

FINANCE COMMITTEE Meeting Minutes

Saturday, January 27, 2024 @ 8:30 A.M.
Town Hall: Second Floor Meeting Room, 173 Main Street Groton, MA
Meeting Jointly with Select Board

Present for the Finance Committee: Bud Robertson, Chair; David Manugian, Colby Doody, Gary Green, Mary Linskey, Mike Sulprizio, Scott Whitefield

Present for the Select Board: Peter Cunningham, Chair; John Reilly, Vice Chair; Alison Manugian, Clerk; Matt Pisani, Becky Pine

Also Present: Mark Haddad, Town Manager; Kara Cruikshank, Executive Assistant to the Town Manager, Dawn Dunbar, Town Clerk; Hannah Moller, Treasurer/Collector; Melissa Doig; Human Resource Director; Patricia Dufresne, Assistant Finance Director/Town Accountant;

8:30 A.M. Mr. Robertson and Mr. Cunningham called the meeting to order.

Meeting Minutes

Mr. Manugian made a motion to approve the minutes of the regularly scheduled meeting from December 18, 2023. Ms. Linskey seconded the motion and it motion was carried. Mr. Colby Abstained. 6-1-0

Mr. Manugian made a motion to approve the minutes of the regularly scheduled meeting from January 8, 2024. Ms. Linskey seconded the motion and it was carried unanimously. 7-0-0

RFT Request: Building Dept.

The Finance Committee received a request to transfer \$2,000 to the Building Department to cover unexpected expenses related to permitting software that exceeded the initial budget.

Ms. Linskey made a motion to approve the transfer of \$2,000 to the Building Department for the software update. Mr. Manugian seconded the motion and it was carried unanimously. 7-0-0

FY25 Operating & Capital Budget Review with Department Heads

Library Budget

Vanessa Abraham and Mark Gerath were present for the discussion of the Library's budget. Mr. Gerath proposed a level-service budget with the main changes reflected in salaries and wages. In FY24, the library offloaded costs for the summer reading program and expanded Sunday hours with the assistance of State aid totaling \$28,000. These costs have been charged to the operating budget in FY25. Mr. Gerath said in the event of an override failure, there would be a need to cut adult programming, a portion of the summer reading program, and Sunday operations. Any temporary positions and four part-time, non-benefited staff positions would be the first to be affected. The proposed reduction would result in a 14% decrease in the operating hours, closing one hour early Tuesday through Friday. This decision would significantly impact evening programs and attendance. As the data shows, attendance has been increasing since 2019, covering three levels of programs for all ages.

Mr. Robertson clarified that the proposed reduction would amount to \$108,000, with approximately \$70,000 from wages and \$30,000 from expenses (books and materials).

Mr. Haddad said that there is a municipal requirement to restore the amount cut within five years and inquired about the waiver process. Mr. Gerath explained that the Library cannot go below a certain level or they would lose accreditation from the Massachusetts Library Board of Commissioners. Resulting in the inability to borrow materials from other libraries and utilize their programs. The regional consortium, which manages inter-library services and IT functions, would no longer be accessible.

To maintain certification, three tests are applied to libraries:

1. Open 40 hours per week.
2. Maintaining a percentage of the total budget spent on books and materials. If the library goes below 50 hours, the materials budget needs to be at 16%.
3. Fulfilling the municipal appropriation requirement, which defaults at 2.5% greater than the average municipal contributions in the last 3 years.

Mr. Gerath noted that a level service budget would not require a waiver, however, with the proposed 10.5% reduction a waiver would be required and the library would be obligated to present in front of a board of commissioners in Boston, which is said to be a challenging process.

Mr. Haddad raised the question of how the Library intends on restoring the \$108,000 reduction over the next five years. Mr. Gerath said that the Board is inexperienced with sustained crutches and that there would need to be further discussions.

Mr. Green noted that the third criteria is specifically for the Library, and it does not matter what the level of spending is; it only matters that the number is increased by 2.5%.

Mr. Robertson inquired about the percentage of unaccredited libraries within the State. Mr. Gerath said that there are only a small number of unaccredited libraries and was uncertain of the exact number.

Mr. Sulprizio pointed out that if a waiver is obtained and there is a reduction in spending, it should beneficially impact the three-year average.

Ms. Pine emphasized that without the override, the summer reading program would be eliminated, the Library would close on Sundays, and there would be a reduction in operating hours.

Mr. Gerath highlighted that the Library has 18,000 attendees and displayed a graph showing the average visits per hour and discussed peak hours. He clarified that there potentially may be a summer program, however, supplemental staff would not be available to run those programs. Ms. Pine questioned if the endowment could cover the costs for Sunday hours. Mr. Gerath explained that the endowment cannot be utilized for salaries and wages.

Mr. Haddad asked if a waiver is necessary when it would be required to approach the Board in Boston. Ms. Abrahams said next January.

Mr. Green sought clarification on the \$28,000 included in this year's budget which was not included in last year's. Mr. Haddad explained that the State Aid Funding could be utilized to fund Sunday hours, however, continued reliance on that funding is unsustainable. To maintain a level-service funding, the

library would need to restore Sunday hours and the summer reading program from their operating budget. Mr. Green commented that all efforts should be made to avoid increasing the spending numbers.

Public Q & A

Tom Pistorino, Hoyts Wharf Road sought clarification on the budget and the need for additional funding. Mr. Haddad explained that there are two reasons for the increase: the summer reading program and Sunday hours which were initially funded by state funding and are now incorporated into the operating budget. Additionally, there is a 2 % cost of living adjustment for employees under their contracts. Mr. Pistorino recommended offsetting the Sunday hours and summer reading with alternative funding. Mr. Gerath agreed that is an option however, further discussion is needed among the Board members.

Linda Bicknell from Hoyts Wharf Road, inquired about the availability of grants to cover the budget shortfall. Mr. Gerath explained that the majority of granting agencies would not provide funding for routine staffing expenses.

Mr. Robertson stated that every department presenting today is ultimately facing a reduction if the Proposition 2.5 Override is not passed.

Mr. Haddad stated that the municipal level service budget being proposed only increased by \$341,000 or 2.23%.

Ms. Manugian commented that, in general, the municipal and school budgets for this year are at a level service, however, are not level funded. The combined sum of those amounts for funding in FY25 exceeds 10%.

Police Department

Police Chief Michael Luth, Deputy Chief Rachael Bielecki, and Joan Tallant were present for the discussion. Chief Luth presented a budget that remains level service, with noteworthy adjustments confined primarily to wages and salaries due to contractual increments. The Town's graduated system incorporates two educational incentives, contributing to the observed changes.

Mr. Robertson pointed out a 6.86% overall budget increase, predominantly steered by escalating salaries and contractual adjustments.

Mr. Green sought clarification on the 4.98% increase in wages. Ms. Tallant explained that the 4.98% encompasses contractual impacts on regular wages and earned time. Mr. Haddad further explained that the Police Department has a three-step system, noting that there has been a significant progression of younger officers. Ms. Tallant noted that there is also an incorporation of a \$27,000 incentive step in the wage line.

Chief Luth said that there were minimal increases to the expenses, attributing factors such as fuel prices, cruiser maintenance, and uniform allowances within contractual limits.

Mr. Robertson highlighted a significant change in the budget, involving the \$49,000 annually received for communication costs. Chief Luth explained that the \$49,000 shift is a result from the dispatch center being transferred to the Patriot Regional Communication Center however; the change ultimately is saving the Police Department \$300,000 which is not represented in this budget. Mr. Haddad confirmed that the

funding is being reassigned, and the communication costs are being budgeted as zero. The \$50,000 grant is being utilized to cover the assessment costs over the next three years.

Mr. Manugian inquired about fuel management. Mr. Haddad said that each department utilizes a key card system, and the Director of the Public Works oversees the purchasing of fuel, issuing monthly bills to the respective departments.

Mr. Manugian sought clarification on mandated staffing. Chief Luth explained that the control contract mandates two full-time officers on duty at all times. Given Groton's expansive geography, he elaborated on scheduling practices of typically three officers on duty during the days and evenings and two officers on the late-night shifts. The strategic scheduling not only accommodates an additional patrol but also contributes to cost savings by reducing overtime, and improves response times.

Chief Luth listed recurring costs as maintenance to the radio system, the reverse 911 service, and a phone recording system.

Mr. Haddad informed the Committee that an administrative support position has been added to the budget. With the dispatch center becoming a regional communication center, there is a crucial need for personnel to aid the general public visiting the police station. Responding to this need, the Select Board requested the presence of a staff member during peak hours, specifically Monday through Friday from 10:00AM-7:00PM. An allocation of \$59,000 has been designated in the budget for this purpose. Chief Luth emphasized the critical importance of filling this position, citing the substantial influx of over 150 individuals into the lobby and receiving 1,500 non-emergency calls from September to November.

Chief Luth said there was one significant item in the capital budget, the acquisition of a pickup truck. This vehicle is instrumental in gaining access to areas where traditional cruisers cannot navigate, particularly for off-roading purposes and the efficiency of picking up items such as barricades. Notably, the Capital Finance Committee has expressed its support for this investment. The funding for this endeavor is earmarked from the Capitalization Standardization Fund.

Mr. Haddad detailed a recommended \$233,217 reduction to the Police Department's budget, which, with the inclusion of a new position, translates to an actual reduction of \$178,000 or 7%. Chief Luth explained that achieving this reduction would necessitate eliminating two full-time personnel; specifically the last two positions hired being the School Resource Officer positions. He said as of right now the department is down a sergeant and one resource officer. Chief Luth projected a $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{3}$ increase to the overtime budget if one less police officer is employed, underscoring the potential impact on patrol services and the need to maintain level service staffing.

Ms. Manugian inquired if the private schools assist in expending the Student Resource Officer positions. Mr. Haddad said that Groton School contributes \$20,000 annually and the Town of Dunstable contributes an additional \$15,000, emphasizing the potential loss of funding if these positions are eliminated.

Ms. Pine summarized that if an override fails then the two positions that the Police Department is currently down are left unfilled, and the proposed position of staffing the lobby would be eliminated.

Public Q&A

Tom Pistorino inquired about the feasibility of recruiting retired military personnel to replace the need for a School Resource Officer. Chief Luth explained the legal constraints imposed by the State Law, citing specific training requirements and additional liabilities associated with such a proposition.

Fire Department Budget

Mr. Robertson stated that the Fire Departments overall budget has increased 3.99%.

During the discussion, Fire Chief Steele McCurdy and Deputy Chief Arthur Cheeks were both in attendance. Chief McCurdy emphasized that the primary spike in the level service budget stems from contractual obligations that are required for meeting current staffing needs. He highlighted a 2% increase specifically allocated to the on-call department. The current composition of the fire department personnel includes 8 career firefighters/EMTs, the chief, the deputy chief, and 25 on-call personnel. Chief McCurdy outlined the tiered response system, wherein the initial full-time staff is supplemented by on-call personnel.

Chief McCurdy said that the ratio of calls for ambulance services versus fire emergencies stands at 60%, indicating a significant disproportion of EMS calls. Further analysis revealed that a small percentage of the population over 65 constitutes as the primary users of the EMS services. Mr. Robertson noted that the ratio is 3:1.

The initial budget proposal included an additional firefighter. Chief McCurdy stated that there has been a decreasing trend in the number of on-call department personnel, even though the overall calls have increased by 3% and inspections by 17%. He highlighted the growing demands on the Fire Department and stressed with upcoming developments, these parameters are expected to accelerate, necessitating proactive measures.

Mr. Robertson stated as of today, the services provided have not experienced any detrimental effects.

Chief McCurdy said the challenges posed by an increasing number of ambulance calls, leads to a higher proportion of emergency responders being engaged. Notably, 10% of these calls occur simultaneously, causing a strain on available resources. Mr. Robertson pointed out that when the ambulance is occupied, additional assistance is sought from neighboring towns. Deputy Chief Cheeks highlighted that the turnaround time for transportation could extend to 45 minutes. Questions arose regarding the adequacy of equipped personnel in different response tiers, prompting consideration of the necessity for mutual aid.

Mr. Cunningham sought information on the statistics related to mutual aid and raised concerns about the potential closure of Steward Health. Chief McCurdy assured that the statistics can be quantified. He emphasized that the potential closure of Steward Health would significantly impact response times and the ability to answer emergency calls promptly.

Ms. Manugian inquired about the substantial volume of inspection calls compared to emergency calls. Chief McCurdy responded that there were a total of 617 inspections conducted last year, contributing to

the 17% increase. He emphasized the distinction between call volume, inspections, and emergency response calls.

Mr. Manugian inquired about mandatory staffing levels, to which Chief McCurdy explained the existence of various standards at both State and Federal levels. Chief McCurdy said that there is a State requirement of maintaining two certified EMTs 24 hours a day, with an additional requirement of four personnel during incidents involving hazardous situations.

Mr. Haddad then brought attention to the proposed budget reduction, indicating a 7% decrease amounting to \$116,558.

Chief McCurdy said that the proposed reduction would impact various avenues, including expenses, overtime pay, and salaries. He highlighted that one of the most significant impacts would involve using the on-call department less and the ability to recruit new employees. While the reduction could be sustained for a brief period, there would be a subsequent need for increased funds overtime.

Mr. Robertson inquired about the impact on overtime, Chief McCurdy explained that shifts would not be fully covered, necessitating more mutual aid and resulting in a reduction in ambulance revenue. Additionally, he emphasized that he would be required to fill in, diverting his attention from other duties. Chief McCurdy further elaborated on the cuts to the on-call side, highlighting potential restrictions on EMTs, which could lead to a loss of training opportunities and decreased utilization. This, in turn, would impact the community by prolonging wait times and increasing the reliance on mutual aid from neighboring towns. The inability to replace on-call firefighters throughout the year would further lower the operational capacity and services provided to the Town.

Mr. Haddad brought attention to the significance of ambulance revenue, noting its substantial contribution to the operating budget, approximately \$350,000 a year. This revenue assists in offsetting the Fire Department's budget and aids in purchasing ambulances every three years. Chief McCurdy noted that the current ambulance receipts have generated roughly \$38,000 per month.

Mr. Reilly pointed out that per diem personnel currently contribute to staffing the full-time department but would not be utilized with the proposed cuts. Chief McCurdy acknowledged that some on-call personnel would be affected, resulting in reduced staffing levels. He noted that in 2023, 75 shifts went unfilled, and reducing the call department's training and experience would lead to a decline in their capabilities, limiting alternative ways to provide basic services.

