

TOWN OF GROTON FINANCE COMMITTEE

Monday, September 25th, 2017: 6:00 p.m.

Town Hall, Selectmen's Meeting Room

173 Main St. Groton, MA

Meeting Jointly with the BOS to Determine FY19 Budget Guidance

Present for Finance Committee: G. Green (Chair), B. Robertson (Vice Chair), A. Prest, L. Leonard, S. Whitefield, D. Manugian, J. Sjoberg, P. Dufresne (Town Accountant/Recording Secretary)

Absent: None

Documents available at the meeting: 2017 Fall Town Meeting Warrant (revised 9/16/17)

The Finance Committee called their meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

FY19 Budget Guidance – Mr. Haddad and the Finance Team completed some preliminary estimates and are willing to budget up to 3.8% growth in new revenue for FY19. Mr. Haddad stressed that this determination is very preliminary as the proposed budget is not due until December. That said, he is confident that the revenue projection is still a conservative measure of expected results (based on FY17 actual figures). This will permit spending of 3% for both the Town and the School District, and will result in a District assessment to Groton of approximately 4.5%. He acknowledged that last year's revenue projections (as well as the budget guidance) were lower; expense growth being held down due to a couple of unions receiving 0% COLA for FY18. Mr. Petropoulos asked for a summary of the revenue drivers for FY19. Mr. Haddad identified these as Motor Vehicle Excise, Meals Taxes and Building Permits which have been conservatively estimated in the past. Mr. Robertson noted that this change will provide a greater ability to meet municipal needs (especially wages and benefits) and will also hold down Free Cash. Mr. Pease would prefer to rely on economic forecasts than past results in making revenue projections; and believes revenue estimates can be pushed higher. Mr. Green stated that while increasing revenue projections will not solve the growth trend problem, he does support guidance of 3% as long as the revenue increase remains conservative. Mid-year corrections are painful, he cautioned, and if an unanticipated economic contraction does occur, he feels the Town could still recover from this adjustment. Mr. Robertson agreed that he would not want to push revenue growth higher than \$200,000 (3.8%) without testing this model for a year. Ms. Manugian wants to provide a clear picture for the voters, and to budget revenue and expenses to actual expectations whenever possible. Ms. Manugian feels that the Town budget could be more transparent and that contingencies exist in expense lines which should be removed and perhaps reallocated to the Reserve Fund. Mr. Pease cautioned about cutting budgets that have unspent appropriations; this tends to motivate managers to spend every dollar every year. Mr. Haddad stood by his methodology noting the line item detail available in the municipal budget, the quarterly budget updates, and support of the DOR and bond rating agencies for the current process. Mr. Pease and Mr. Petropoulos discussed the level of risk the Town should be willing to assume with regards to potential revenue from businesses that are not yet operational. The BOS chose not to vote on budget

guidance for FY19 at this time, as some of the members were not convinced that 3% growth was sustainable.

On a motion by Mr. Robertson, seconded by Mr. Prest, the Finance Committee recommended that the Town Manager assume 3.8% municipal revenue growth but not exceed 3% municipal expense growth when drafting the FY19 Operating Budget. The Vote: 5-0-0 (Mr. Manugian & Mr. Sjoberg not present)

The group briefly discussed the practice of gathering in small working groups prior to holding public meetings with the BOS or FinCom to discuss major agenda items. Some felt this added brevity to the public meetings, but others were concerned that this caused a lack of transparency in the overall process.

At this point in the meeting, (6:51 p.m.) the BOS and FinCom voted to enter Executive Session pursuant to M.G.L. c. 30A, Sec. 21 (a) to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation as an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body. Both BOS and FinCom will re-convene in regular session immediately following the Executive Session.

On a motion by Mr. Robertson, seconded by Ms. Leonard, the Finance Committee voted unanimously to enter executive session to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation as an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body, and the Chair did declare it in accordance with M.G.L. Ch. 30A, 21(a). Roll Call Vote: Mr. Green – Aye, Ms. Leonard – Aye, Mr. Prest – Aye, Mr. Whitefield – Aye, Mr. Robertson – Aye. (5-0-0) (Mr. Sjoberg and Mr. Manugian not present)

Mr. Sjoberg & Mr. Manugian joined the meeting at 7:00 pm and 7:15 pm respectively.

Public session re-convened at 7:15 pm: Mr. Degen (BOS Chair) outlined the meeting agenda and made announcements for the public. The BOS then opened the public hearing to discuss accepting Chamberlin's Mill Lane as a public way. Attorney Robert Collins explained that the Planning Board has accepted the layout as presented and recommends adoption by the BOS. He described the location of the parcel (off of Route 40) and noted that 11 acres were gifted to the Water Department for a future well site. All abutters have been notified. When no additional questions were forthcoming, the BOS closed the Public Hearing and reconvened in regular session. The BOS voted unanimously to adopt the layout as presented contingent on holdback of \$3,900 until terms of the bond have been satisfied.

Town Meeting Warrant Update: Mr. Haddad noted that the budget adjustments listed in Article 3 now total \$14,500 (\$5,000 having been subtracted as requested at the previous meeting), and the unexpended tax capacity is currently \$161,679. The Senior Center Design project (as presented in Article 7) has received three bids for Architectural Services and five bids for Owners Project Manager. No change has been made to the proposed funding: \$175,000 from Receipts Reserved, and \$225,000 from Free Cash. Mr. Haddad has reduced the amount he is requesting from Free Cash for Article 8, (GDRSD Capital Stabilization Fund) from \$600,000 to \$500,000. He added that bids for Article 10 (Assessors Cyclical Inspections) are due on October 12th, and should amount to approximately \$110,000. Given proposed spending for the upcoming Town Meeting, \$632,401 will remain in Free Cash should all Articles pass as presented (this does not include \$227,000 proposed for BAN principal payments).

