voted upon in accordance with the by-laws."

Budget Items Not Recommended by the Finance Committee

The Committee has worked hard over the last three months with the Town Manager, his finance team, the Board of Selectman and other town committees. The end result is a budget that we

believe deserves broad support. However, the committee did not recommend one item, Article 30, CPC Proposal B – Conservation Fund.

Through vigorous discussion in two separate meeting, there was numerous concerns voiced by members of the Finance Committee including:

- The lack of a specific project or proposal for the use of the money
- The downward trend in state matching funds in concert with the upcoming Spring 2015 Town meeting vote on additional CPC projects that may lead to the depletion of CPC funds available for potential future projects
- The fact that this request ties up town monies by transferring \$200,000 to the Town's Conservation Fund which can only be used to purchase new land for conservation
- Concerns about the ability to fund maintenance of existing Conservation Committee owned properties
- A lack of clear priorities and criteria from the Conservation Committee with regard to how they determine if they should spend town money on a property
 - The Conservation Committee points to the Town of Groton's Master Plan.
 - The Finance Committee does not consider the Master Plan a suitable alternative to clearly documented priorities and criteria from the Conservation Committee
 - Equally concerning, when asked to define the Conservation Committee's goals with respect to land purchases, the answer offered was that they will reach their goal when all undeveloped land is either developed or put into conservation
- Every year, the town expends \$480,000 for the Surrenden Farm Land Acquisition, which is a piece of property that is under conservation restriction.

The Finance Committee understands that the Conservation Fund currently has just over \$500,000 and this request would bring the fund into the recommended range of ~\$750,000. We also appreciate the character of the Town of Groton and support purchases of land when presented with a compelling reason. In our opinion, we are being asked to simply trust the Conservation Commission to determine when they want to spend Groton citizen's money by providing the funds up front with no compelling reason and no clearly defined priorities or guidelines.

Closing Words

Overall, the Finance Committee believes this process has been thorough leading to a budget that reflects the needs as well as the priorities of the town. That said, the Finance Committee is eager to participate in the upcoming Charter Review process to strengthen the fiscal checks and balances and to refine the role of the Finance Committee in the process of fiscally managing the town's budget.

Now, it is up to the voters to decide and ultimately approve the budget for the Town of Groton through their vote at Town Meeting.

The Finance Committee would like to thank the Town Manager, his finance team, the Board of Selectman, various town committee members and members of the public who spent many long, hard hours assembling this budget for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Gary Green

Appendix

Budget Adjustments

Changes from Town Manager's Proposed Budget

<u>Line Item</u>	<u>Department</u>	<u>Original Appropriation</u>	<u>Revised Appropriation</u>
1000	Moderator Wages	\$500	\$65
1031	Town Manager Wages	\$87,344	\$96,327
1100	Info Technology Salaries	\$115,553	\$125,248
Sub Total General Government		\$1,908,191	\$1,926,434
1213	MRPC Assessment	\$3,160	\$3,320
1272	Nashoba Nursing	\$10,021	\$10,273
1273	Nashoba BOH Assessment	\$22,366	\$22,948
Sub Total Land Use		\$421,918	\$422,912
1400	Nashoba Tech Assessment	\$587,094	\$596,609
1410	GDRSD Assessment	\$17,087,003	\$17,097,405
1412	Debt Within Levy	\$53,822	\$50,404
Sub Total Education		\$18,846,306	\$18,862,805
1700	Country Club Salaries	\$119,781	\$129,781
1701	Country Club Wages	\$169,172	\$123,483
Sub Total Library and Citizens Services		\$1,575,399	\$1,539,710
2007	Short Term Debt	\$132,500	\$125,000
Sub Total Debt Service		\$1,391,090	\$1,383,590
3010	Health Insurance	\$1,532,500	\$1,574,000
Sub Total Employee Benefits		\$3,465,889	\$3,507,389
Grand Total Budget		\$33,264,783	\$33,298,830