In response to Mr. Green's inquiry about whether on-call staffing equals one full-time employee, Chief McCurdy indicated that it would be roughly 1.5. Mr. Green commented on the level of risk the Town is willing to take, highlighting the substantial efforts invested in achieving and maintaining a level service. He questioned Chief McCurdy about his sentiments regarding the current staffing level. Chief McCurdy expressed the anticipation of growth and the need for increased staffing in the future, suggesting that there should ideally be 3 or 4 people on duty at all times. Deputy Chief Cheeks emphasized the importance of considering the level of experience, clarifying that per diem and on call department numbers may be the same, however, the experience level would not be equivalent to that of a full-time employee.

Ms. Manugian raised concerns about relying on mutual aid, questioning whether other communities are dealing with similar issues which might limit their ability to assist. Chief McCurdy responded that neighboring communities are also experiencing challenges and may resort to overrides, significantly impacting their availability.

Mr. Reilly highlighted the potential impact of the proposed cuts on on-call training. Chief McCurdy concurred, noting that training programs are funded from the expense budget which is potentially being reduced.

Ms. Pine inquired if there are any minimum standards that must be met within the mutual aid contract formed by the collaborating communities. Chief McCurdy explained that there is not a minimal standard, as it is legally required for a fire department to provide assistance if they have the resources, the key consideration is their availability. Ms. Pine stressed the importance of knowing the status of other communities, expressing concerns that while reducing hours might address the shortfall, it could impact services.

Mr. Robertson voiced his concern about the aging population in the Town and the potential increase in calls, necessitating more mutual aid. He highlighted the risk of a drop in service levels.

Chief McCurdy commented that the surrounding towns are also seeing an increase in emergency calls. He also raised the issue of gear replacement, if gear is destroyed and there is no available funding for replacement, 2 or 3 personnel could be taken out of service due to not being adequately equipped. Ms. Pine questioned whether the gear acquired by the Town is PFAS-free. Chief McCurdy said no, and the issue of how to properly remove it is being addressed. If it is successfully achieved it potentially would mean that the department would be mandated to replace all equipment.

Mr. Manugian suggested that, given the stability of the Fire Department and its heavy reliance on staffing, a 5% increase is reasonable. Mr. Haddad agreed.

Mr. Pistorino expressed concerns about the impact of increased taxes on seniors in Town, especially considering their fixed income.

DPW Budget

Tom Delaney, Director of Public Works, engaged in the discussion where the proposed budget saw a 1.17% increase. Staffing levels remain satisfactory with the department operating with 13 total personnel, enabling the progress of crucial projects. The Chapter 90 allocation boosts road paving efforts; however, there is a potential 20% spike in asphalt costs. Mr. Haddad sought clarification on the \$600,000 allocation and its impact on road mileage. Mr. Delaney said it costs approximately \$70,000 per mile, translating to 8 miles annually. The impending cost increase could result in a half-mile reduction each year and there are alternative budgetary supplements.

The Millionaires Tax contributes \$300,000; however, its longevity is uncertain. Mr. Delaney acknowledged the difficulty in securing snow subcontractors, coupled with rising salt prices. He noted that the capital equipment is well maintained and ensures operational efficiency.

Mr. Delaney discussed the Transfer Station and explained that the tipping fees reflect the Town's cost for material disposal, with construction and demolition materials incurring higher expenses than household trash. Mr. Delaney said the existing contract concludes in July, with a minimal increase anticipated. State-provided RDP funds help facilitate purchases, such as containers. In the past year, the Transfer Station has generated \$239,000 in revenue, covering nearly 77% of the budget.

Mr. Green sought a breakdown of the revenue from recyclables versus associated costs. Mr. Delaney explained his practice of offsetting material costs with revenue from higher valued recyclables. He said he would provide the exact figures at a later date. Ms. Dufresene confirmed that the DPW generated \$341,123 in revenue last year, with the current figure standing at \$200,000.

Mr. Delaney emphasized cost savings through in-house project execution, citing a 30% reduction in Chapter 90 funding expenditure by self-performing tasks such as renting a crack-sealing machine. The department's proactive approach further optimizing its resources.

Mr. Green inquired about reducing the amount of material going into the construction and debris pile. Mr. Delaney noted that separating materials that do not belong would be time-consuming and suggested that a revolving fund could offset and reduce the budget. He estimated that there would be a \$70,000 reduction in tipping fees if those materials were eliminated.

Ms. Manugian asked if mattresses can be discarded at the Transfer Station. Mr. Delaney said that the Transfer Station accepts mattresses with residents paying the removal fee. Ms. Manugian then inquired about the incentives on wages and salaries. Mr. Haddad explained that there is a performance incentive only for the Director and built-in increases for other unionized employees. Mr. Delaney acknowledged that there are upcoming retirements which will change the dynamics.

The municipal buildings were discussed, highlighting minimal maintenance needs. Mr. Delaney reported that he had applied for a grant under the Green Community Act to replace the boilers at Town Hall and had been successful receiving a similar grant to update the lighting at the Fire Station. There have been challenges in filling a vacant custodial position.

Mr. Cunningham questioned if there would be any savings to the police facility with the dispatchers transferring to a regional center. Mr. Delaney said that there should be savings in electricity. He noted that the DCR intends on utilizing the Lost Lake Fire Station as a satellite and would be covering \$12,000-\$15,000 in expenses.

Mr. Haddad proposed a \$130,000 reduction or 12% to the budget along with a \$95,000 decrease to the municipal buildings. Mr. Delaney said with the upcoming retirements there would be a savings of \$96,000 if the positions are left unfilled. However, that number would increase to \$145,000 the following year. Mr. Delaney warned of reduced service levels if the department is forced to eliminate positions and would become reactive instead of proactive. Projects would be delayed, summer part time positions would not be filled leaving mowing to be managed by full time employees. Snow storm costs would increase as well as the duration to clear the roadways.

Mr. Robertson said with the potential reduction in a level service the sidewalk plowing and maintenance of side roads may experience delays due to fewer plow truck drivers. Mr. Delaney added that there would also be unnoticed projects that would be deferred such as culvert pipe replacements and cutting brush along the roadsides. In the summer, vacation limitations and unforeseen absences may strain personnel

availability, affecting infrastructure maintenance and response capabilities. The anticipated result would have a cascading effect throughout the entire department.

Ms. Pine questioned if the stormwater program would be impacted and if closing the Transfer Station would save the Town money. Mr. Haddad clarified that the storm water program has its own funding and would remain unaffected. The Transfer station generates a revenue of \$350,000 and if the Town were to lose that money it would greatly impact the operating budget and residents would also need to contract out for trash disposal. Ms. Pine summarized if the override fails the highway department loses two highway department personnel and one maintenance personnel.

Mr. Green questioned if there would be an impact on the schools if the positions are eliminated. Mr. Delaney said that the openings may be delayed if he is short personnel to treat the roadways. It costs roughly \$4,000 in salt every time the buses run their routes. As seen with North Middlesex Regional District they tend to have more delayed openings due to the Town of Ashby not being sufficient in clearing their roads.

GDRSD Budget Assessment

Lauren Chesson, Superintendent of Schools, and Sherry Kersey, Director of Finance & Operations, were present for the discussion. Ms. Chesson discussed the significance of a level service budget, emphasizing the commitment to maintaining the current standard of services. While proposing new positions, it was clarified that these additions are essential for sustaining the existing services rather than introducing new ones.

Ms. Kersey outlined the key drivers behind the \$3,693,788 assessment increase, encompassing aspects such as the E & D fund, full-day kindergarten salaries, 4.4 FTE positions, wages and salaries, health insurance, and utilities.

Mr. Cunningham sought clarification on the distinction between a social worker and an interventionist. Ms. Chesson clarified that a school social worker primarily engages in one-on-one counseling, whereas an interventionist works directly within the classroom to mitigate any adverse impacts on students. Ms. Chesson acknowledged the challenges of students impacted by Covid and transitioning back to full classrooms, noting that it might take 2-3 years for adjustment.

Mr. Manugian inquired about the current staffing levels, to which Ms. Chesson said that there is a deficit in second-grade teachers, with data suggesting that there should be one additional teacher. There are a total of 377.1 FTE's employed.

Mr. Haddad sought clarification on the availability of interventionists and its impact on students. Ms. Chesson acknowledged that in the absence of interventionists, students would need to leave the district for alternative educational opportunities and this cost more than having an interventionist staffed.

Mr. Green raised concerns about the \$100,000 for full-day kindergarten salaries. Ms. Chesson clarified that there are no extra positions being introduced; rather, the funds are being drawn from the revolving account and being sustained by kindergarten fees.

Ms. Chesson emphasized the need for additional maintenance staff to uphold the current level of support once the new elementary school is complete. Managing a total of 654 students and increased interactions with parents necessitates the creation of two full-time administration positions.

In discussing the kindergarten model, Ms. Chesson noted that not all kindergarteners are full day and choose not to pay the tuition fees. There is a sliding scale funding system set in place for residents facing financial constraints. Ms. Pine commented on the importance of recognizing that the cost of full-time kindergarten is borne by families. She expressed the need to shift the financial responsibility for education from individual families to all taxpayers.

Ms. Kersey provided insight into the ongoing negotiations within the School District concerning salaries and benefits. The intricate process encompasses considerations such as cost-of-living adjustments, steps (differentials reflecting years of experience), and lanes (differentials based on the level of education attained). It was emphasized that, given these factors, certain teachers may be in line for a notable 3-4% salary increase. This poses a challenge for the School District to adhere to the 2.5% increase target. Ms. Chesson highlighted a noteworthy shift occurring statewide in the historical increments for paraprofessionals and teaching staff. Recognizing the significance of staying competitive in the market, she stressed the importance of aligning compensation with prevailing rates to attract and retain qualified professionals.

Mr. Manugian inquired about the funding status of the proposed positions, questioning whether their financial support expires or remains a continuous commitment from the budget and taxpayers. Ms. Chesson clarified that those specific FTE positions would indeed be sustained through taxpayers funding.

Mr. Green sought clarification on the overall average wage and salary increase, factoring in considerations such as the cost of living, steps, and wages. In response, Ms. Kersey stated that the comprehensive average increase stands at 6.5%.

Mr. Robertson highlighted the primary contributors to the assessment increase, pointing to wages & salaries and health insurance, which collectively account for 73% or approximately \$2.6 million. Seeking further details, he inquired about the specific allocation for steps and lanes within the total of \$1,930,037. Ms. Kersey responded, indicating that \$1.2 million is earmarked for steps and lanes, emphasizing that this allocation is mandated. Ms. Chesson provided additional context on the industry standard for teacher compensation. She explained that teachers' pay is determined by their tenure within the district, educational level (typically a master's degree which is state mandated), and adjustments for the cost of living.

Mr. Cunningham raised a question regarding the extension of the water main to the school. Mr. Haddad responded, stating that the budget for PFAS needs to be retained in the FY25 budget until next June when the pipe extension will be completed. Ms. Chesson added that there has been an increase in the PFAS plume, and various factors are expected to contribute to rising numbers. Mr. Haddad noted that the School Committee is veering away from utilizing E&D funds to reserve it for unseen emergencies.

Mr. Green raised a concern about the potential challenges arising from staffing growth in steps and lanes. Ms. Kersey responded by acknowledging that while there may be costs associated with staff progressing in their steps and lanes, there will also be savings as individuals retire and new employees are hired. Ms. Chesson added a crucial perspective, noting that six months ago when the budget was initially proposed, specific retirements were unknown.

Ms. Kersey said the budget shows a 10% increase in health insurance and that is only a placeholder until the exact percentage is determined at the end of February.

Mr. Robertson made a comment, highlighting that the ongoing negotiations, particularly concerning the health insurance and staffing-related costs, pose challenges. He pointed out that to significantly reduce those numbers, major items would need to be addressed; however, such changes would take time and not be implemented immediately.

Mr. Whitefield inquired about the potential savings if the School District were to contribute a different percentage towards benefits, specifically citing scenarios like 75-25 or 50-50. Ms. Kersey responded, indicating that adopting a 75-25 split would result in a savings of \$300,000. Currently, the School District covers 85% of benefits for employees. Ms. Chesson reminded the Committee that the amount paid towards insurance is contractual, and any reduction would necessitate significant incentives, potentially surpassing the initial savings estimate. Mr. Green confirmed that transitioning to a different model had benefited the Town after an initial adjustment period. Brian Leblanc commented on the unlikelihood of removing steps and lanes, emphasizing the challenging nature of such a change.

Ms. Kersey explained that the utilities expenses encompass various fees, including drinking water delivery fees, monitoring PFAS levels, installing POET infiltration systems to homes that exceed safe PFAS levels, and contract fees. Mr. Haddad said he raised the question of whether some of the appropriated money could be used to expense a portion of the \$119,000. However, the Town Council clarified that the warrant article does not permit the allocation of funds in that manner.

Mr. Kersey provided an overview, stating that the School District's projected budget aligns with the estimated increases used in the development of the 5-year projection plan. Notably, heat and utilities stayed within the projected range of 2% to 10%. There was a 4.8% increase projected in transportation, however, a reimbursement was received in FY23 that offset the assessment to the towns, resulting in a savings of \$75,000. The projected 8.5% increase in the Middlesex retirement expenses was also reduced to 6.6%, leading to a saving of \$26,000.

Ms. Kersey presented the proposed operating budget, indicating an increase of \$3,448,019 or 7.29% without debt, and provided a historical perspective on the increases. In response to an inquiry from Ms. Pine, Ms. Chesson explained that ESSER refers to COVID-related funds directly provided by the federal government. Ms. Chesson specified that CARES money, totaling \$650,000, had been a part of this assistance however, any pandemic-related funds are no longer available.

Ms. Chesson conveyed that the state passed the Student Opportunity Act, intended to provide additional funding for school districts; however, Groton Dunstable only received \$50,000, while other districts were granted much larger amounts, reaching up to \$6 million.

Ms. Kersey clarified the concept of the 5-year rolling average and how it functions to moderate fluctuations. She emphasized the importance of distinguishing between the assessment increase and the budget increase. While the budget has increased by 7.29%, assessments have risen in double digits.