Mr. Green said that the Finance Committee had voted to establish the GDRSD Capital Stabilization Fund but had not yet agreed on the amount to transfer from Free Cash for this purpose. Additionally, they have

voted to offset the FY18 tax rate by \$0 (zero dollars). The group briefly reviewed the benefits of completing the entire Cyclical Inspection project up front (mainly to improve the accuracy of the database, but also to take advantage of the potential for New Growth revenue). Mr. Degen stressed that if the GDRSD CapStab account were funded with \$500,000 and the Telephone Infrastructure Article passes for \$346,000, this amounts to \$846,000 of capital funding for the District in FY19. Ms. Gilbert noted that the District does not consider their E&D to be healthy at this time and therefore cannot commit any of it to this capital initiative. She also noted that any programming changes that are accepted based on the recently completed Audit, will require start up spending which will be assessed to the member Towns. The group requested clarification on whether the District capital charge to Groton as presented in their documentation includes the funding for the Telephone Infrastructure Article.

At this point in the meeting (7:40 p.m.), the Finance Committee relocated to the adjacent conference room to continue deliberations on Warrant Articles and to address other business.

Art. 5 Transfer to Town Capital Stabilization Fund - The group discussed the relative merits of funding this account with only what is needed for current spending versus gradually building the balance to meet 5-year spending projections. Mr. Green encouraged the members to review the BOS Financial Policies document which addresses this topic.

On a motion by Ms. Leonard, seconded by Mr. Sjoberg, the Finance Committee voted unanimously to recommend this article to Town Meeting (\$500,000 transfer from Free Cash to TOG CapStab).

The Vote: 7-0-0

Art. 7 Senior Center Design – Mr. Green explained the bid process in place. Once the bids have been received and ranked, the price proposals will then be reviewed. If the design funding is authorized at the Fall Town Meeting, then construction/renovation money can be requested in the spring with bids in hand. He also noted the ways in which this article is an improvement over the Design article voted last spring: the rumor of a \$6 million construction figure has been dispelled, voter confusion regarding the land purchase on Farmers ROW has been neutralized, and the question of whether to build new or renovate will clearly be the first priority of the chosen architect. He stressed that rising construction costs will be a significant factor if the project is delayed.

On a motion by Ms. Leonard, seconded by Mr. Prest, the Finance Committee voted unanimously to recommend this article to Town Meeting (Funding from Free Cash/Receipts Reserved for Appropriation not to exceed a total of \$400,000 for Senior Center Design services). The Vote 7-0-0

Art. 8 GDRSD CapStab Fund – The group debated the merits of funding this initiative at \$400,000 versus \$500,000. Mr. Green said that the District had just confirmed that the capital obligation for Groton in FY19 is \$772,362 of which \$346,860 is earmarked for telephone/wiring infrastructure improvements. Mr. Robertson said this supports the notion of transferring \$400,000 to the capital stabilization fund (similar to the Town's current policy). He added that he would agree with adding \$100,000 to that figure in the interests of compromise. Mr. Whitefield noted that an extra \$100,000 would prevent the fund from being completely depleted each year. Ms. Leonard pointed out the difference in philosophy between the District and the Town regarding cash reserves: the Town considers 5% to be a minimum that should be kept on hand, while for the District, 5% is the maximum allowed in E&D.

On a motion by Mr. Robertson, seconded by Mr. Prest, the Finance Committee voted to recommend this article to Town Meeting at a funding level of \$500,000. (Transfer from Free Cash for GDRSD Capital Stabilization Fund). The Vote: 7-0-0

Mr. Manugian informed the group that while he had previously deferred his vote on the creation of the GDRSD CapStab Fund, he now feels able to vote in favor of this initiative. The final vote of the Finance Committee on creation of the GDRSD CapStab Fund is 5-2-0 (Sjoberg and Leonard voted NO)

Art. 10 Appropriation for Cyclical Inspections – On a motion by Ms. Leonard, seconded by Mr. Robertson, the Finance Committee voted unanimously to recommend this article to Town Meeting (Free Cash funding in an amount not to exceed \$110,000 to hire a contractor to measure and list all Town parcels). The Vote: 7-0-0

Art. 12 Free Cash to Offset FY18 Tax Rate – Mr. Sjoberg informed the group that while he had previously deferred his vote on using Free Cash to offset the tax rate, he now would like to vote in favor of using Free Cash for this purpose. As the Finance Committee previously voted in favor of using \$0 (zero) dollars to offset the tax rate (6-0-1), the new vote is 6-1-0 with Mr. Sjoberg being the dissenting vote.

Art. 3 FY18 Budget Amendments (\$14,500) – After a brief discussion, some of the members would prefer to address these budget needs in the spring as Line Item Transfers. Mr. Prest said he would be willing to support the amendments as they represent ongoing budget needs (not one-time spending requests). Mr. Robertson would prefer not to see numerous small adjustments to the budget in the fall. Mr. Manugian believes that as these amounts are relatively minor, they could be satisfied from existing appropriations. The members agreed ask the Town Manager to delay these adjustments till later in the year. Mr. Green noted that if necessary, the FinCom could take a position on Article 3 at Town Meeting.

Reserve Fund Transfer Request for Fire Department FLSA Audit – Ms. Dufresne informed the members that the Fire Department had requested that a third party perform an audit of their time cards to determine whether additional overtime is payable to their officers. An agreement has been signed with Giusti & Hingston in the amount of \$3,000. They have billed the Town for \$1,000 thus far. The Finance Committee decided to defer action on this request until the Town Accountant's budget has been depleted, but authorized payment of the bills in the meantime.