Line Item Transfers
Spring 4/27/15 for FY15

4/6/2015

DRAFT

Funding Source	\$	Budgetary Use	\$	Notes
<i>Reserve Fund</i>	137,300	Fire Dept Expenses	17,000	Nozzles & Ladder Truck Repair
		Accounting Expenses	3,500	Scheduled Departmental Audit
		Unemployment Comp	30,000	Unanticipated EE Terminations
		Mechanical Insp Salaries	7,000	Increased Inspection Hours/rates
		Fire Wages	30,500	Storm Coverage/C.Jefferson pay
<i>RFT Subtotal</i>	137,300	<i>Subtotal</i>	88,000	
<i>Ending Reserve Fund Bal</i>	49,300			
<i>Line Item Transfers</i>				
Communications Wages	64,000	Mechanical Insp Expenses	1,000	Mileage for Increased Inspections
		Sealer of Weights/Meas Sal	1,000	New Scales Installed at Shaw's
		Legal Expenses	62,000	Increased Litigation Expenses
County Retirement	30,000	Medicare Matching	5,000	Misc Budget Adjustment
		IT Wages	5,000	Stipend pd during IT Dir vacancy
		Country Club Expenses	20,000	Pool Chairs
Country Club Wages	32,000	Country Club Salary	16,000	New Golf Pro
		Country Club Expenses	11,000	Repair to Locker Rooms
		Country Club Expenses	5,000	Stock Pro Shop
		Solid Waste Wages	8,000	Misc Budget Adjustment
Highway Wages	24,000	Highway Expenses	16,000	General Expenses
Library Wages	1,610	Library Salaries	1,610	Misc Budget Adjustment
HR Salary	2,500	HR Expense	2,500	Recruitment
<i>Line Item Trfs GF</i>	154,110		154,110	\$0.00
<i>Free Cash Beginning Bal</i>	400,358.00			
		Voting Machines	22,000.00	
		Prior Year Bills	715.00	
		FY13 Grant Deficits	1,884.16	
		Town Hall HVAC	60,000.00	
<i>Free Cash End Balance:</i>	315,758.84		84,599.16	
Enterprise Funds				
Funding Source	\$	Budget Use	\$	
Water E&D	100,000	Water Operating Budget	100,000	
Sewer E&D	100,000	Sewer Operating Budget	100,000	
Overlay Surplus Released	175,000	Snow & Ice	175,000	

REQUEST FOR TRANSFER FROM THE RESERVE FUND

(To be submitted in triplicate)

Date April 6, 2015

Advisory Board
Town of Groton

Gentlemen:

Request is hereby made for the following transfer from the Reserve Fund in accordance with Chapter 40, Section 6, of the Massachusetts General Laws:

1. Amount requested: \$ 7000
2. To be transferred to: 242 - Mechanical Inspectors
(give name of appropriation)
3. Present balance in said appropriation: \$ 1514.00
4. The amount requested will be used for (give specific purpose):

Electric, gas & plumbing inspectors' salaries.

5. This expenditure is extraordinary and/or unforeseen for the following reasons:

Typically, we have requested a line item transfer for the last quarter of the fiscal year. We have had more inspectors this year, and the amount paid per inspection increased on January 1, 2015. As you know, the fees for the permits more than cover the cost of the inspections.

Michelle Collette
Officer or Department Head

Action of Advisory Board

Date of Meeting 4-6-15 Number Present and Voting 7

Transfer voted in the sum of \$ 7,000

Transfer disapproved
Guy
Chairman Advisory Board

Request must be made and transfer voted before any expenditure in excess of appropriation is incurred.

Patricia DuFresne

From: Scott Evans Harker <se_harker@charter.net>
Sent: Wednesday, March 18, 2015 7:32 AM
To: Josh Degen-Home; Accountant; Alison Manugian; Jason Kauppi
Cc: Mark Haddad; Patricia DuFresne
Subject: Groton Town Charter Review Committee Membership

Please consider this communication as reflecting my willingness to serve on the forthcoming Town of Groton Charter Review Committee. My "Interest" form will be forthcoming, and I would be glad to meet with each of you, individually or collectively, to discuss my reason(s) for making this commitment.

Very sincerely,

(Signed)

Scott Evans Harker, BS, MBA
Martins Pond Road
Groton, MA 01450 (978) 448.5318
se_harker@charter.net

"I am only one, but I am one. I cannot do everything, but I can do something. And I will not let what I cannot do interfere with what I can do."