Mr. Manugian raised a question about whether the percentage of anticipated funding for Groton would decrease over time. Ms. Kersey explained the concept of the "hold harmless" chapter 70, where the district currently receives the bare minimum, approximately \$30 per student. She noted that next year, an increase of 0.6% is expected, amounting to \$97,500. This minimal increase is influenced by declining enrollment. If the allotment were based solely on enrollment, the increase would be even less. Ms. Chesson added that the perceived community wealth would also play a role in shifting the local contribution.

Mr. Green inquired about the impact of the minimum local contribution on the School District's budgeting in recent years. Ms. Kersey said that there was a significant shift towards Dunstable.

Ms. Chesson explained that the decrease in the assessment is a result from the adjustments made on the cherry sheets. She further shared that the Town Managers submitted a budget proposal contingent on an override, which would allocate \$28,741,942 for Groton and \$8,650,942 for Dunstable. This budget is designed to address not just a one-year issue but rather reflects a three-year commitment. The School District is dedicated to staying within the outlined projections

Ms. Chesson highlighted the potential repercussions if an override is unsuccessful. The proposed positions would go unfilled, and there would be a cut of 31-33 staff positions. The entire staff would feel the impact, leading to increased class sizes, reduced course offerings, and diminished support services. Teachers, as per contractual obligations, are entitled to prep time, and eliminating art, music, and technology teachers would result in not receiving their designated time. This loss would impact valuable planning time for education. Looking ahead to FY25, an additional 10 positions may need to be eliminated, followed by another 10 the subsequent year. The reduction in positions could particularly impact younger staff members. Furthermore, there is a concern that the loss of 10% of employees may lead individuals to explore opportunities elsewhere.

Mr. Haddad noted that failing to fulfill contractual obligations, such as providing prep time, could lead to grievances and violations of contracts.

Ms. Manugian discussed factors from the past; mentioning that correcting for unemployment would not be covered and that potentially 40 teachers would need to be eliminated.

Mr. Manugian inquired about the current number of unfilled positions within the School District, to which it was mentioned that only one paraprofessional position is currently vacant.

Ms. Pine raised a concern about the financial implications when laying off employees, stating that the Town would be required to contribute to the unemployment benefits that those individuals are entitled to collect. She stated that the School District is not a revenue-producing entity.

Mr. Whitefield questioned why the number of FTEs for paraprofessionals has increased even though the enrollment has remained stable. Ms. Kersey explained that there is a larger influx for paraprofessionals in early childhood due to an increasing number of children being identified. Additionally, the teachers' union has seen a significant uptick, with the decision to hire service providers for certain occupations rather than

contracting out. Ms. Chesson added that there are more students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) requiring 1-1 or 2-1 support at the Boutwell School. This is due to the law mandating the provision of these services. The community members pay for regular education services for children ages 3-5 however, special education services at Boutwell are provided at no cost for anyone that qualifies.

Mr. Haddad highlighted the cost-effectiveness of having staff on board, even with salaries and benefits factored in, as opposed to contracting out. Paraprofessionals, earning \$15 per hour, often work with the most challenging students. There is an ongoing effort to negotiate for a market rate, looking to the state for guidance. Ms. Chesson added that there is no control over contracts and prices can always increase.

Ms. Pine noted a decrease in school administration positions from 18 to 15. She pointed out that the data in the comparative market baskets suggests that Groton-Dunstable is not top-heavy, contrary to the perception.

Mr. Haddad said that he would post the Q & A on the Town website.

FY25 Budget Deliberation Town Manager

Mr. Haddad pointed out that once the preliminary numbers from the cherry sheets were released, it would prompt a recalibration of the school's assessment. While the school district's overall budget remained unchanged, there was a notable shift in the allocation between Groton and Dunstable. Initially, the Town of Groton's anticipated assessment was \$29,392,165 prior to receiving the cherry sheets, which has now decreased by \$650,000. This adjustment for FY25 lowers the \$2,383,222 anticipated deficit, bringing it down to \$1.7 million. Additionally, it results in a decrease of the anticipated tax rate by \$.24 or \$167 on the average tax bill for FY25. Also, minimizing the amount of money required to be reduced from the municipal budget, reducing it from \$953k to \$684k, which is a substantial decrease. The three-year projection for the school district's funding remains consistent at \$5.5 million.

Mr. Green and Ms. Manugian inquired about the shortfalls and how they are formulated. Mr. Haddad explained by subtracting the general fund surplus from the \$5.5 million override would result in \$1.7 million levy capacity for FY25, \$1.3 million levy capacity for FY26, and \$1.5 million levy capacity in FY27. Mr. Haddad stated those numbers do not reflect the \$650,000 decrease or the annual 2.5% increase. The Committee discussed that the \$5.5 million override potentially would carry over into additional fiscal years.

Ms. Manugian requested that the average tax impact be calculated.

Mr. Green raised concerns about the projections for the next two fiscal years and inquired about strategies to reduce the \$1.3 million and \$1.5 million shortfalls. In response, Mr. Haddad explained that during discussions with the Department of Revenue, there was a consensus that the Finance Committee would diligently work to adhere to these figures. If unforeseen circumstances arise, efforts would be made to offset any additional expenses by reducing other expenditures. The Town is committed to this approach. Ms. Pine highlighted that over the past 15 years, the number of FTE positions in the Town Hall has been reduced by 6.5%, emphasizing the ongoing efforts to manage expenses and demonstrating fiscal responsibility to taxpayers. Mr. Haddad acknowledged this fact and noted that despite the reduction in FTEs, the administration has assumed additional responsibilities while workloads have increased.

Mr. Cunningham expressed his view that discussions about a future override in the five-year projection should be avoided, suggesting that this current override may extend beyond the initially proposed three years. In response, Mr. Haddad clarified that he routinely conducts a five-year projection. Historically, the Town has been able to adjust the budget to prevent the need for any overrides. However, given the current growth trends, such adjustments may not be feasible.

Mr. Manugian expressed his preference for addressing budgetary challenges through policy discussions rather than facing financial uncertainties each year. He suggested engaging colleagues in a dialogue about drafting policies regarding how to manage increases, ensuring equitable distribution between towns, and considering long-term benefits for employees to keep residents informed.

Building upon Ms. Pine's comment about the reduction in Town Hall staff over time, Mr. Robertson emphasized the importance of public awareness regarding these significant reductions. He noted that further cuts could impact customer service and proposed scheduling a meeting to discuss the pros and cons of an override.

Mr. Haddad inquired about the deadline for ordering ballots. Ms. Dunbar responded that they need to be ordered by March. The Select Board had already voted to call for the override election on April 2, 2024 and if the Finance Committee has any changes to the budget it needs to be completed by February 18th.

Ms. Pine suggested exploring the possibility of a legal agreement that would assure taxpayers that if a multi-year override is approved, there would be a maximum spending limit. Mr. Haddad responded by indicating that within the three-year period, the intention is not to seek additional revenue beyond what has been outlined. He clarified that the entire amount would not be collected in the first year; only \$1.7 million.

Ms. Pine requested clarification for the residents to be aware of the process that is necessary for the override. Mr. Haddad explained for the override to be successful, both Groton and Dunstable would need to approve the assessments provided by the School District at Town Meeting and then vote for it via a ballot question. If Groton passes the override and accepts the assessment and the Town of Dunstable does not the School Committee has two options: they can either lower the assessment to accommodate Dunstable's budget constraints, or they can convene a district-wide meeting and vote for the original assessment, in which case the Town would be obligated to pay.

Ms. Linskey highlighted that if the School District requests for a "Super Town Meeting," the municipal budget would absorb the entire amount being requested. However, if the Town of Groton rejects the override, the outcome becomes uncertain.

Mr. Green emphasized that the budget issue is not just about expenses or revenue; it's primarily a matter of managing growth. While the Town has maintained a sustainable average growth rate of 2.5%, achieving similar rates in the School District presents greater challenges. Mr. Haddad pointed out that due to contractual obligations such as steps and lanes, eliminating them would be incredibly difficult. Mr. Robertson agreed, acknowledging that the percentages are too high and once they are lowered for one year it would make a difference, however, wages and benefits continue to grow.

The Committee expressed concerns about how to ensure that the growth rate remains below revenue levels. Mr. Haddad assured that all efforts are underway to address this issue.

The next Finance Committee is scheduled for February 6, 2024.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:45pm.

Respectfully submitted by Kristine Fox, Per Diem Minute Taker

KFA #2

REQUEST FOR TRANSFER FROM THE RESERVE FUND
(To be submitted in triplicate)

Finance Committee
Town of Groton

Date: 12/21/23

Ladies & Gentlemen:

A 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:\$2000.00
2. To be transferred to:Building Dept
3. Present balance in said appropriation: \$3.34
4. The amount requested will be used for (give specific purpose):Balance of year for Building Dept Expenses
5. This expenditure is extraordinary and /or unforeseen for the following reasons:
\$1600 increase in Opengov software license yearly fee

Robert Garstide

Officer or Department Head

Action of Finance Committee

Date of Meeting 1-27-24

Number Present and Voting 7

Transfer voted in the sum of \$ 2,000.00

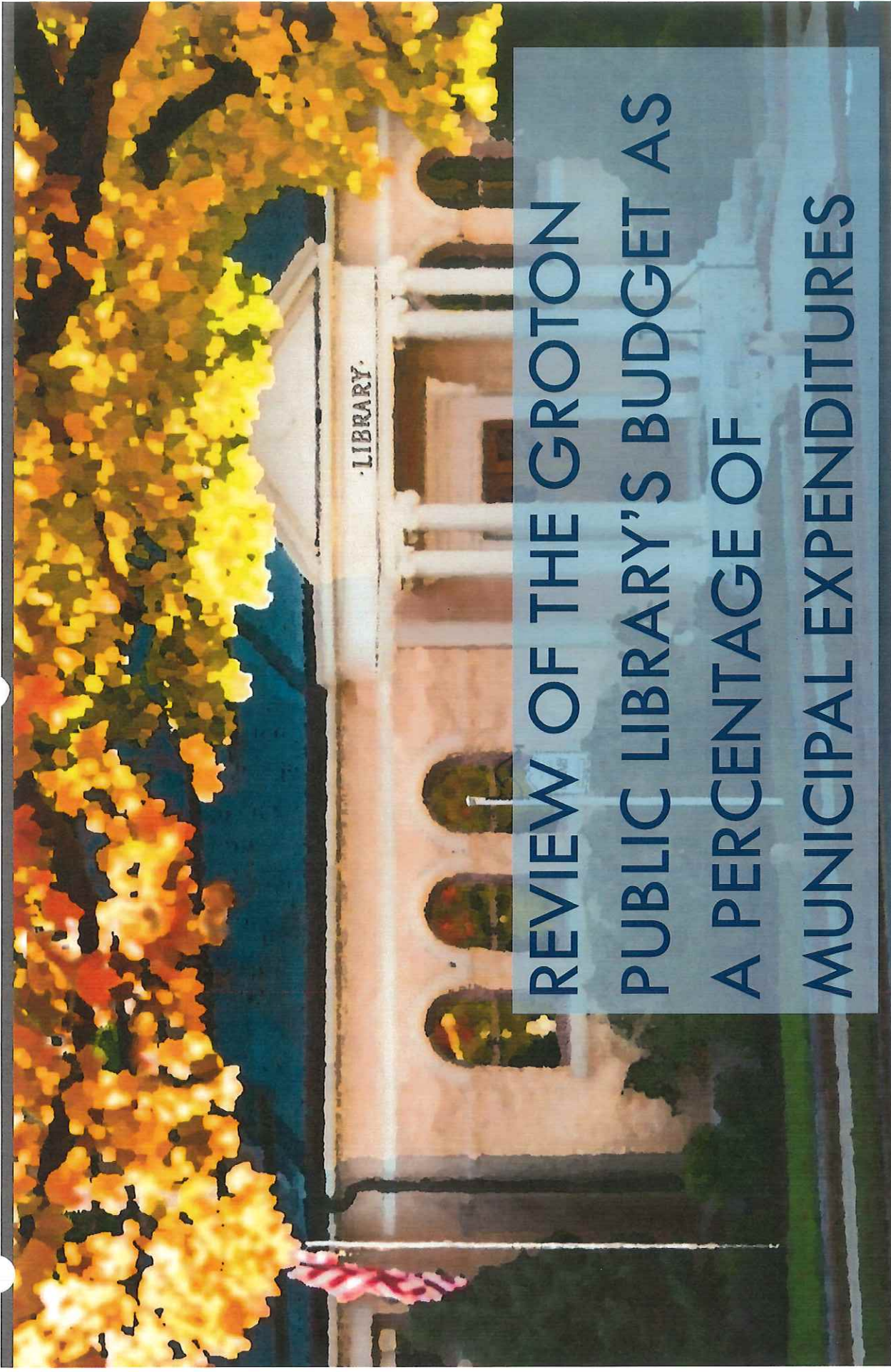
Bud Foh

Finance Committee Chair

Transfer NOT approved _____

Finance Committee Chair

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

The background image shows a two-story library building with a white portico and columns. The word "LIBRARY" is inscribed on the front of the building. Large trees with bright yellow and orange autumn leaves are in the foreground. A semi-transparent blue box with white text is centered over the image.

REVIEW OF THE GROTON PUBLIC LIBRARY'S BUDGET AS A PERCENTAGE OF MUNICIPAL EXPENDITURES

Presented to the Board of Selectmen and the Finance Committee
January 2024

Report of the Town Manager's Tri-Comm Working Group

Data from FY2022

<u>Town</u>	<u>Culture and Recreation Expenditures</u>		<u>Percentage</u>
Groton	\$	1,611,513	3.77%
Norfolk	\$	784,825	1.73%
Georgetown	\$	523,211	1.56%
Swampscott	\$	798,229	1.24%
Hanover	\$	563,172	0.85%
Hamilton	\$	255,817	0.76%

This number becomes 2.65% after removing the Country Club.
GPL is the biggest part of the 2.65%

*Please note that Groton is the only community with a Municipal Golf Course as part of the Operating Budget. When you remove Country Club Expenditures from Culture and Recreation, Groton's percentage of expenditures in this category drops from 3.77% to 2.65%.