Town Meeting Assignments: The Finance Committee assigned the following members to speak to individual articles during Town Meeting should specific questions arise regarding FinCom positions:

Sewer Transfer	Mr. Manugian
Free Cash for Cap Stab	Mr. Robertson
Free Cash for Gen Stab	Ms. Leonard
Senior Center Design	Mr. Prest
GDRSD Cap Stab	Mr. Robertson
GDSRD Phone Infrastructure	Mr. Sjoberg
Cyclical Inspections	Ms. Leonard
Complete Streets Eng.	Mr. Manugian
Free Cash to Offset Tax Rate	Mr. Robertson
4 Corners Sewer Enterprise/Budget	Mr. Manugian
Sacred Heart Parcel Rezone	Mr. Prest

Approval of Minutes:

On a motion by Mr. Robertson, seconded by Ms. Leonard, the Finance Committee voted unanimously to approve and release the minutes from their meeting on September 18, 2017 as drafted.

The Vote: 7-0-0

Mr. Green officially adjourned the Finance Committee meeting at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Dufresne, Recording Secretary

Revised: 09/20/2017

Warrant, Summary, and Recommendations

TOWN OF GROTON



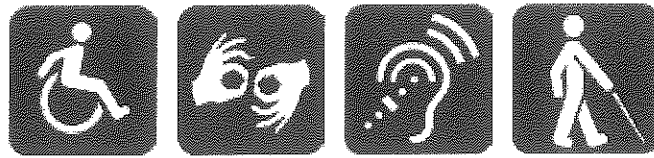
2017 FALL TOWN MEETING

**Groton-Dunstable Middle School Auditorium
344 Main Street, Groton, Massachusetts 01450**

Beginning Monday, October 23, 2017 @ 7:00 PM

Attention – Voters and Taxpayers

Please bring this Report to Town Meeting



Town Meeting Access for Voters with Disabilities

Parking – Universally accessible parking spaces are available in the parking lot in front of the Groton Dunstable Middle School South. There is a ramp providing access from the parking lot to the front door of the Middle School.

Wheelchair Accessible & Companion Seating – Wheelchair spaces, seating for people with mobility issues and companion seats are available in the center aisle on both sides of the auditorium.

Sign Language – A Sign Language Interpreter will be provided for the hearing impaired, upon request, at least one week prior to the meeting.

Speaking at Town Meeting – There will be volunteers available to bring hand-held microphones to voters who have mobility issues or cannot stand in line and wait at the microphones.

Restrooms – Accessible restrooms are available near the entrance to the auditorium.

Transportation to Town Meeting - The Council on Aging van will be available to Groton residents attending Town Meetings at no charge. All riders will be at the meeting prior to the start. However, the van will depart the school at 10 PM regardless of the status of the meeting. The van is wheelchair accessible. Your reservation can be made by calling the Senior Center at 978-448-1170. Seats will be filled on a first come, first serve basis.

Questions or concerns - If you or a member of your household has questions or would like to request a sign language interpreter, please contact ADA Coordinator Michelle Collette at Town Hall at 978 448-1105 at least one week before the Town Meeting.

**FALL TOWN MEETING WARRANT
OCTOBER 23, 2017**

Middlesex, ss.
Commonwealth of Massachusetts
To any Constable in the Town of Groton

Greetings:

In the name of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, you are hereby required to notify and warn said inhabitants of the Town of Groton qualified to vote on Town affairs to assemble in the Groton-Dunstable Middle School Auditorium in said Town on Monday, the twenty-third day of October, 2017 at Seven O'clock in the evening, to consider the following:

ARTICLE LISTINGS

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Article 2	Prior Year Bills	3
Article 3	Amend Fiscal Year 2018 Town Operating Budget	4
Article 4	Transfer Within Sewer Enterprise Budget	4
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Article 15	Fiscal Year 2018 Four Corners Sewer District Budget	10
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Article 17	Amend Code of the Town of Groton -- New Chapter 181	11
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ARTICLE 1: CITIZENS' PETITION – ALL ARE WELCOME MARKERS

To see if the Town will vote to change the wording of the markers approved at the 2017 Spring Town Meeting from "All Are Welcome" to "Welcome" such that the existing and any subsequent markers to be placed pursuant to that meeting will read (by line): "Town of Groton/Welcome/Town Meeting 2017". All funds needed to change the wording of the existing markers will be contributed by individual Town citizens who wish to avoid the divisiveness caused by the existing and planned markers, or to take any other action relative thereto.

CITIZENS' PETITION

<u>NAME</u>	<u>ADDRESS</u>	<u>NAME</u>	<u>ADDRESS</u>
John L. Saball	271 Forge Village Road	John M. Niles	14 McLains Woods Road
Claudia Saball	271 Forge Village Road	Kimberly S. Niles	14 McLains Woods Road
Gail Chalmers	123 Pepperell Road	Donald R. Black	573 Longley Road
Penelope C. Hommeyer	18 Blossom Lane	Earl N. Carter	8 Lone Lane
James A. Hommeyer	18 Blossom Lane	John W. Valentine	313 Whiley Road

Board of Selectmen:
Finance Committee:

Summary: The following summary was prepared by the petitioners and represents their view on the Article: *The Welcome Markers Article seeks to assure that the Town's public signage is politically and culturally neutral. Subsequent to the approval of the "All Are Welcome" markers, many Town residents have learned that the wording of the signs does, in fact, have specific political and cultural connotations. This is not appropriate for a Town with diverse citizens and points of view. The changes are sought to lessen the partisan divisiveness caused by Town markers which make a political/cultural statement rather than simply welcoming people of all backgrounds and views to our Town.*

ARTICLE 2: PRIOR YEAR BILLS

To see if the Town will vote to transfer from available funds a sum or sums of money for the payment of unpaid bills from prior fiscal years, or to take any other action relative thereto.