- Edward Everett Hale

**TOWN OF GROTON
VOLUNTEER INFORMATION**

Town Government needs citizens who are willing to give time in the service of their community. If you are interested in serving, on a voluntary basis, on boards and committees within the Town, please complete this form and return to:

**TOWN OF GROTON
Board of Selectmen
173 MAIN STREET
GROTON, MA 01450-1237**

Date: March 18, 2015

Name: Scott Evans Harker

Address: 341 Martins Pond Road, Groton, Massachusetts 01450

Telephone No. (daytime) (evening): (978) 448-5318 (Same)

Preferred e-mail Address: se_harker@charter.net

Occupation: Retired/Researcher

Background:

(See attached)

Town activities/issues which interest you:

Activities/Issues which impact Groton's community as a whole

Specific committees or positions in which you have served, or are interested:

Have served on:

Commission on Accessibility,
Town Meeting Review Study Committee,
Groton Polling Place Committee

Current Interest in:

Town of Groton Charter Review Committee

(Cont'd)

TOWN OF GROTON VOLUNTEER INFORMATION

Scott Evans Harker (Cont'd)

A) Background:

Academic: Moses Brown Quaker Preparatory School, Providence, RI – 1964;
Boston University, Boston, MA - BS, June, 1969; and, Clark University, Worcester, MA
- MBA, June, 1985.

Personal: Resident of Groton, with family, since September, 1978; and, have two (2)
children who attended, K thru 12, in Groton Public and Private Schools.

Professional: Digital Equipment Corporation, Digital's Sr. Corporate Supply
Base/Commodity Consultant – Telecommunications.

Responsible for creating, populating and managing Digital's Corporate Supply Base
Management/Telecommunications business function; For negotiating and
managing/administering multi-million dollar contractual corporate business relationships,
for Digital, with select Fortune 500 telecommunications firms; and, For identifying,
researching and providing strategic, national and international, procurement support for
Digital's use of advanced telecommunications technologies.

B) Why my interest in the "Town of Groton Charter Review Committee"?

Groton's original (a.k.a., "current") Town Charter is, in essence, a governmental
"contract" defining inter-relationships between Groton and our Commonwealth, Groton
and it's citizens, and the roles and intra-relationships of Groton's various Town
departments and functions. This Charter is now a dated document, made so by practical
experience, with it's, often obtuse, content, language and structure.

Thus, ten (10) years into it's creation, it is in sore need of objective scrutiny, and
formulation and insertion of practical revisions that reflect past learnings and today's
realities that were not, or could not have been, conceptualized by it's creators ten (10)
years past.

I view my participation in the efforts of this Committee as an unique opportunity
to bring to bear many of my personal and professional skill sets in a project whose end
result, should have a long term, positive impact on Groton's day to day affairs.

I would do it, in gratitude, for what this community has provided my family and
myself, for over 37 years.

Scott Evans Harker

Patricia DuFresne

om: Russ Harris < russ@lostincosmos.com >
Sent: Monday, March 16, 2015 11:10 AM
To: Patricia DuFresne
Subject: Interest in being a candidate for Charter review committee

Hi Patricia,

My name is Russ Harris, Groton resident at 25 Longley Road. I am interested in being considered for an appointment to the Charter review committee. I am sending this to advise you of my interest in being appointed to the committee and of my intention to send you some personal background information by the end of next week.

Please acknowledge that you have received this email.

Thank you,

Russell Harris

Russell Harris Responses to Fin-Com Requested Qualifications for Appointment to the Charter Review Committee

REQUESTED QUALIFICATIONS

•Fiscal Experience

- Ability to review Groton's Charter to determine if current fiscal checks and balances are sufficient or if additional divisions of responsibilities are required.
- Candidate should have Company/Municipal experience in finance and administration and have an understanding of best practices. Senior level experience is desired.
- Must be able to assist in creating clear definitions of roles and responsibilities as required.