This High-Level Comparison is Too Simple

- The Budgets Being Compared are Different in Three Important Ways:
 - In the comparison towns, key costs are not reflected in their budgets – Utilities, facility upkeep, custodians, admin. asst.
 - Three floors at the GPL require an additional staff member for basic safety and security
 - Hamilton and Wenham share a library and Wenham's costs were not reflected in Tri-Comm data
- Public Use is Highest in Groton and Hamilton/Wenham
Consistent with Higher Rates of Financial Support

Recall the 2017 Audit of Town

Departments

- Focused on Operations of Each Department Rather than a Simple Survey of Percentage Expenditure
- Study Concluded that the GPL was Efficiently Run
- The Trustees Provided a Summary and Additional Analyses to the Finance Committee and the Select Board – [Attached](#)
 - ▣ GPL is a high service library consistent with citizen requests
 - ▣ Corrected materials spending conforms to other towns
 - ▣ Circulation is high
 - ▣ FTEs and staff hours/hours open are consistent with other libraries
 - ▣ Increased hours were without proportional effect on staff hours

2017: Increased Hours have Not Driven Increased Salaries and Wages

Change in Groton Public Library Staff and Service Hours									
FY 2012 to FY 2018									
Fiscal Year	Staff Hours/Week		Hours Open Per Week		Staff Hours/Hours Open				
	Annual Average	Change Hours %	Annual Average	Change Hours %	Annual Average	Change Hours %			
2012	472.6	- -	42.1	- -	11.2	- -			
2018	490.6	18.0 3.8%	50.8	8.7 20.6%	9.7	-1.6 -13.9%			

Total Staffing, Hours Open, and Staff Hour/Hour
Open are Essentially the Same in FY23 and FY24 as
FY18 with Some Hours Defrayed by State Aid in
FY24

Additional Data Analysis

- FY22 Data Available from the Mass Board of Library Commissioners
 - ▣ Details on costs and level of service
- These Data were Analyzed and are Presented Below

GPL and Hamilton/Wenham are Better Funded than Other Libraries

Location	Municipal Population	Total Appropriated Municipal Income-- Operating	Library Appropriation as Percent of Municipal Budget	Appropriated Municipal Income per capita	Total Operating Income per hour open	Full Time Equivalency
Georgetown - Georgetown Peabody Library	8,470	\$407,520	1.22%	48.11	290.26	5.83
Groton - Groton Public Library	11,315	\$952,286	2.11%	84.16	496.62	13.63
Hamilton - Hamilton-Wenham Public Library	12,540	\$995,341	1.77%	79.37	413.72	12.86
Hanover - John Curtis Free Library	14,833	\$600,612	0.85%	40.49	514.62	8.00
Norfolk - Norfolk Public Library	11,662	\$667,892	1.38%	57.27	327.53	8.46
Swampscott - Swampscott Public Library	15,111	\$781,922	1.14%	51.75	328.60	10.29

Note that Hamilton and Wenham share a library with Hamilton addressing the costs of the physical plant and Wenham addressing other costs such as salaries and wages. For this table this costs, populations, etc. are combined.

Each column is formatted to reflect the town's ranking with green

highest and red lowest.

GPL's ranking is high and the budget reflects items not in other library budgets. The percent contribution will be adjusted below.

Costs in Library Budget by Town

Location	Library Appropriation as Percent of Municipal Budget	Utilities and Upkeep in Library Budget?	Custodians in Library Budget?	Cost Admin in Library Budget?	Minimum Operating Staff
Georgetown - Georgetown Peabody Library	1.22%	Y	N	N	3
Groton - Groton Public Library	2.11%	Y	Y	Y	4
Hamilton - Hamilton-Wenham Public Library	1.77%	Y	N	N	3
Hanover - John Curtis Free Library	0.85%	N	N	N	3
Norfolk - Norfolk Public Library	1.38%	N	N	N	2
Swampscott - Swampscott Public Library	1.14%	N	N	?	3

Note that Hamilton and Wenham share a library with Hamilton addressing the costs of the physical plant and Wenham addressing other costs such as salaries and wages. For this table this costs, populations, etc. are combined.

Red reflects that higher costs are borne by the library.

GPL's budget reflects items not in other library budgets.

Rough Adjustment of GPL's Costs

- The Costs Approximations Below Quantify the Difference Between GPL's Budget and Other Comparison Libraries
- Accounting for this Lowers GPL's Percentage of the Municipal Budget

Category	Cost
Utilities and Facility Maintenance	\$74,200
Custodians & Finance/Admin. Asst.	\$87,400
One Additional Staff for Third Floor	\$78,977
Total	\$240,587

Combining Hamilton and Wenham; Adjusting Groton

Municipality	Library Exp % of Tot GF Exp	Library Exp/Capita	Total GF Exp/Capita
Hamilton	0.00%	\$ -	\$ 4,453
Hanover	0.85%	\$ 38	\$ 4,465
Swampscott	1.14%	\$ 48	\$ 4,252
Georgetown	1.22%	\$ 48	\$ 3,958
Norfolk	1.38%	\$ 54	\$ 3,891
Groton	2.11%	\$ 80	\$ 3,783
Wenham	4.65%	\$ 193	\$ 4,157
Hamilton + Wenham	1.77%	\$ 77	\$ 4,336
Case 1: Utilities and Custodial/Financial			
Groton	1.73%	\$ 65	\$ 3,783
Case 2: Utilities and Custodial/Financial Plus One Incremental Staff			
Groton	1.54%	\$ 58	\$ 3,783

GPL budget includes costs that most other town libraries' budgets don't. Approximate adjustment of GPL's budget to reflect those practices, brings GPL's percentage more in line to those communities.

General Fund Expenditures per capita are lower than other comparison towns.
If Groton spent at the average of the other towns, the GPL percentage would be 1.9% rather than 2.11%.

GPL's Level of Service is Higher than Most Comparison Communities

Location	Municipal Population	Library Appropriation as Percent of Municipal Budget	Total Circ per capita	Hours/wk	Visits/yr Per Capita	Total Programs	Total Program Attendance Per Capita	Main Library - Meeting Room Usage
Georgetown - Georgetown Peabody Library	8,470	1.22%	11.59	28.4	1.52	132	0.10	133
Groton - Groton Public Library	11,315	1.54%	16.27	45.4	5.83	608	0.50	688
Hamilton - Hamilton-Wenham Public Library	12,540	1.77%	21.86	47.8	4.45	199	0.52	435
Hanover - John Curtis Free Library	14,833	0.85%	9.73	23.5	0.67	64	0.03	117
Norfolk - Norfolk Public Library	11,662	1.38%	12.10	41.3	6.01	326	0.24	230
Swampscott - Swampscott Public Library	15,111	1.14%	10.44	48.4	2.73	299	0.18	162

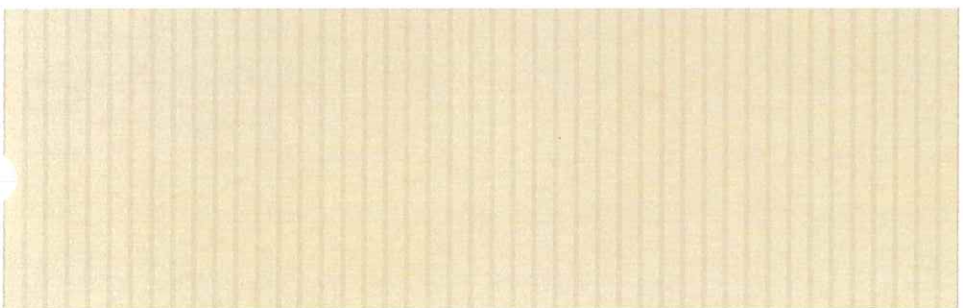
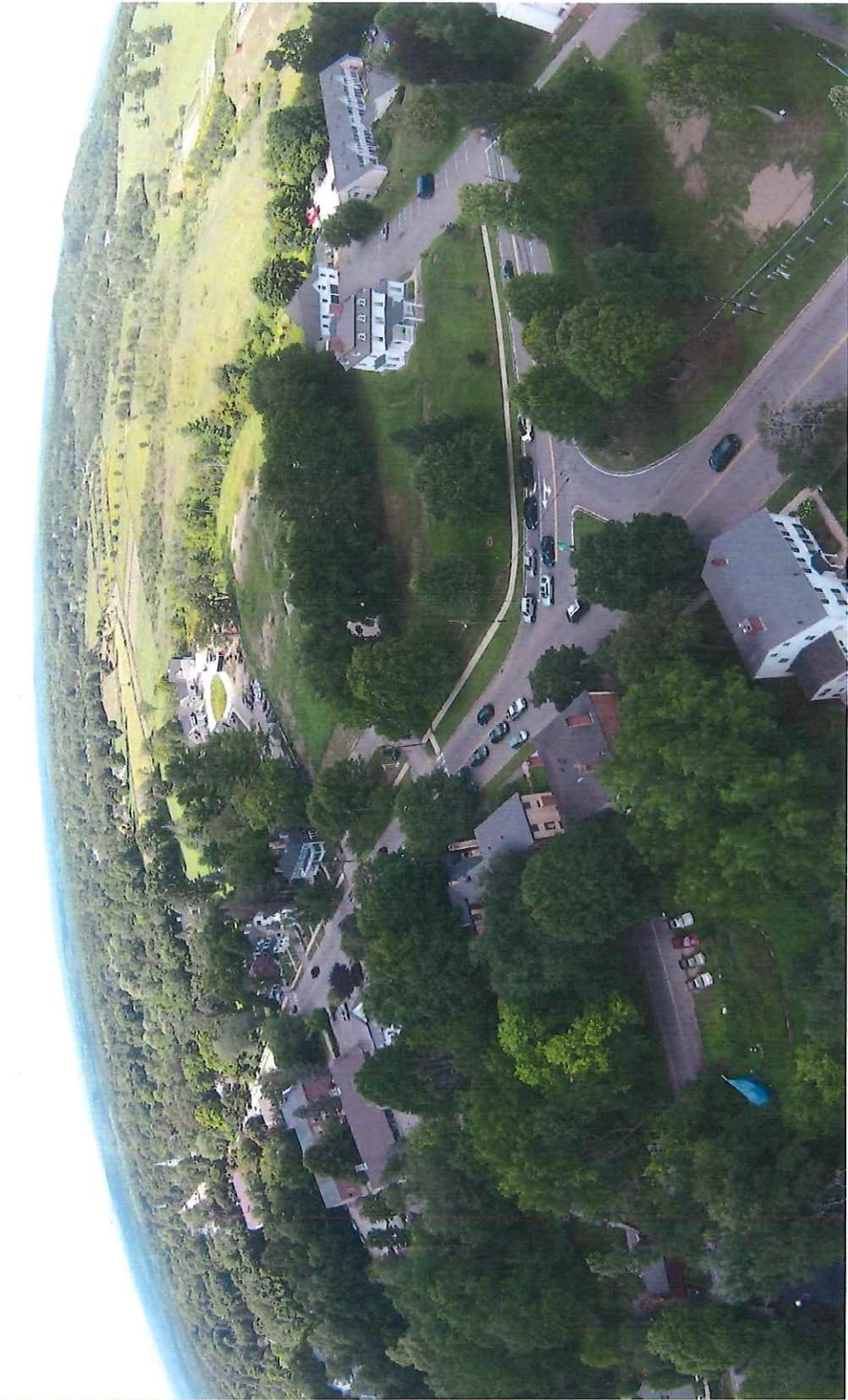
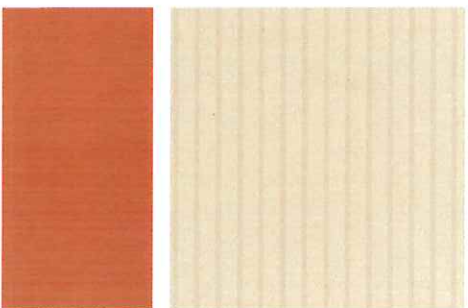
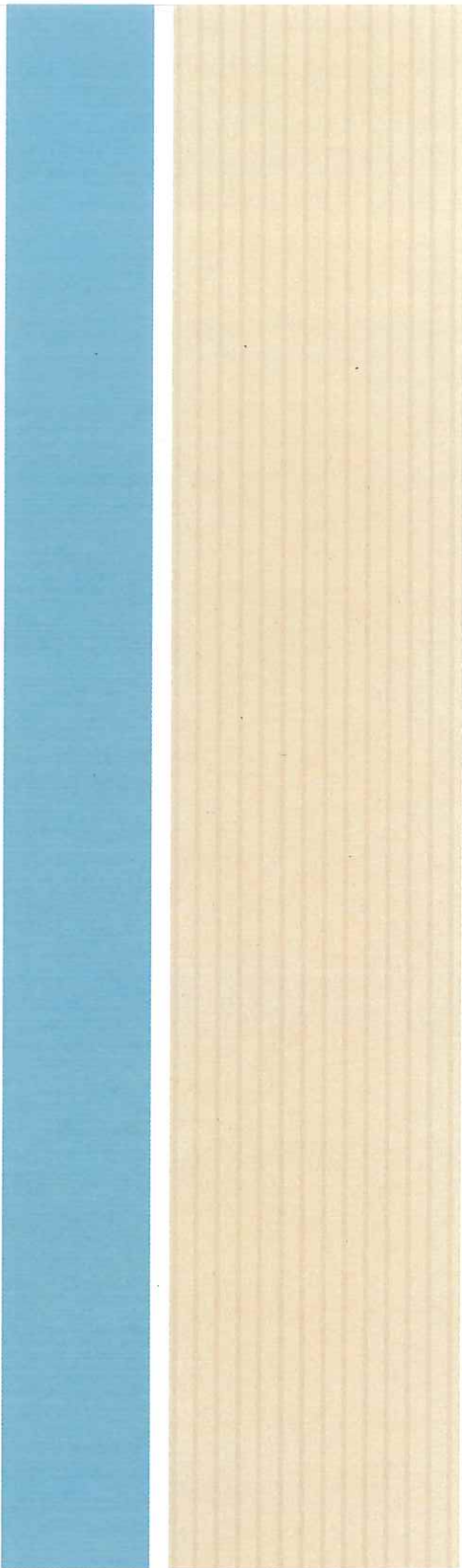
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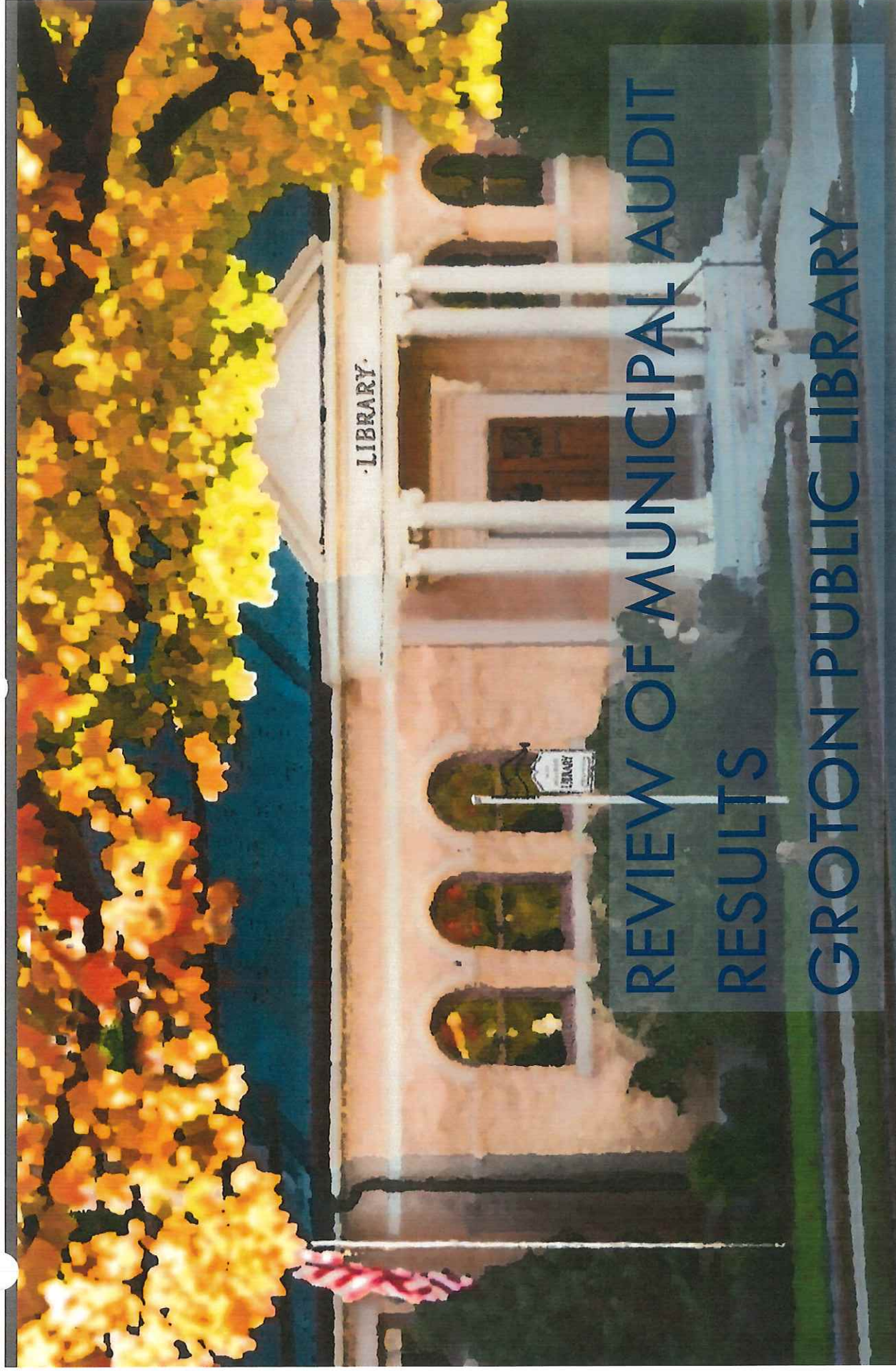
Level of public use and service correlates with level of funding.