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Board of Selectmen:
Finance Committee:

Summary: *Town Meeting approval is required to pay bills from a prior fiscal year. A list of unpaid bills will be provided at Town Meeting.*

ARTICLE 3: AMEND THE FISCAL YEAR 2018 TOWN OPERATING BUDGET

To see if the Town will vote to amend the Fiscal Year 2018 Operating Budget as adopted under Article 4 of the 2017 Spring Town Meeting, and vote to raise and appropriate and/or transfer from available funds a sum or sums of money as may be necessary to defray the expenses of the Town for Fiscal Year 2018, or to take any other action relative thereto.

**FINANCE COMMITTEE
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
TOWN MANAGER**

Board of Selectmen: *See Town Manager's Report in Back of Warrant for Recommendations*
Finance Committee: *See Town Manager's Report in Back of Warrant for Recommendations*

Summary: *The Fiscal Year 2018 Town Operating Budget was approved at the 2017 Spring Town Meeting in April, 2017. Any changes to this Budget would have to be made prior to setting the tax rate. The purpose of this article is to make any necessary changes to balance the FY 2018 Operating Budget. Please see the Town Manager's Report contained in the back of this Warrant for an explanation outlining the proposed changes.*

ARTICLE 4: TRANSFER WITHIN SEWER ENTERPRISE FUND

To see if the Town will vote to transfer a sum or sums of money from the Sewer Enterprise Fund Surplus to the Fiscal Year 2018 Sewer Enterprise Department Budget for engineering services related to the Pepperell Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrades, or to take any other action relative thereto.

BOARD OF SEWER COMMISSIONERS

Board of Selectmen:
Finance Committee:
Sewer Commission:

Summary: *This Article seeks to transfer a sum of money from the Sewer Enterprise Fund Surplus to the Fiscal Year 2018 Sewer Department's General Expense for engineering services related to the Pepperell Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrades. The exact amount will be provided at Town Meeting.*

ARTICLE 5: TRANSFER MONEY INTO THE CAPITAL STABILIZATION FUND

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate and/or transfer from available funds a sum or sums of money to be added to the sum already on deposit in the Capital Stabilization Fund, or to take any other action relative thereto.

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Board of Selectmen:
Finance Committee:

Summary: *The Fund has a balance of \$118,486. The financial management goal is to achieve and maintain a balance in the Capital Stabilization Fund equal to 1.5% of the total annual budget. The target amount for the Capital Stabilization Fund will be provided at Town Meeting.*

ARTICLE 6: TRANSFER MONEY INTO THE STABILIZATION FUND

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate and/or transfer from available funds a sum or sums of money to be added to the sum already on deposit in the Stabilization Fund, or to take any other action relative thereto.

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Board of Selectmen:
Finance Committee:

Summary: *The balance in this fund is \$1.79 million. The financial management goal is to achieve and maintain a balance in the Stabilization Fund equal to 5% of the total annual budget. The target amount for the Stabilization Fund will be provided at Town Meeting.*

ARTICLE 7: SENIOR CENTER DESIGN

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, transfer from available funds, and/or borrow a sum or sums of money, to be expended by the Town Manager, for the purpose of hiring an architect and/or engineer, pursuant to the Designer Selection Guidelines adopted by the Board of Selectmen in December, 2010, for the design, or design and construction bidding process, of a new Senior Center, and/or the renovation and expansion of the current Senior Center, and all costs associated and related thereto, or to take any other action relative thereto.

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
SENIOR CENTER BUILDING COMMITTEE**

Board of Selectmen:
Finance Committee:

Summary: Originally constructed in 1986 as a VFW hall, Groton's current senior center is inadequate for current program needs as well as deficient in meeting minimal standards of universal accessibility. Previous analysis and Town Meeting vote have determined that the current West Groton site is the preferred choice for a center that will serve Groton's growing senior population and the community both now and into the future. This article requests funding to allow the Town to secure design and bid-level documents that will determine how much a renovated and expanded or new senior center will cost and thereby adequately inform voters for a future Town Meeting and Proposition 2 ½ debt exclusion vote.

ARTICLE 8: CREATE TOWN CAPITAL STABILIZATION FUND FOR GDRSD

To see if the Town will vote to create a Capital Stabilization Fund entitled "Town of Groton Capital Stabilization Fund for the Groton Dunstable Regional School District" and to raise and appropriate and/or transfer from available funds a sum or sums of money to be added to said fund, or to take any other action relative thereto.

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
FINANCE COMMITTEE
TOWN MANAGER**

**Board of Selectmen:
Finance Committee:**

Summary: The Groton Dunstable Regional School District Committee has recently adopted a long-range Capital Plan to address its capital needs. This detailed plan will require a substantial financial contribution from both Groton and Dunstable over the next several years. While Groton approved a GDRSD held Capital Stabilization Fund, approval of Dunstable is also needed. A Town of Groton held Capital Stabilization account will allow Groton to be prepared to pay its share of Capital costs. To that end, the Board of Selectmen, Finance Committee and Town Manager would like to create and begin funding a Town of Groton held Capital Stabilization fund for the GDRSD.

ARTICLE 9: GDRSD PHONE SYSTEM & INTERNET INFRASTRUCTURE

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, transfer from available funds, and/or borrow a sum or sums of money to pay the Town of Groton's share for the Groton Dunstable Regional School District's District Wide Phone System & Internet Infrastructure replacement project, and all costs associated and related thereto, in accordance with the Regional School Agreement, or to take any other action relative thereto.

GDRSD COMMITTEE

**Board of Selectmen:
Finance Committee:**

Summary: The replacement of the District Wide Phone System & Internet Infrastructure is the largest expense in the adopted long-range District Capital & Technology Plans and is scheduled to take place in FY19. Groton's portion of the expense, per the regional agreement and based on the five-year rolling average pupil enrollment, is \$346,860. Replacing the network infrastructure is a necessity. The network is used for almost all assignments and testing. Many of the software requirements include taking MCAS via computer are mandated by the state. Currently the bandwidth is the most significant impediment (i.e. bottleneck); there are times when the performance is impacted and not steady. This can occur at inopportune moments such as during classroom activities or state mandated online MCAS testing. In addition to being an academic necessity there are safety concerns as the District does not have caller ID. Without caller ID, the District remains in a vulnerable position of not being able to determine where or what type of call is coming into the District, making prosecution difficult in the event of a threat. This vulnerability was identified when the District received a Robo Call bomb threat. Caller ID could prove to be critical for investigative purposes.