Russ Harris: I have no formal experience or education in Finance. However, as a 37 year resident of Groton, and having reported on and observed Town politics, government, finances, education and social life since starting the Groton Herald with my wife Deborah in 1979, I believe I have a useful understanding and perspective on the Finance committee's role and purpose in Groton's government. I have observed, written about and commented on all parts of town government including the Finance Committee for the Groton Herald. I have seen the advantages and disadvantages of both elected and appointed Finance Committees and believe it is better that the Fin-com be appointed. I support the Finance committee's position that the Board should be appointed by the Moderator instead of the Town Manager and have been advocating that position for a couple years.

•Civic Awareness

A fundamental belief that an effective Charter must benefit all residents within the Town of Groton, and that the Governance of Groton as established by the Charter must uphold this as a paramount part of its mission.

Russ Harris: I agree with the statement above and it is one of the reasons I wish to serve on the Charter Review Committee. One of our blessings is the privilege and responsibility of governing ourselves; a privilege not afforded local residents in many parts of the country to the degree that we have here. I want to preserve Groton residents' right to participate in, contribute to, and benefit from being part of our town and its government.

•Fact driven and Open-minded:

- An individual who seeks out knowledge from reliable, 3rd party sources to help validate existing Charter protocols, define better methodologies, and redefine roles and responsibilities.
- Willing to look at the effectiveness of the entire Town Charter including potentially contentious areas of the document.
- Awareness of any personal bias and ability to put personal agendas aside.

Russ Harris: It is important to seek various sources for ideas on how to both validate and, hopefully, improve Groton's Charter. I have begun examining other town's Charter's and, so far, am finding a lot of commonality, but also some interesting differences in other Town's Charters compared to Groton's. In addition, I believe it would be worthwhile to reach out to some of the political science resources at local universities to see if there are suggestions we should consider both for a methodology for examining the Charter and specific ideas that might be considered.

Another tool we might consider for studying the Charter is a detailed organizational chart showing the duties and responsibilities of the various arms of government as well as their corresponding checks and balances in order to see if they are adequately 'checked' and 'balanced'. There are people in town with significant expertise in organizational

development who might be able to help with something like this. I believe that such a graphic representation might help identify certain weakness in our system, some of which might need some change.

•**Vision:**

- An ability to look backward to understand and appreciate Groton's history.
- An ability to look at current happenings to assess the effectiveness of our current Charter.
- An ability to assess the Charter against a reasonable vision of the future of Groton.

Background: My wife Deborah and I founded the Groton Herald in October 1979. This October, we will start our 36th year reporting the town's news. Knowing that the Newspaper would not provide sufficient income to raise a family, I worked in other businesses for many years and my wife ran the newspaper. Even so I have been active in reporting and thinking about Groton's town government, having worked at the newspaper in a support capacity for many years and also having served for several years on the Cable committee with John Ellenberber and Dorothy Davis. In the last five years that I have been able to dedicate a substantial amount of time to the Herald and have been actively participating in the management and reporting for the newspaper.

My wife and I raised three daughters Groton all who started and finished schools here, graduating from the Groton Dunstable Schools. They all graduated from college going to excellent local universities.

My wife was one of the principal authors of the 'Groton at 350' a history of the town published for the 350th anniversary of the town. A good piece of Groton's history of the last hundred years is based on the many years of the Groton Herald's reporting having published stories and reminiscences collected from residents' going to the early 20th century. I have many years of historical knowledge of this town's government - both before and after the acceptance of the Charter and, thus, therefore, I believe I would be able to bring a different perspective to the deliberations.

•**Collaborative:**

- Proven ability to work effectively with team members and assist in creating a culture of calm and efficient collaboration.
- Ability to *communicate* effectively to fellow committee members and the public.

I believe that both my stable work history, my having held leadership positions in my church, as well having been a key in keeping a small business going for 35 years - a business requiring the interest and cooperation of people who are not full-time benefitted employees - is testimony to my ability to be part of a team. In addition, I hope that through the years of reporting for the paper and writing editorials I have developed some ability to write clear English and communicate with the Groton Herald's readers.

General Statement. I consider that getting this Charter right to be a key to a bright future for Groton. My having extensive experience reporting about Groton politics and government would, I believe, make me a useful member of the Charter Review committee. Thank you.