Conclusions



- The Trustees Believe that the 2017 Independent Audit was a Sound Assessment of the GPL's Functioning. It Concluded that the GPL was Well Run. Those Findings Remain Relevant
- The Percentage of the Municipal Budget is a Screening Assessment and Details Need to Be Considered to Correctly Evaluate the Situation
- GPL's Budget is More In-Line with Comparison Communities than the Tri-Comm Report Found
- GPL's Budget Reflects that of a Highly Used Library





Presented to the Board of Selectmen and the Finance Committee
January 17, 2018

Audit Recommendations and Potential Improvements

- “The Town and Library Board should work together and establish a target for material support as well as the appropriate sources of funding for the level established.”
- Potential Improvements:
 - ▣ Patron list should be reviewed periodically
 - ▣ Are poorly circulated materials weeded out?
 - ▣ How viable are alternative sources of funds for the long term?
 - ▣ What is the demand for Sunday hours?

Data on GPL and Other Communities

- Data on Library Operations Available from the State were Downloaded and Presented
- For each Parameter (Row), the Cell is Coded from Lowest (Red) to Highest (Green) on the Row
- These Data Can Be Used to Evaluate

Recommendations and Potential Improvements

Town	Groton	Leicester	Hull Less Suitable Comparisons	Holbrook Comparisons	Carver	Littleton Suitable Comparisons	Norwell Comparisons	Norfolk	Lynnfield	Northborough Added Comparisons	Wayland	Duxbury
Population	10646	10970	10106	10791	11509	8924	10506	11227	11812	14529	13166	15126
Med. Household Income	\$117,127	\$71,062	\$75,551	\$62,897	\$72,161	\$105,455	\$123,944	\$134,104	\$110,980	\$108,415	\$121,036	\$118,272
Per Cap. Coll Exp.	\$6.14	\$2.93	\$4.76	\$4.50	\$5.23	\$9.22	\$10.15	\$8.39	\$10.06	\$7.96	\$13.14	\$10.51
Per Cap. Coll Exp. (Corrected)	\$11.78	\$2.93	\$4.76	\$4.50	\$5.23	\$9.22	\$10.15	\$8.39	\$10.06	\$7.96	\$13.14	\$10.51
Total Holdings	88215	213912	42992	194138	76690	236620	218359	88043	101914	155769	136567	243665
Total FTEs	13.6	3.46	4.54	6.07	7.11	9.36	7.94	8.13	12.7	13.09	13.71	19.6
Total Weekly Staff Hours	476	121	225	159	249	327.5	272.5	314.5	445	458	480	686
Average Hours Open/Wk	49.5	38.6	39.8	38.3	45.3	42.7	49.9	48.2	60.3	50.9	62.9	49.2
Av. # of Staff per Hrs Open	9.6	3.1	5.7	4.2	5.5	7.7	5.5	6.5	7.4	9	7.6	13.9
Total Circulation	232905	38491	45430	56267	72681	186972	138899	122679	135913	185907	264732	233481
Circulation/Capita	20.95	3.51	4.5	5.21	6.3	20.95	13.22	10.93	10.97	12.59	19.69	15.27
Total Programs	693	99	55	98	357	482	302	370	250	460	475	801
Total Participants	10843	1149	1096	1364	6079	7694	5133	6280	5971	5741	8044	10459
Participants/Program	15.6	11.6	19.9	13.9	17.0	16.0	17.0	17.0	23.9	12.5	16.9	13.1
Participants/Capita	1.02	0.10	0.11	0.13	0.53	0.86	0.49	0.56	0.51	0.40	0.61	0.69

Data on GPL and Other Communities

- “no attempt to make general comparisons of the towns, only to examine practices in communities in the state which are roughly the same size”
- The Trustees Do Not Believe that Some of the Comparisons are Suitable and Have Included Others

Town	Groton	Leicester	Hull	Holbrook	Carver	Littleton	Norwell	Norfolk	Lynnfield	Northborough	Wayland	Duxbury
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Participants/Program	15.6	11.6	19.9	13.9	17.0	16.0	17.0	17.0	23.9	12.5	16.9	13.1
Participants/Capita	1.02	0.10	0.11	0.13	0.53	0.86	0.49	0.56	0.51	0.40	0.61	0.69

Observation #1: Data are Consistent with Groton Citizens' Requests

Hours Open are Mid-range but Increased.
This value will be Higher in 2018.

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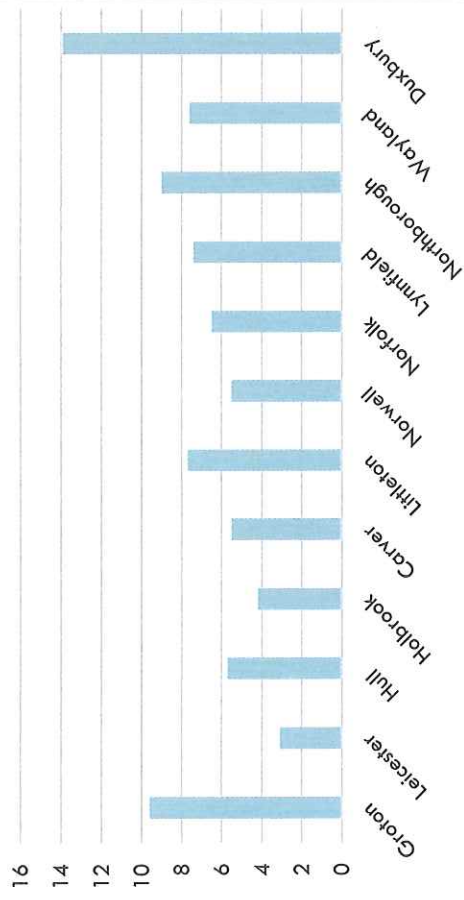
Program Number and Attendance are Both High

Attendance and Attendance per Capita are both Highest for Groton

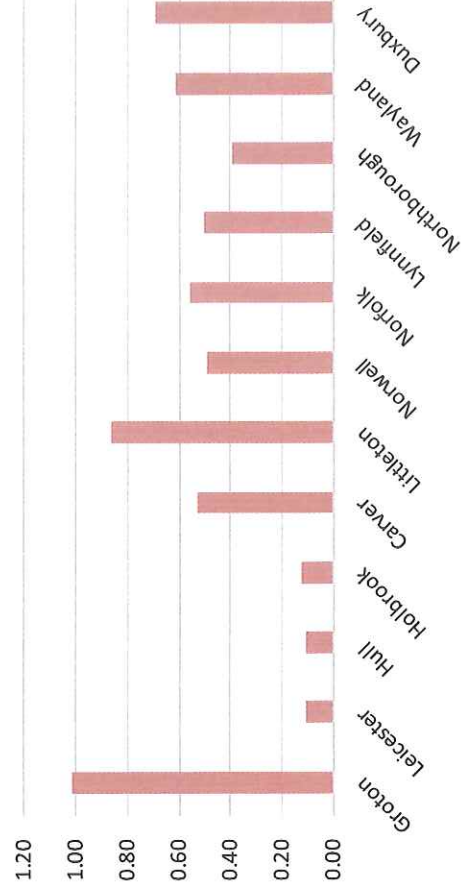
Circulation and Circulation/Capita are High

Observation #1

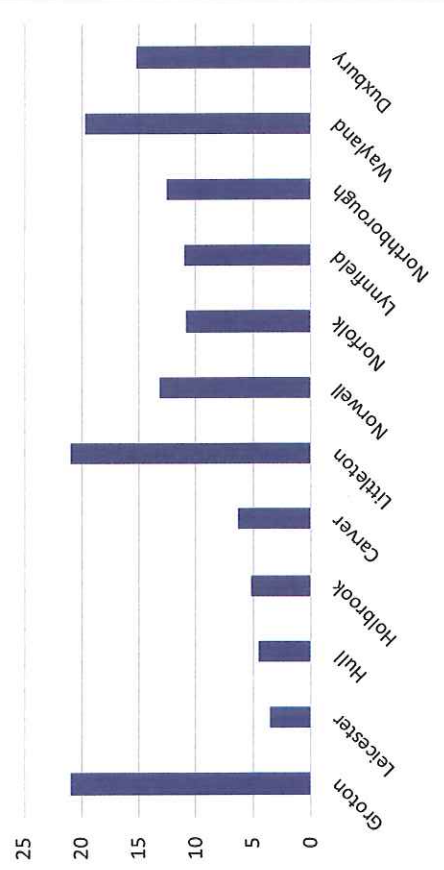
Av. # of Staff per hrs open



Program Participants/Capita



Circulation/Capita



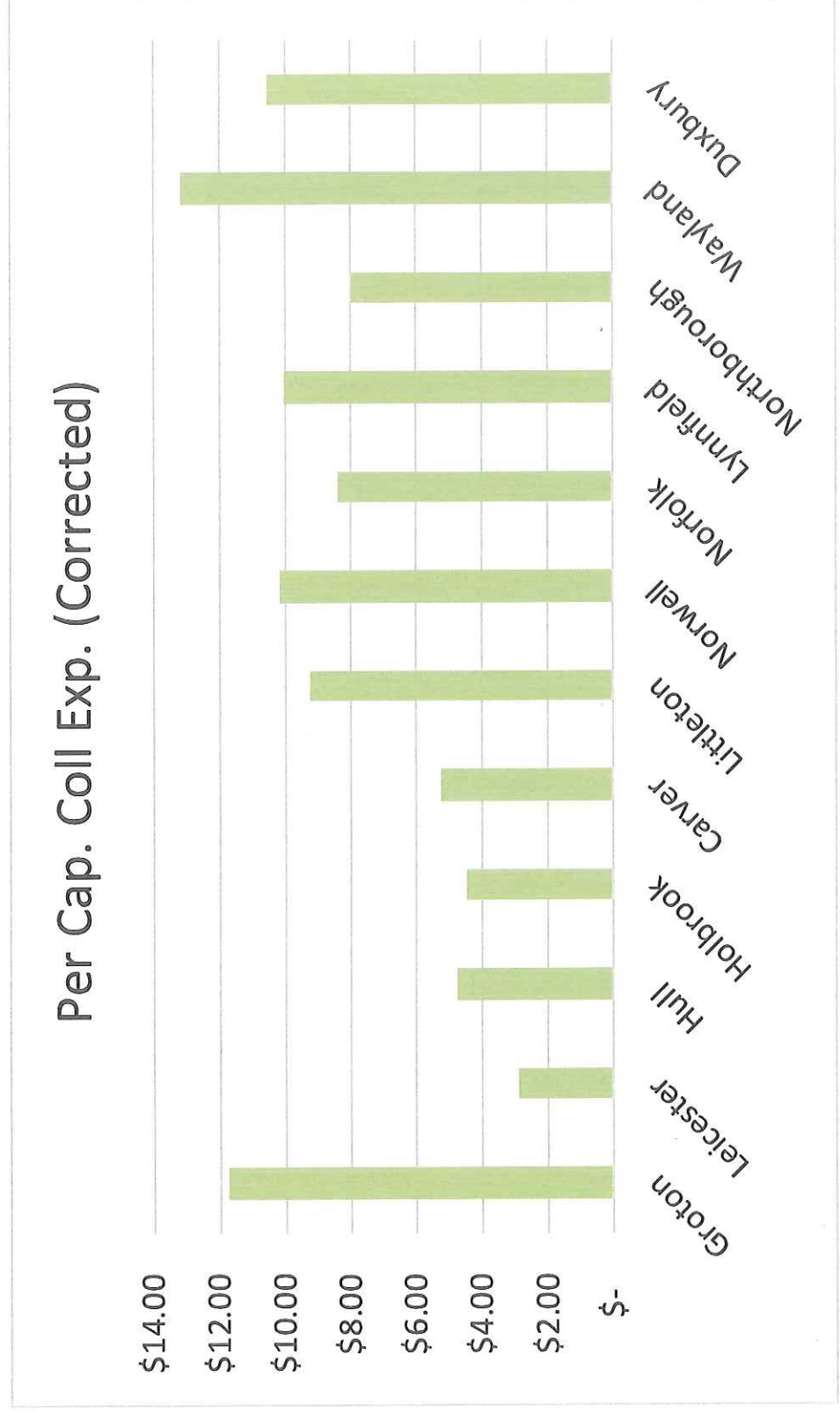
Observation #2: Corrected Materials Funding is at the Upper End