ARTICLE 10: APPROPRIATION FOR CYCLICAL INSPECTION

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, transfer from available funds, and/or borrow a sum or sums of money, to be expended by the Board of Assessors to perform a cyclical re-inspection program, pursuant to and as required by the directive issued by the Massachusetts Department of Revenue, Bureau of Local Assessments, or to take any other action relative thereto.

BOARD OF ASSESSORS

Board of Selectmen:
Finance Committee:

Summary: In 2017, the Bureau of Local Assessments issued the following directive: "**Cyclical Reinspection** - Maintenance of current and accurate property inventory data is a critical element in the development of uniform, fair market values. Our last certification review indicated that the Board of Assessors should begin a cyclical re-inspection program of all descriptive property data over a specified time period, so that each parcel is inspected at least once in every nine-year cycle." Cyclical Inspection, as defined by the Mass DOR, is the process of the systematic measure and listing of all properties within a municipality over a specified period of time (over the next 5 fiscal years and concluding prior to the Town of Groton's next recertification commencing in FY2022). The Cyclical Inspection process is utilized to update property owner record cards in order to provide fair and equitable assessments to ALL property owners in town. The Town has issued a Request for Proposal that will allow the Town to determine the cost effectiveness of conducting these inspections all at once, or over the next five years. A full report will be provided at Town Meeting.

ARTICLE 11: COMPLETE STREETS ENGINEERING

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, transfer from available funds, and/or borrow a sum or sums of money, to be expended by the Town Manager, for the purpose of hiring an engineer for the design of traffic safety and pedestrian improvements funded by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts "Complete Streets" program, or take any action relative thereto.

COMPLETE STREETS COMMITTEE

Board of Selectmen:
Finance Committee:

Summary: *The Complete Streets Committee received a grant from MassDOT to improve pedestrian safety and accessibility at crosswalks in the Town Center, to extend the sidewalk on Long Hill Road from Riverbend Drive to Groton Place, to install speed limit flashing lights in various locations, and to install two bicycle repair kits on the Nashua River Rail Trail. This article will provide funding for the required engineering design of the projects. The Town must provide the engineering to design and solicit bids in order to obtain the construction funding. It is anticipated that the cost of this engineering will not exceed \$45,000.*

ARTICLE 12: OFFSET THE TAX RATE

To see if the Town will vote to transfer a sum of money from the General Excess and Deficiency Fund (Free Cash) or from other available funds for the purpose of affecting the tax rate for the period beginning July 1, 2017, or to take any other action relative thereto.

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Board of Selectmen:
Finance Committee:

Summary: *The intent of this article is to use a portion of Free Cash or General Stabilization Fund monies as a funding source for the FY 2018 Budget in order to lower the amount of money required to be raised from taxes or to balance a deficit budget. The Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee will determine what amount, if any, will be proposed and make a recommendation to the 2017 Fall Town Meeting.*

ARTICLE 13: SALE OR LEASE OF 23 STATION AVENUE

To see if the Town will vote to authorize the Board of Selectmen to sell and/or lease, for a period not to exceed 99 years, the buildings formerly known as the Groton Electric garages, which comprise approximately 6300 square feet, and all or a portion of the 1.8 acre site on which they are located at 23 Station Avenue, Groton, Massachusetts, to take all necessary action to comply with the General Laws of the Commonwealth for the disposal of said buildings, and to petition the General Court for any necessary special legislation, or to take any other action relative thereto.

GROTON ELECTRIC LIGHT COMMISSIONERS

Board of Selectmen:
Finance Committee:

Summary: *With the completion of GELD's new office and garage facilities, the former garages are surplus. The Light Department and the Town will no longer be putting the garages to best use and seek a better use for the parcel. The Groton Electric Light Board has issued an RFP for the sale of these buildings and hopes to have a final proposal for consideration at Town Meeting. The purpose of this article is to present the successful proposal to Town Meeting for approval and disposal of the Buildings. A full report will be made at the Town Meeting.*

ARTICLE 14: ENTERPRISE FUND - FOUR CORNERS SEWER DISTRICT

To see if the Town will vote to accept the provisions of Chapter 44, Section 53F½, an Act Authorizing Cities and Towns to Establish Enterprise Funds, for the purpose of establishing an Enterprise Fund for the Four Corners Sewer District, to be effective January 1, 2018, or to take any other action relative thereto.

TOWN MANAGER

Board of Selectmen:
Finance Committee:

Summary: *This Article proposes to create a separate Sewer Enterprise Fund for the Four Corners Sewer District.*

ARTICLE 15: FY 2018 FOUR CORNERS SEWER DISTRICT ENTERPRISE BUDGET

To see if the Town will vote the following operating budget, for Fiscal Year 2018, for the Four Corners Sewer District Enterprise Fund, with funding to come from donation revenues which have been received by the Town in support of the Four Corners Sewer Project:

<u>Line Item</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Expenses	\$13,230

or to take any other action relative thereto.