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Total Weekly Staff Hours	476	121	225	159	249	327.5	272.5	314.5	445	458	480	686
Average Hours Open/Wk	49.5	38.6	39.8	38.3	45.3	42.7	49.9	48.2	60.3	50.9	62.9	49.2
Av. # of Staff per Hrs Open	9.6	3.1	5.7	4.2	5.5	7.7	5.5	6.5	7.4	9	7.6	13.9
Total Circulation	232905	38491	45430	56267	72681	186972	138899	122679	135913	185907	264732	233481
Circulation/Capita	20.95	3.51	4.5	5.21	6.3	20.95	13.22	10.93	10.97	12.59	19.69	15.27
Total Programs	693	99	55	98	357	482	302	370	250	460	475	801
Total Participants	10843	1149	1096	1364	6079	7694	5133	6280	5971	5741	8044	10459
Participants/Program	15.6	11.6	19.9	13.9	17.0	16.0	17.0	17.0	23.9	12.5	16.9	13.1
Participants/Capita	1.02	0.10	0.11	0.13	0.53	0.86	0.49	0.56	0.51	0.40	0.61	0.69

Audit's Calculation of Materials Funding (\$6.14 per capita) Neglected Funding by the Trust Funds

Corrected Figure (\$11.78) Reflects Strong Funding

Observation #2



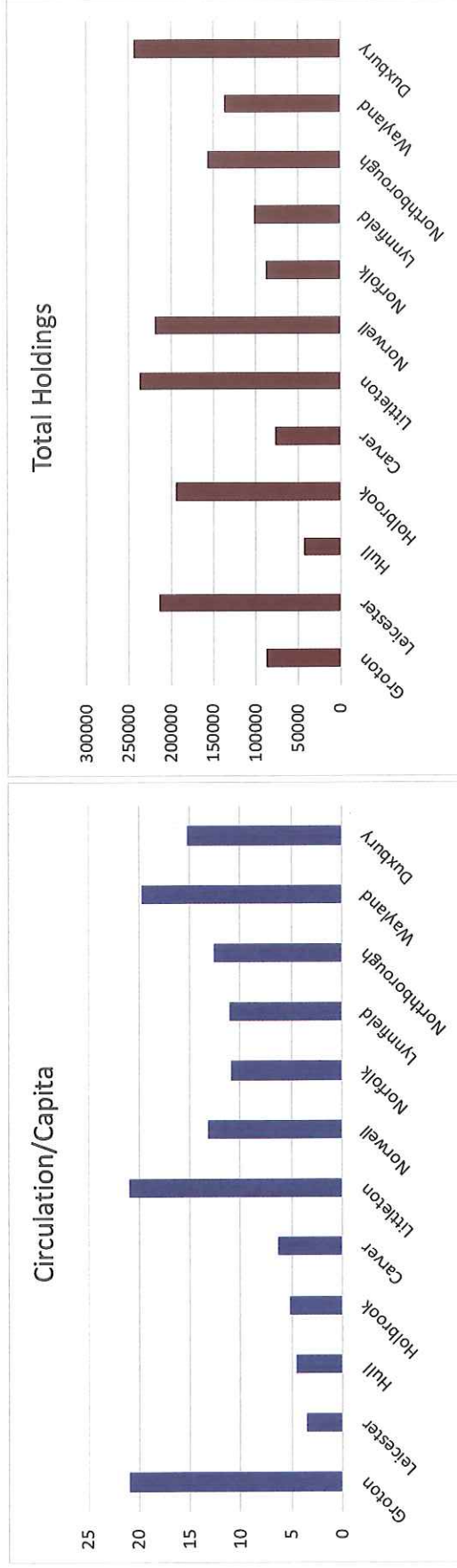
Observation #3: Collection Size is Moderate but Circulation is High

Town	Groton	Leicester	Hull	Holbrook	Carver	Littleton	Norwell	Norfolk	Lynnfield	Northborough	Wayland	Duxbury
Population	10646	10970	10106	10791	11509	8924	10506	11227	11812	14529	13166	15126
Med. Household Income	\$117,127	\$71,062	\$75,551	\$62,897	\$72,161	\$105,455	\$123,944	\$134,104	\$110,980	\$108,415	\$121,036	\$118,272
Per Cap. Coll Exp.	\$6.14	\$2.93	\$4.76	\$4.50	\$5.23	\$9.22	\$10.15	\$8.39	\$10.06	\$7.96	\$13.14	\$10.51
Per Cap. Coll Exp. (Corrected)	\$11.78	\$2.93	\$4.76	\$4.50	\$5.23	\$9.22	\$10.15	\$8.39	\$10.06	\$7.96	\$13.14	\$10.51
Total Holdings	88215	213912	42992	194138	76690	236620	218359	88043	101914	155769	136567	243665
Total FTEs	13.6	3.46	4.54	6.07	7.11	9.36	7.94	8.13	12.7	13.09	13.71	19.6
Total Weekly Staff Hours	476	121	225	159	249	327.5	272.5	314.5	445	458	480	686
Average Hours Open/Wk	49.5	38.6	39.8	38.3	45.3	42.7	49.9	48.2	60.3	50.9	62.9	49.2
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Total Participants	10843	1149	1096	1364	6079	7694	5133	6280	5971	5741	8044	10459
Participants/Program	15.6	11.6	19.9	13.9	17.0	16.0	17.0	17.0	23.9	12.5	16.9	13.1
Participants/Capita	1.02	0.10	0.11	0.13	0.53	0.86	0.49	0.56	0.51	0.40	0.61	0.69

The Collection is Reviewed and Weeded Consistently.

Alternative Media and Access to the Regional Network Allowing Leveraging of the Collection.

Observation #3



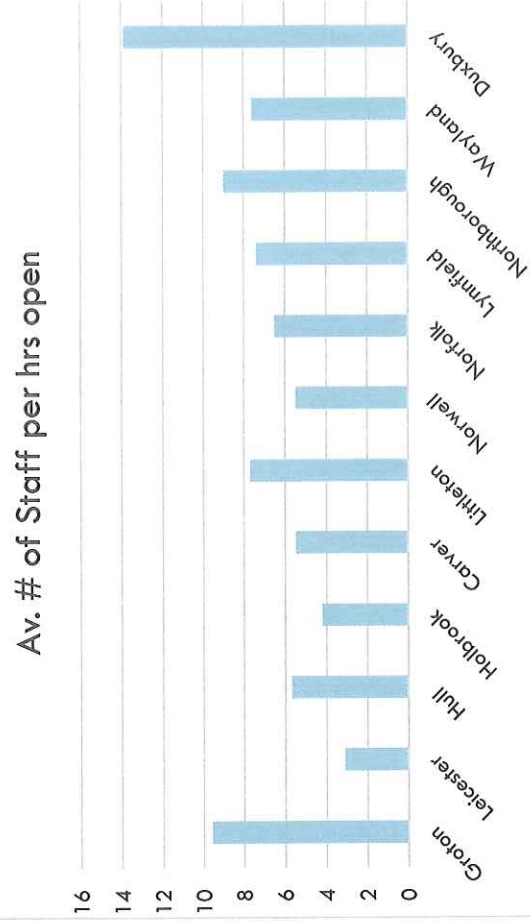
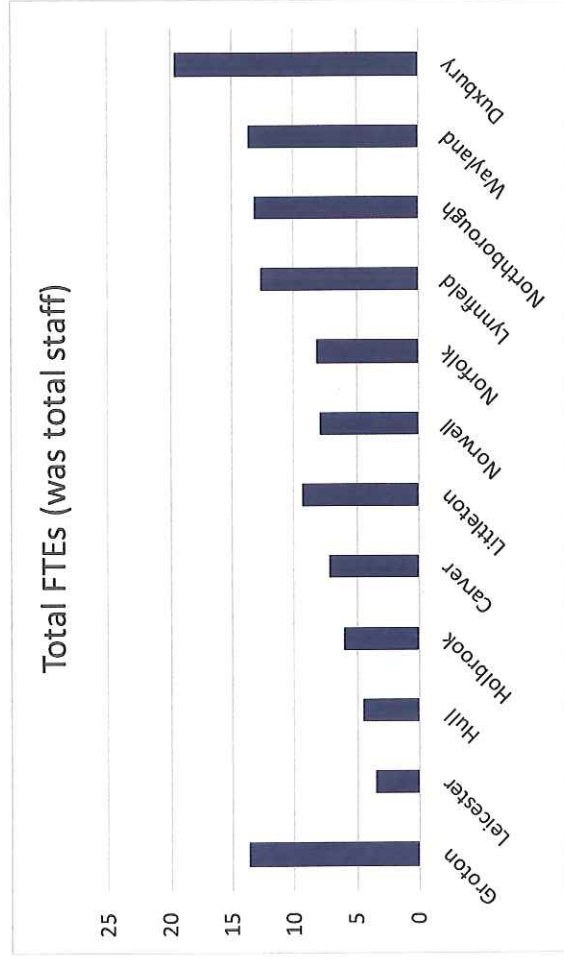
Observation #4: FTEs and Staff Hours/Hours Open are Within Range

Town	Groton	Leicester	Hull Less Suitable Comparisons	Holbrook Suitable Comparisons	Carver	Littleton Suitable Comparisons	Norwell Suitable Comparisons	Norfolk	Lynnfield Added Comparisons	Northborough Added Comparisons	Wayland	Duxbury
Population	10646	10970	10106	10791	11509	8924	10506	11227	11812	14529	13166	15126
Med. Household Income	\$117,127	\$71,062	\$75,551	\$62,897	\$72,161	\$105,455	\$123,944	\$134,104	\$110,980	\$108,415	\$121,036	\$118,272
Per Cap. Coll Exp.	\$6.14	\$2.93	\$4.76	\$4.50	\$5.23	\$9.22	\$10.15	\$8.39	\$10.06	\$7.96	\$13.14	\$10.51
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Participants/Capita	1.02	0.10	0.11	0.13	0.53	0.86	0.49	0.56	0.51	0.40	0.61	0.69

Relatively High Level of Staffing Reflect Level of Service (Circulation and Programs)

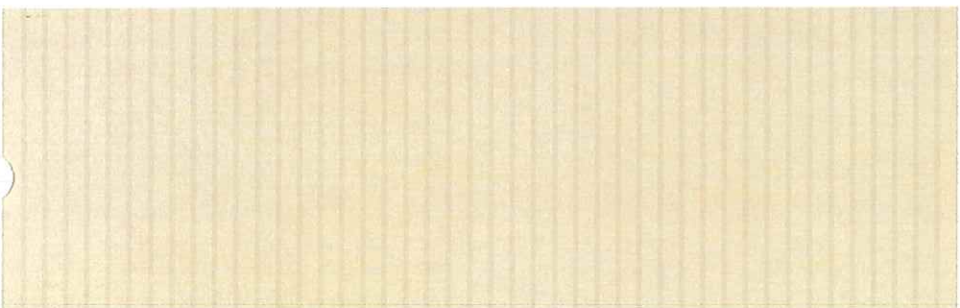
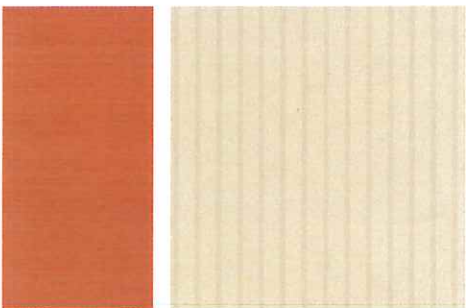
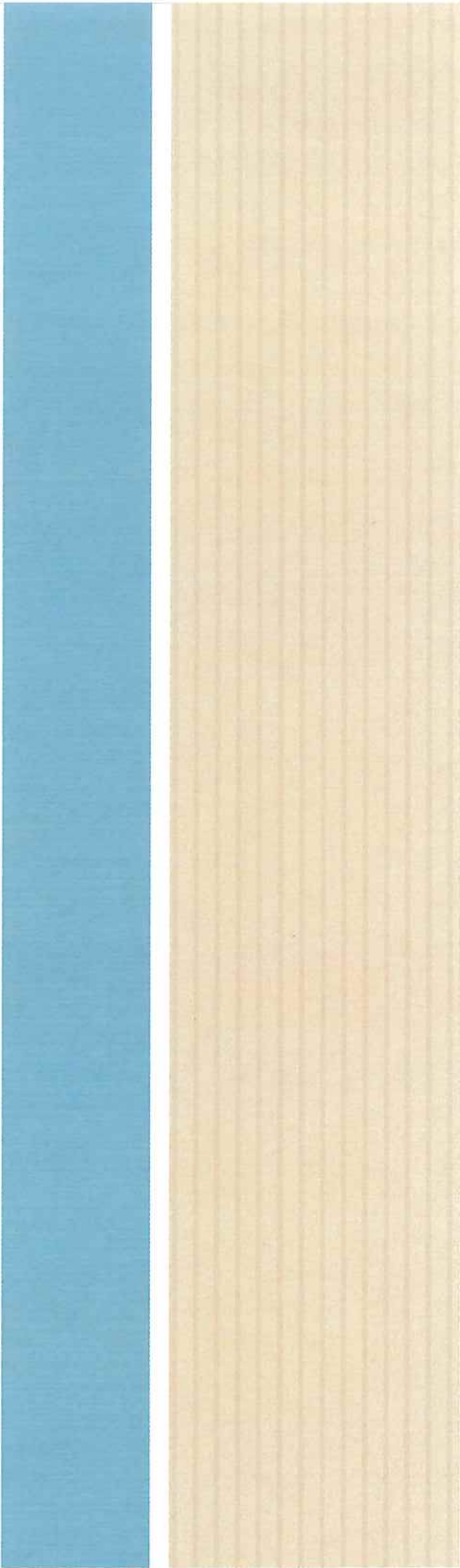
The Library is on Three Floors and Staffs Appropriately

Observation #4



Increased Hours have *not* Driven Increased Salaries and Wages

Change in Groton Public Library Staff and Service Hours									
FY 2012 to FY 2018									
Fiscal Year	Staff Hours/Week		Hours Open Per Week		Staff Hours/Hours Open				
	Annual Average	Change Hours %	Annual Average	Change Hours %	Annual Average	Change Hours %			
2012	472.6	- -	42.1	- -	11.2	- -			
2018	490.6	18.0 3.8%	50.8	8.7 20.6%	9.7	-1.6 -13.9%			



Answers to Library Budget Questions

January 23, 2024

- I. These two areas were the weakest in terms of helpful information - effectively letting us know that financial cuts will drive detrimental reductions, but not identifying what is good detail.