TOWN MANAGER

Board of Selectmen:
Finance Committee:

Summary: *This Article proposes an Operating Budget for the Four Corners Sewer District Enterprise Fund, to be effective January 1, 2018.*

ARTICLE 16: AMEND COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE BYLAW

To see if the Town will vote to amend Chapter 10, "Community Preservation Committee" of the Code of the Town Groton by deleting paragraph B of §10-1 in its entirety and replacing it with the following new paragraph B:

"Initially, the members designated by the Conservation Commission, Historical Commission and Planning Board will serve for three years, the members designated by the Parks Commission and the Housing Authority will serve for two years, and the members appointed by the Board of Selectmen will serve for one year. Subsequent appointments for members designated by the Conservation Commission, Historical Commission, Housing Authority and members appointed by the Board of Selectman shall be for a term of three years terms. Subsequent appointments for members designated by the Parks Commission and the Planning Board shall be for a term of one year. If a person no longer serves in the position or on the board or commission as set forth above, his or her term shall end, and any person appointed as a replacement shall serve out the remainder of the original term of that person."

or to take any other action relative thereto.

COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

Board of Selectmen:
Finance Committee:
Community Preservation Committee:

Summary: *The purpose of this article is to clarify the appointment process and length of terms of individuals appointed by the various Boards and Committees to the Community Preservation Committee.*

ARTICLE 17: AMEND CODE OF GROTON BY ADDING NEW CHAPTER 181

To see if the Town will vote to amend the Code of the Town of Groton by adding a new Chapter 181, entitled "Anti-Litter/Snow in Public Ways," as follows:

**CHAPTER 181
Anti-Litter/Snow in Public Ways**

§181-1 Disposal of Refuse

Whoever disposes of garbage, trash, refuse, bottles, cans, containers, rubbish or other debris or household items on a public or private way, or in inland waters, shall be subject to a penalty of three hundred dollars. Each violation shall be considered a separate offense.

§181-2 Discarding of Snow in Public Way or on Property of Another

Whoever shall discard, shovel, throw, or pile snow in a public way, or plow snow across a public way to the property of another without the written permission of the owner of such property, after a police warning not to do so, shall be subject to a penalty of one hundred dollars. Each violation shall be considered a separate offense.

§181-3 Enforcement

This bylaw may be enforced in accordance with the provisions §1-4.B Non-Criminal Complaint, of the Code of the Town of Groton. The Groton Police Department shall be the enforcement authority.

or to take any other action relative thereto.

**TOWN MANAGER
PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR**

**Board of Selectmen:
Finance Committee:**

Summary: *Currently, the Town has no enforcement provisions for littering or discarding snow within a public way. If this proposed new Bylaw is adopted, the Groton Police Department will have the authority to enforce and issue fines for either infraction.*

ARTICLE 18: ACCEPTANCE OF CHAMBERLINS MILL LANE AS A TOWN WAY

To see if the Town will vote to accept as a public way the roadway known as Chamberlins Mill Lane, as heretofore laid out by the Board of Selectmen and as shown on a plan entitled "As Built Plan Chamberlins Mill, Groton, Mass, prepared for Regulas Realty Trust, P.O. Box 381, Groton, MA" dated June 1, 2017, prepared by Ducharme & Dillis, Bolton, MA, a copy of which is on file with the Town Clerk, and to authorize the Board of Selectmen to acquire, by gift, purchase, or eminent domain, the fee to or lesser interests in said roadway and all related easements, or to take any other action relative thereto.

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Board of Selectmen:
Finance Committee: *No Position*

Summary: *To accept Chamberlins Mills Lane as a public way.*

ARTICLE 20: CITIZENS' PETITION - REZONE PARCELS 112-60, 112-61, 112-62 FROM RESIDENTIAL – AGRICULTURAL "R-A" TO VILLAGE CENTER BUSINESS "VCB"

To see if the Town will vote to amend the Zoning Map established under Chapter 218 of the Code of the Town of Groton to rezone three adjoining parcels of land from Residential-Agricultural (R-A) to Village Center Business (VCB), said parcels of land located at 279 Main Street consisting of approximately 1.25 acres, being shown on Assessors' Map 112, Parcels 60, 61, and 62, or take to take any other action relative thereto.

CITIZENS' PETITION

<u>NAME</u>	<u>ADDRESS</u>	<u>NAME</u>	<u>ADDRESS</u>
Stephen S. Palmer	81 Boston Road	Michael W. Hill	56 Wintergreen Lane
Cynthia J. Marcus	293 Chicopee Row	Jessica C. Bicknell	14 High Oaks Path
Myra Lane	21 Lovers Lane	Kenneth C. Kolodziej	10 Whiting Avenue
Lawrence R. Deal	76 Fairway Drive	Jeffrey A. Gordon	161 Main Street
Miqelle F. Demeis	63 Fairway Drive	Deborah E. Johnson	25 Longley Road

Board of Selectmen:
Finance Committee:
Planning Board:

Summary: The following summary was prepared by the petitioners and represents their view on the Article: *Stephen Palmer, 81 Boston Rd, Groton, MA, requests rezoning of the Sacred Heart Church from its current residential/educational/religious zoning to a commercial zoning. The objective of this rezoning is to permit renovation of the property for the use as a theater suitable for screening of independent and foreign films, as well as for live theater uses. The Groton Celestial Theater proposes to use these facilities to screen two movies daily in two theaters. Proposed seating capacity will be for 120-150 and parking in the existing parking lot can accommodate 50 – 60 cars/light trucks.*

Hereof fail not and make return of your doings to the Town Clerk on or before time of said meeting.

Given under our hands this 2nd Day of October in the year of our Lord Two Thousand Seventeen.

Joshua A. Degen

Joshua A. Degen, Chairman

Barry A. Pease

Barry A. Pease, Vice Chairman

Alison S. Manugian

Alison S. Manugian, Clerk

John G. Petropoulos

John G. Petropoulos, Member

Rebecca H. Pine

Rebecca H. Pine, Member

OFFICERS RETURN

Groton, Middlesex

Pursuant to the within Warrant, I have this day notified the Inhabitants to assemble at the time, place, and for the purpose mentioned as within directed. Personally posted by Constable.

Constable

Date Duly Posted

REPORT OF THE TOWN MANAGER TO THE 2017 FALL TOWN MEETING

The 2017 Fall Town Meeting Warrant contains several warrant articles that seek appropriations, some of which that will affect the Tax Rate and some of which will have no further impact on taxes. The purpose of this report is to provide the residents and taxpayers with a summary of these articles and what impact they will have on the Fiscal Year 2018 Tax Rate.

As you will recall, the 2017 Spring Town Meeting voted a budget of \$36,049,935, which was \$183,950 under the levy limit based on our best estimate of revenues at that time. At that Town Meeting, we estimated that the Fiscal Year 2018 Tax Rate would be \$18.65. Since that time, we have begun to get a better picture of our estimates. Most importantly, in July, the Commonwealth finalized its budget and provided the Town with its final State Aid Estimates. Further, the Assessors continue to work toward the finalization of the Town's new growth figure. They should have it certified by the end of October. At this time, it appears that our revenue estimates are pretty much in line (slight decrease) with what we anticipated in the Spring. The following chart provides the difference between what was originally estimated and what we are estimating at this time:

	<u>Original</u>	<u>Current</u>	<u>Difference</u>
State Aid	\$ 915,112	\$ 912,979	\$ (2,133)
State Charges	\$ 89,523	\$ 89,523	\$ -
Snow and Ice Deficit	\$ 200,000	\$ 200,000	\$ -
Cherry Sheet Offsets	\$ 1,000	\$ -	\$ 1,000
Off-Set Receipts	\$ 20,000	\$ 18,953	\$ 1,047
Property Tax Levy	\$ 29,129,180	\$ 29,129,180	\$ -
Local Receipts	\$ 3,828,472	\$ 3,820,787	\$ (7,685)
		Difference	\$ (7,771)

With these revised estimates, the approved budget is now \$176,179 under the levy limit. Since the original budget was voted, there are a few issues that require attention. Article 3 of the Warrant proposes to amend the original budget in some line items. These amendments will have a slight impact on the Tax Rate for Fiscal Year 2018, since the additional revenues will come from the unexpended tax capacity. The additional amount of tax levy proposed at this meeting will cause the tax rate to increase by \$0.01 to an estimated tax rate of \$18.66. In addition, the Department of Revenue has certified the Town's Excess and Deficiency Fund (Free Cash) at \$2,369,261. "Free Cash" is proposed to fund several of the Articles contained in the Warrant. The use of "Free Cash" will not impact the tax rate.

The following is a summary of Warrant Articles requesting funding:

Article 2: Unpaid Bills

Amount Requested: \$0

At this time, we do not anticipate any Unpaid Bills for Town Meeting appropriation.

Article 3: Budget Amendments

Amount Requested: \$14,500

The proposed funding for this Article will come from taxation and will impact the Tax Rate (at the conclusion of all the Article summaries will be a chart showing the impact on the FY 2018 Tax Rate). The following is a breakdown of the requests, followed by an explanation:

<u>Line Item</u>	<u>Original Appropriation</u>	<u>New Appropriation</u>	<u>Difference</u>
Town Manager Expenses	\$ 4,000	\$ 14,000	\$ 10,000
Town Clerk Wages	\$ 54,589	\$ 58,589	\$ 4,000
IT Wages	\$ 47,753	\$ 48,253	\$ 500
Total	\$ 106,342	\$ 120,842	\$ 14,500

Explanation of Requests

Town Manager Expenses - \$10,000

The Board of Selectmen had approved a recommendation by the Town Manager to hire per diem minute takers for the Planning Board, Conservation Commission and Finance Committee. Department Heads are taking minutes and it is becoming increasingly difficult for them to participate in the meeting while taking minutes. It is difficult for them to take minutes and participate in the meeting. This expenditure would cover the cost of taking and preparing the minutes for approval by these three Boards. This would also become an annual expenditure and part of the Annual Operating Budget.

Board of Selectmen:
Finance Committee:

Town Clerk Wages - \$4,000

At the beginning of the current Fiscal Year, the Town Clerk's Office had two twenty (20) hour per week Assistant Town Clerks. Both of these positions received full benefits from the Town. When one of the Clerks resigned to take another position, a reorganization plan was approved by the Board of Selectmen that increased the Housing Coordinator from 25 hours to 40 hours and assigned this position to the Town Clerk's Office for 15 hours per week. The other Assistant Town Clerk was increased from 20 hours per week to 25 hours per week to keep administrative staff support in the Town Clerk's Office at 40 hours. This reorganization has eliminated one benefited position that could save the Town \$18,000 annually. Due to the current hourly rates of the above two referenced employees, the Town Clerk's Wage Line item needs to be increased by \$4,000.

Board of Selectmen:
Finance Committee:

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IT Wages - \$500

Due to a scrivener's error in setting the Wage Line Item for the IT Department, two numbers were transposed and the actual hourly rate of the Desk Stop Specialist that was approved will cause a short fall in that wage line by \$500. Since this is the annual wage of the current employee, it is recommended that this line item be increased by \$500 to cover the expense.

Board of Selectmen:
Finance Committee:

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Article 4 – Transfer Within Sewer Enterprise **Amount Requested: \$90,000**

This Article seeks to transfer \$90,000 from the Sewer Enterprise Fund Surplus to the Fiscal Year 2018 Sewer Department's General Expense for engineering services related to the Pepperell Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrades. The Fund has a balance of \$545,281. This transfer will not affect the tax rate.

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Article 5 – Capital Stabilization Fund **Amount Requested: \$500,000**

The Fund currently has a balance of \$118,486. The financial management goal is to achieve and maintain a balance in the Capital Stabilization Fund equal to 1.5% of the total annual budget. To meet this level and provide adequate funding to meet the anticipated Fiscal Year 2019 Capital Budget, the Town will need to add \$500,000 to the fund. This funding will come from Free Cash and not affect the Tax Rate.