Response: The following is a summary of the cuts that would be necessary and their impacts on the services provided by the library:

1. **State Certification would be Threatened and Waiver from the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC) would be Necessary**
 - a. Regardless of amount, any cuts to the library budget below the Municipal Appropriation Requirement (MAR) will result in issues with State Certification.
 - b. If the proposed cuts happen, the Town and Library will have to participate in the waiver petition process with the state. This process will require us to demonstrate that cuts to the library are proportional to other town departments or the Library Director, a Trustee, Town Accountant, and Town Manager would need provide testimony to the MBLC in Boston.
 - c. A waiver must be granted or GPL will be decertified for the minimum of one full year, eliminating the ability of Groton citizens to use other libraries or borrow materials from any public library in the state.
 - d. Waivers are only granted if the Town presents a plan to restore the MAR within 5 years.
2. **Reduced Summer Reading Program** without additional help to support all the programming and demands. This impacts kids and teens directly, as those that don't read over the summer lose ground academically and start behind their peers in the fall.
3. **Zero Sunday Hours.** With this large of a cut, the library has to make hard decisions about when to close its doors from the present offerings. Sundays are often the only hours in the week when many people/families can come and enjoy the library. We see different patrons and families on Sundays than we do during the week. Every Sunday staff hear from patrons how happy they are that we are open – and usage is strong. We would lose the ability to offer family programs on Sundays.
4. **Cut Books/Materials - \$22,480.** All collections funding would be reduced; more expensive applications (Hoopla, Kanopy) and databases (Consumer Reports, Ancestry) could be eliminated.
5. **Cut Four (4) Part-Time (No-Benefits) Library Assistants: 41 staff hours/week, 8.8% cut in staffing = 4+ service hours cuts per week.**

Cutting 4 Service Hours: We would close 1 hour early on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday at 8 pm and close 1 hour early on Friday at 5 pm.

We were forced to do this during frozen COVID budget followed by wage cuts, and many patrons were upset at our closing at 8 pm. All adult programs had to start at 6 or 6:30 pm instead of 7 pm, which did not work for many people. Closing at 8 pm also drastically reduced the number of community groups able to meet here for free in the evening. It also reduced quiet study time for students. **With the reduction of Sunday hours, the average hours open year-round would be reduced from 50 per week to 43 per week, a reduction of 14%.**
6. **Reduced Programming.** We can only offer as many programs as staff can manage during hours open. Fewer staff members combined with fewer evening and weekend hours means fewer programs. We lose the ability to optimize the generous funding provided by the Lecture Fund

Answers to Library Budget Questions

January 23, 2024

and Endowment Trust for programs. The impacts to programs of the specific hourly cuts anticipated are discussed further below.

7. **Cut Staff Meetings/Trainings.** GPL is open as much as 52 hours a week and relies heavily on part-time staff to provide coverage and support. Staff meetings are essential for keeping everyone up-to-date. Part-time hourly workers receive no benefits and are some of the most cost-effective employees in Town, but some investment in ongoing training is required.
8. **Cut Grounds Maintenance.** We're still getting things back in shape after 1.5 years without grounds care due to COVID budget freezes; it takes a long time to catch back up after such extended neglect. Cutting this again would mean the Trustees would lose their investment (from state aid) in restoration.

II. **Library seems to bundle HVAC rooftop work on units 15-28 years old into a single event to avoid mobilization/crane costs. This may be an overreaction- what are the mobilization/crane costs? How do they justify the need for work on units of such disparate ages?**

Response: It was recommended by the HVAC company to replace all at the same time to consolidate the costs for mobilization and a crane (approximately \$1000 for the day), but you make an excellent point. It should be noted that we did have two months in winter 2013/2014 when we went without heat on the top floor of the library when both units 5 & 6 died at the same time and required emergency replacement and we had to wait for availability of the units. At the time, those units were 16 years old (manufactured in 1997.)

Your suggestion of splitting the work is a good one and we will move forward with that plan in the next round of capital planning. Thank you.

New plan going forward: Replace the current units at the end of life at 15 years:

1. **FY2028 estimate \$50,000 for Rooftop Units 5 & 6** (manufactured 2013), with replacement of all oldest HVAC equipment:
 - . **Rooftop Unit 3** (mfr. 1997, with updated parts)
 - . **Interior Split Air Handler** (mfr. 1997) for elevator machine room
 - . **Roof Split Condenser** (mfr. 1997) for communications room
 - . **Roof Exhaust Fan** (mfr. 2001)
2. **FY2030 estimate \$50,000 for replacement of Rooftop Units 1, 2, 4, & 7** (mfr. 2015)

III. **It seems like there may be some areas of the Library where carpet is not the best approach. Have other, easier to clean, alternatives been considered?**

Response: We have considered alternatives, but believe commercial carpeting is best because:

1. These are the principle areas where our **youngest visitors crawl around** on the floor
2. These are the **loudest areas** of the library and carpeting helps with acoustics by reducing echo and reverberation and absorbing some of the noise
3. We've been using a **carpet cleaner** to more quickly address stains in recent years

Answers to Library Budget Questions

January 23, 2024

4. We will use commercial **carpet squares**, not broadloom. If an area stain is unable to be cleaned, it is an easy matter to pop up that one square and glue down another.
5. Carpet squares are about the **same price** as broadloom now
6. **Aesthetics** – all the library is carpeted and the carpeting will all match once these 3 areas are replaced

IV. **I understand the MAR calculations the library shows, which seem to indicate that we're proposing \$29k more than is needed. I'm not at all clear on the 15-16% municipal appropriation/MAR analysis. No where does it seem to review what we're spending now on this.**

Response: There are three main components of the state certification:

1. Meet the **Municipal Appropriation Requirement (MAR)**, calculated from the average of the three previous fiscal year municipal appropriations increased by 2.5%.
2. Meet the Population-based **Minimum Hours Open Standard** – Groton's is 40 hours/week, 5 days/week, evening hours.
3. Meet the **Materials Expenditure Requirement**, calculated as a percentage of total municipal appropriation to the Library. Groton's requirement is 16% (unless we meet a higher service threshold, and then we can flex it down to 15%.)

\$28,500 was cut from the library budget for this fiscal year 2024 – all Sunday hours and temporary staff for the Summer Reading program. The Trustees stepped in and used state grant funding to keep those hours this FY24, but these personnel hours have been in the town budget for years, so the **\$29,000 for FY2025** is not an increase but is a **restoration to GPL's level services budget** for FY2025, as instructed by the Town Manager.

If we are open Sunday hours for 9 consecutive months, we meet a higher hours service threshold (as defined by the state) and are allowed to spend less on books and materials – dropping the books and materials requirement from 16% to 15% of the municipal library budget, or approx. \$10,000. This amount offsets the cost for 5 months of Sunday wages. (Jan-Apr Sundays have been in the town library budget since 2005.)

When our average weekly hours open fall below the state-defined threshold that allows reduction in the books and materials budget (i.e., 50 hours/week), we must increase the books and materials budget from 15% to 16% of the total municipal library budget. Therefore, books and materials must increase by approximately \$10,000 per year to maintain state accreditation. More on these calculations is provided below.

V. **It seems that the basic math could show that a 2.5% increase in materials (MAR) isn't viable with salary, wage and benefit increases as they are and with Prop 2.5 and new growth as they are.**

Response: It's a good question, but it has seldom been an issue. When the issue arose, it was because broad budgetary cuts were necessary because municipal and school budgets have been challenging - as anticipated in FY2025.

Answers to Library Budget Questions

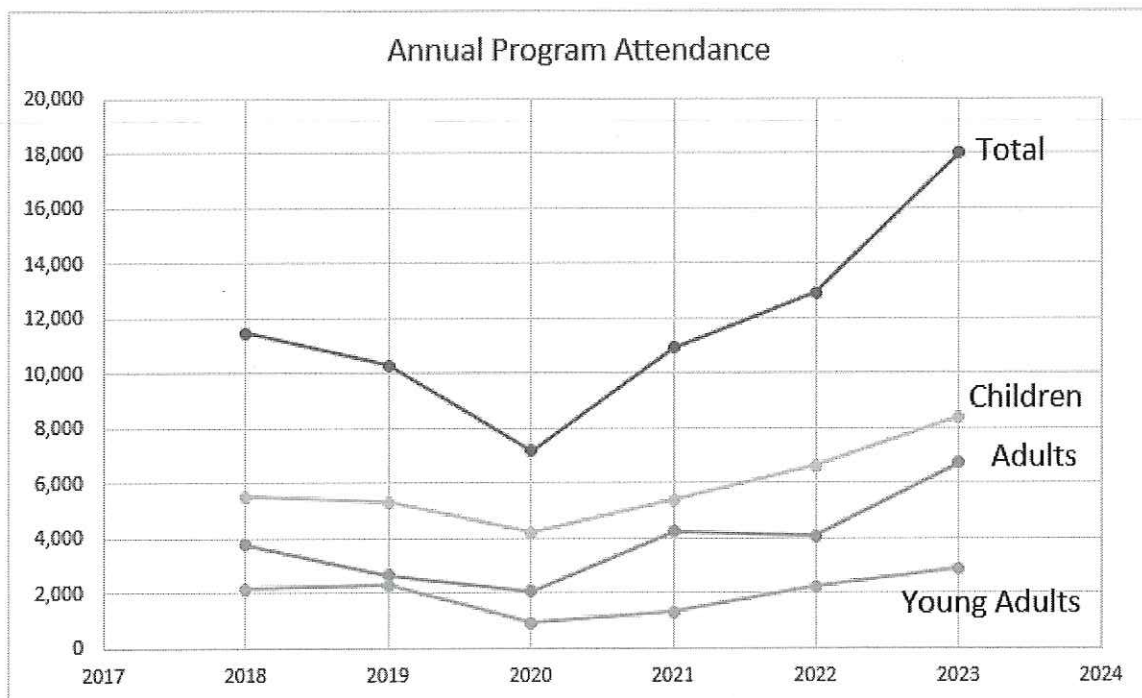
January 23, 2024

- The 2.5% increase is relative to the average of the last three municipal contributions to the library. Generally, the average of the last three years is lower than the last year, making the MAR test less difficult.
- With the Town keeping COLA at 0-2% and Merit at 0-2.5%, library salaries and wages stay within small growth percentages.
- While the cost of benefits - especially health insurance - far outpace 2.5%, they don't come out of the library budget and are not considered by the state in the MAR calculation.
- Most years the Library presents a level services budget, with rare larger increases (such as joining the MVLC library network in 2013)

Therefore, the MAR test of a 2.5% increase over the average of the last three years has tended to be very sustainable overall within the library budget itself.

VI. Similarly to the COA hours it would be helpful to have attendance/use data on the currently open hours. It's hard to envision that the hours can't be adjusted without tremendous impact.

Response: The Library Director and Trustees are committed to maintaining the library's hours of service and we consider that any reduction in hours impacts our patrons. To fully understand the effects of cuts in hours, we have to consider the effects of those cuts on the ability to offer programs. Over the last fifteen years, increased programming has been a strategic focus of the Groton Public Library, driven by demand from our patrons. Last year, the Groton Public Library offered 1,228 programs with attendance of 18,010 individuals. As shown in the figure below, program attendance was reduced during the Covid years but has since grown substantially for all three demographics served.



Answers to Library Budget Questions

January 23, 2024

In order to offer programs, the library must be open. Programs generally occur in three different time periods for the three age groups: mornings for pre-school children, afternoons for school-aged children and teens, early evenings for teens (aka young adults), and evenings and weekends for adults. As described below, this was considered when we evaluated which hours to close in the event of budgetary demands.

The library has had “people counters” at both of its doors for several years. Unfortunately, the counter at the main entrance failed early in 2023 and we are still working to replace it. Data from the years 2020, 2021, and 2022 were affected by Covid and attending budget issues and so are not representative of the library’s typical operation. Therefore, we have collated the rates of use for the most recent representative year – 2019. In the table below, the average rate of visitation for each hour that the library is open is presented. This average is for the full year for Tuesday through Saturday and for nine months for Sunday. The cells are color-coded with the lowest rates in green and the highest in red. The average rate of visitation is 67 individuals per hour and the average number of visits for a week is 3,502.

The column to the right of the table indicates when programs started during 2023. Three peaks are apparent at 10 am, 4 pm, and 7 pm.