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Article 6 – Stabilization Fund

Amount Requested: \$10,000

The Fund currently has a balance of \$1,797,719. The financial management goal is to achieve and maintain a balance in the Stabilization Fund equal to 5% of the total annual budget. To meet this level, the Town will need to add \$10,000 to the fund. This funding will come from Free Cash and not affect the Tax Rate.

Article 7 – Senior Center Design

Amount Requested: \$400,000

From the Warrant Summary: Originally constructed in 1986 as a VFW hall, Groton's current senior center is inadequate for current program needs as well as deficient in meeting minimal standards of universal accessibility. Previous analysis and Town Meeting vote have determined that the current West Groton site is the preferred choice for a center that will serve Groton's growing senior population and the community both now and into the future. This article requests funding to allow the Town to secure design and bid-level documents that will determine how much a renovated and expanded or new senior center will cost and thereby adequately inform voters for a future Town Meeting and Proposition 2 ½ debt exclusion vote. Funding for this Article will come from Free Cash (\$225,000) and Receipts Reserved for Appropriation (\$175,000) and not affect the Tax Rate.

Article 8 – Capital Stabilization for the GDRSD

Amount Requested: \$600,000

From the Warrant Summary: The Groton Dunstable Regional School District Committee has recently adopted a long-range Capital Plan to address its capital needs. This detailed plan will require a substantial financial contribution from both Groton and Dunstable over the next several years. While Groton approved a GDRSD held Capital Stabilization Fund, approval of Dunstable is also needed. A Town of Groton held Capital Stabilization account will allow Groton to be prepared to pay its share of Capital costs. To that end, the Board of Selectmen, Finance Committee and Town Manager would like to create and begin funding a Town of Groton held Capital Stabilization fund for the GDRSD. The Town Manager is proposing that \$600,000 be transferred from Free Cash to begin funding this Capital Stabilization Fund. This transfer will not affect the Tax Rate.

Article 9 – GDRSD Phone System and Infrastructure Amount Requested: \$346,860

From the Warrant Summary: The replacement of the District Wide Phone System & Internet Infrastructure is the largest expense in the adopted long-range District Capital & Technology Plans and is scheduled to take place in FY19. Groton's portion of the expense, per the regional agreement and based on the five-year rolling average pupil enrollment, is \$346,860. Replacing the network infrastructure is a necessity. The network is used for almost all assignments and testing. Many of the software requirements include taking MCAS via computer are mandated by the state. Currently the bandwidth is the most significant impediment (i.e. bottleneck); there are times when the performance is impacted and not steady. This can occur at inopportune moments such as during classroom activities or state mandated online MCAS testing. In addition to being an academic necessity there are safety concerns as the District does not have caller ID. Without caller ID, the District remains in a vulnerable position of not being able to determine where or what type of call is coming into the District, making prosecution difficult in the event of a threat. This vulnerability was identified when the District received a Robo Call bomb threat. Caller ID could prove to be critical for investigative purposes. This funding will come from Free Cash and not affect the Tax Rate.

Article 10 – Appropriation for Cyclical Inspections Amount Requested: \$110,000

From the Warrant Summary In 2017, the Bureau of Local Assessments issued the following directive: "Cyclical Reinspection - Maintenance of current and accurate property inventory data is a critical element in the development of uniform, fair market values. Our last certification review indicated that the Board of Assessors should begin a cyclical re-inspection program of all descriptive property data over a specified time period, so that each parcel is inspected at least once in every nine-year cycle." Cyclical Inspection, as defined by the Mass DOR, is the process of the systematic measure and listing of all properties within a municipality over a specified period of time (over the next 5 fiscal years and concluding prior to the Town of Groton's next recertification commencing in FY2022). The Cyclical Inspection process is utilized to update property owner record cards in order to provide fair and equitable assessments to ALL property owners in town. The Town has issued a Request for Proposal that will allow the Town to determine the cost effectiveness of conducting these inspections all at once, or over the next five years. A full report will be provided at Town Meeting. The proposed funding for this Article will come from Free Cash and not affect the Tax Rate.

Article 11 – Complete Streets Engineering Amount Requested: \$45,000

From the Warrant Summary: The Complete Streets Committee received a grant from MassDOT to improve pedestrian safety and accessibility at crosswalks in the Town Center, to extend the sidewalk on Long Hill Road from Riverbend Drive to Groton Place, to install speed limit flashing lights in various locations, and to install two bicycle repair kits on the Nashua River Rail Trail. This article will provide funding for the required engineering design of the projects. The Town must provide the engineering to design and solicit bids in order to obtain the construction funding. The amount needed is \$45,000 and will come from Free Cash. This appropriation will not affect the Tax Rate.

Article 12 – Offset the Tax Rate

Amount Requested: \$0

After reviewing all of the other financial commitments contained in the Warrant for the 2017 Fall Town Meeting, the Board of Selectmen will make a recommendation, if at all, of an amount to be transferred from Free Cash to offset the Fiscal Year 2018 Tax Rate. A complete report will be made to the 2017 Fall Town Meeting.

The funding for the request for Articles 3 (total of \$14,500) will come from the tax levy. Should this Article pass as presented, it will cause the tax rate to increase by \$0.01. The impact on the FY 2018 Tax Rate is as follows:

Original Budget -	\$36,049,935
Original Levy Capacity Used -	\$31,118,125
Amount Under the Levy Limit -	\$183,950
Original Proposed Tax Rate -	\$18.65
Average Tax Bill -	\$7,926 or \$165 increase over FY 2017
New Proposed Budget -	\$36,090,935
New Levy Capacity Used	\$31,140,396
Amount Under the Levy Limit -	\$161,679
New Proposed Tax Rate -	\$18.66
Average Tax Bill -	\$7,930 or \$169 increase over FY 2017

Respectfully submitted,

Mark W. Haddad
Mark W. Haddad
Town Manager