Average Visits Per Hour for 2019 and Program Start Times for 2023								
Hour of the Day	Sunday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Average Weekly Visits	2023 Programs - Start Times
10:00-11:00	closed	74	67	63	64	66		141
11:00-12:00	closed	68	70	65	68	70		89
12:00-1:00	closed	63	63	57	85	66		10
1:00-2:00	70	62	61	62	91	72		89
2:00-3:00	60	76	74	68	103	71		79
3:00-4:00	72	91	78	86	97	66		101
4:00-5:00	59	90	76	80	82	63		198
5:00-6:00	closed	81	61	65	59	closed		63
6:00-7:00	closed	64	61	57	closed	closed		71
7:00-8:00	closed	39	37	39	closed	closed		225
8:00-9:00	closed	42	36	41	closed	closed		0
Daily Total	260	750	685	683	650	475	3,503	1,228 Total Programs with 162 All-Day Programs

As described above, in the event that budget cuts are necessary, we propose to cut Sunday hours and the last hour of the four weekdays. Cutting Sunday hours is the first measure as staffed generally by part-time fill-in workers. The decision to close early on the weekdays seems the best option given the low rates of new visitors during those hours. The alternative of opening an hour later in the morning is a poor approach as the rates of use are higher and protecting children’s programs is a high priority.

Programming is important to the citizens of Groton and closing early on weekdays will adversely affect programs, particularly for adults in the evenings and teens on Fridays. Not reflected in the average rate of visits are substantial spikes in evening attendance into the hundreds associated with very popular programs. Adult programs almost always last longer than one hour, indicating that a 7 pm start time would be impractical while closing the library at 8 pm. We have found that program starts at 6 or 6:30 pm are not popular with our patrons as it conflicts with work schedules or

Answers to Library Budget Questions

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commutes, dinner, and family time. In summary, our priority would be to maintain the 8 pm to 9 pm open time as it enables our critical programs for adults, and Fridays 5 pm to 6 pm for teens.

VII. **Lastly, we need to see a clear straight forward analysis of the costs of Sunday hours vs the reduction in materials spending.**

Response: We believe \$10,293 in FY2025 municipal funding (1% of the total budget earmarked for books and materials) is better spent providing five months of additional Sunday hours to the community than on books and materials. As 60% of our books and materials spending requirement is taken off the municipal contribution thanks to the Robbins Library Trust and GPL Endowment Trust, we are fortunate to be in a position to make this swap. But we are eligible to make the swap only if the budget meets the Municipal Appropriation Requirement (MAR).

January to April Sunday hours have been in the library municipal budget since 2005. With the 5 additional months of Sunday hours, we meet the 9 months and weekly hours required to reduce the books and materials expenditures.

The following table presents the funds associated with Sunday hours and the reduction in books and materials for the FY25 level service budget:

Category	Cost	Notes
Wages - Sundays - January to April	\$ 8,629	Generally funded by the Town since 2005; Hours are insufficient to meet the weekly threshold for reduction in books and materials
Wages - Sundays - September to December and May	\$ 10,786	Exceeds state's threshold for hours open, allowing books and materials reduction of 1% of the municipal library budget
Books and Materials Reduced from 16% to 15% of the Municipal Library Budget	\$ 10,293	
Net Cost of Five Additional Months of Sunday Hours	\$ 493	

While the expanded Sunday hours are relatively low cost, we hear every Sunday how much our patrons appreciate our being open. We also hear every May how sad people are that we are closing Sundays for the summer.

Children's staff see completely different families on Sundays than during the week. Sunday afternoon is for many people the only unstructured time left in the week. It's an optimal time for programming, as it works for so many full-time workers, busy families, and older adults who cannot or prefer not to drive at night.

Groton-Dunstable Regional School District FY25 Budget Outlook/Update for Town of Groton

Presented by Laura Chesson, Superintendent of Schools
Sherry Kersey, Director of Finance & Operations
January 27, 2024

FY25 Preliminary Budget Highlights

Highlights of budget outlook:

- It is a level services budget
- Major Drivers of the budget increase
- Difference between budget increase and assessment increase
- Assessment changes to both towns
- Enrollment shifting higher percentage to Dunstable in near future

FY25 Proposed budget is Level Services

A level services budget means that the proposed budget includes anticipated expenses to provide the same level of service currently being provided.

A level service budget is NOT a level funded budget.

There are no new programs or initiatives being proposed.

There are new positions included in the proposal, but they are to maintain services already being delivered.

FY25 - Summary of Major Drivers of Assessment Increase

Using less E&D (\$911K to \$500K)	\$ 400,000
Adding \$100K of Full Day Kindergarten Salaries	\$ 100,000
Anticipated new positions*	\$ 285,000
Estimated Wages & Salaries Increases	\$1,930,037
Health Insurance - Active & Retired	\$ 769,136
Utilities (water usage & PFAS)	\$ 209,615
Total Major Drivers of Assessment Increase	\$3,693,788

*see next slide for positions

Anticipated new positions

1.0 FTE Grade 2 Teacher (if class size dictates)	\$	70,000	FloRo
1.0 FTE Behaviorist Interventionist	\$	70,000	District
1.0 FTE ELL Teacher (compliance with ratio)	\$	70,000	District
1.0 FTE Maintenance Position	\$	62,000	FloRo
0.4 FTE Administrative Assistant (from PT to FT)	\$	<u>13,000</u>	FloRo
Total anticipated new positions	\$	285,000	

FY25 Considerations that have increased \$ implications

Salary projections

As discussed in previous budget updates to the school committee and both towns, the school district is currently negotiating salary and benefits with many groups. This also includes step and lane changes for all collective bargaining units as well as market adjustment considerations for positions on individual contracts. Supporting data can be reference in the “Groton-Dunstable By the Numbers” presentation on the district website.

FY25 Considerations that have increased \$ implications

Health Insurance

The school district has projected a 10% annual increase in health insurance premiums. This is what is in the 5 year plan. As of November, our claims seem to be running in a favorable direction, however it is still premature to reduce this line item until the actual renewal is presented by Harvard Pilgrim in late February/early March.

Point of reference - FY24 renewal was at 7.52%.

FY25 Considerations that have increased \$ implications

Utilities/PFAS Expenses

There is \$100,000 in the budget for PFAS expenses. Until the project is complete to connect the high school to Groton town water supply, we are required to provide:

- Drinking water delivery to homes testing above PFAS limit
- Have drinking water supply tested to all homes to monitor PFAS levels
- Install POET filtration systems to homes testing above
- Contracting with Tighe & Bond to prepare documentation for EPA filing requirements.

Note: This is not in the FY24 budget currently, we will be requesting a budget transfer from contingency.

FY25 - Stayed within the 5 year plan projections

For most other budget categories, the projected budget reflects increase estimates that were used to develop the 5 year projection plan.

- Heat and utilities (with the exception of a small water adjustment) are between 2% to 10% as projected.
- Transportation - we projected a 4.8% increase, however we received more reimbursement funding in FY23 that will offset the assessment to the towns (saving \$75K)
- Middlesex Retirement - we projected an 8.5% increase, however our assessment only increased by 6.6% (saving \$26K)

FY24 Budget vs FY25 Proposed Budget

Budget Increases: The amount of total General Fund Expenses from FY24 to FY25

FY24 Actual General Fund Budget (w/o debt): \$47,314,148

FY25 Estimated General Fund Budget (w/o debt): \$50,762,165

Estimated Budget Increase (w/o debt): \$ 3,448,017

7.29% increase

5 Year Historical increases

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>\$ Increase</u>	<u>% Increase</u>
FY24 - FY25	\$3,448,017	7.29% operating increase
FY23 - FY24	\$2,841,635	6.39% operating increase
(Note: ESSER & ARPA gone - expenses added to GF)		
FY22 - FY23	\$1,029,038	2.37% operating increase
(Note: ESSER & ARPA funding available)		
FY21 - FY22	\$1,956,213	4.71% operating increase
FY20 - FY21	\$1,494,556	3.74% operating increase

Enrollment - 5 year rolling average FY 24 to FY 25

Regional Agreement dictates a 5 year rolling average of certified October 1st enrollment.

FY24	Dunstable	22.74%	current year only = 23.35%
	Groton	77.26%	current year only = 76.65%
FY25	Dunstable	22.82%	
	Groton	77.18%	

Assessment Increases versus Budget Increases

Once all projected revenues have been estimated, the remaining balance is funded through assessments to the towns. Increases to assessments can occur when:

- A. Another **revenue** source is reduced or eliminated (Example: Excess & Deficiency, Kindergarten Fees, etc.)
- B. **Expenses** increase (Example: Salary increases, inflation, utilities, new positions, etc.)

Both conditions are occurring in the draft FY25 Budget

FY25 Estimated Assessment Comparisons

Description	FY22	% 22-23	FY23	% 23-24	FY24	% 24-25	FY25
Dunstable Assessment	\$7,000,663	2.87%	\$7,201,464	7.52%	\$7,742,721	11.73%	\$8,650,942
Groton Assessment	\$23,481,350	3.57%	\$24,319,318	6.65%	\$25,937,716	10.81%	\$28,741,942

Assessment Increase

FY24 Dunstable Assessment:	\$7,742,721
FY25 Est. Dunstable Assessment:	<u>\$8,650,942</u>
Assessment Increase:	\$ 908,221
FY24 Groton Assessment:	\$25,937,716
FY25 Est. Groton Assessment:	<u>\$28,741,942</u>
Assessment Increase:	\$ 2,804,226
Total Assessment Increases:	\$ 3,712,447

Groton Town Manager's Budget

Mark Haddad, Town Manager for the Town of Groton, submitted his Proposed Operating Budget dated December 24, 2023 (updated January 26, 2024).

Groton Operating Assessment as of January 26, 2024	\$28,741,942
Town Manager Placeholder for GDRSD	<u>\$28,741,942</u>
Difference	\$ 0

This is contingent upon a successful operational override passing at Annual Town Meeting and at the ballot.

Dunstable Town Manager's Budget

Jason Silva, Town Manager for the Town of Dunstable, submitted his Proposed Operating Budget dated December 29, 2023.

Dunstable Operating Assessment as of January 10, 2023	\$8,650,942
Town Manager Placeholder for GDRSD	<u>\$8,650,942</u>
Difference	\$ 0

This is contingent upon a successful operational override passing at Annual Town Meeting and at the ballot.

This is not a one year problem

The towns have estimated town revenues for the next 3 years.

The school district has estimated town assessments for the next 3 years.

The FY25-FY27 comparisons illustrate a deficit between the two estimates that occurs every year. School Administration has informed the leadership team that we are committed to stay within our projections and that any future unplanned increases need to be balanced with a corresponding reductions.

What happens if override votes are not successful?

The result of a failed override vote would be devastating to the school district.

Salary and benefits are 77% of the operating budget, thus a majority of the reductions would have to be staff. Most likely the proposed anticipated positions would not be filled in addition to at least 31 additional FTE's by our estimations. This will include all categories of staff. Note: teachers, guidance & paraprofessional = 81% of FTEs

Increased class sizes, reduced course offerings, reduced support services are examples of what is expected to happen with that amount of cuts to make.

FTE comparison data

	FY 2023	FY 2024 - Budget	FY 2024 - Actual	FY 2025
	Budget	Budget	Actual	Budget
Central Office	14.1	14.1	15.1	15.1
School Administrators	18.0	16.0	15.0	15.0
Teachers - Unit A	203.2	197.5	206.0	209.0
Guidance - Unit A	19.0	18.0	19.0	19.0
Nurse - Unit A	7.5	7.6	7.6	7.6
Paraprofessionals - Unit D	66.5	71.0	81.7	81.7
Administrative Assistants - Unit C	11.1	11.1	11.1	11.4
Food Service	6.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
Custodian/Maintenance	7.0	6.0	6.0	7.0
Support Staff Non Union	10.3	10.6	10.6	10.6
Total	362.7	356.9	377.1	381.3

Student Enrollment

2242

2246

2246

20

FY25 Capital Plan and Funding

The Towns were requested to put a placeholder equal to FY24's assessment for their capital assessment for consistency purposes. The Director of Building & Grounds and the Director of Finance reviewed the requested and ongoing projects and are recommending a reduced financial request for the upcoming FY25.

There are many exciting capital improvements that will require our maintenance teams attention in the upcoming months and year. Thus, the capital requests are minimal this upcoming fiscal year.

FY25 Capital Plan and Funding

Projects that are upcoming or in progress:

- Move from existing Flo Ro to new Flo Ro
- Ground repair/upkeep for Flo Ro/Middle School campus that may be necessary due to demolition of old building
- New HS stadium field - nurture natural turf planted in the Fall to ensure it is ready for use for this upcoming Fall season
- Managing irrigation at the middle school track and the high school for all fields with limited water supply
- Weatherization measures at Middle School North (part of the recently awarded Green Communities Grant)
- Flooring replacement at Middle School North

FY25 Capital Plan and Funding

New Requests for Capital Funding in FY25

	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Groton \$</u>	<u>Dunst. \$</u>
• Technology leases	\$198,500	\$153,202	\$45,298
• Two (2) 15-passenger vans	\$ 64,000	\$ 49,395	\$14,605
• Baseball/softball groomer	\$ 25,000	\$ 19,295	\$ 5,702
• Designer/Engineer HS Windows	\$ 25,000	\$ 19,295	\$ 5,702
• MSN - 8th grade bathroom renov	\$ 15,000	\$ 11,695	\$ 3,305
• MSN - Flooring replacement (Phase 2)	<u>\$ 55,000</u>	<u>\$ 42,884</u>	<u>\$12,116</u>
Total Request	\$382,500	\$295,766	\$86,734

FY25 Capital Plan and Funding

There are two large projects that need to be undertaken in the near future, but they require additional vetting at this time.

Wall of Windows replacement at the high school. This could cost upwards of \$250,000 by preliminary estimates, however we need a proper study and report prepared prior to requesting project funding.

Swallow Union roof replacement/major repair. The district will submit a MSBA Accelerated Repair Project application in coordination with the towns once the necessary discussions have taken place regarding funding commitments.

FY25 Capital Plan and Funding

There are other projects that the district has earmarked that needs attention.

- Lighting replacement in the common areas at the High School
- LED lighting upgrade at Middle School North and South
- Concrete sidewalk repair and 2 sets of steps at the High School
- Lobby tile repair at the High School
- Ductless A/C installed at Middle School South on second floor
- Potential piloting a EV Charging Station at the Middle School Campus (thank you Charlotte Weigel for your help and guidance)

We are looking for energy efficiency funding for the lighting projects and charging stations. Additionally, there are excess funds in our capital revolving fund from savings on prior projects. The school committee will be presented with a request in the late spring to reappropriate unspent funds to fund a number of these requests.

Important Upcoming Dates

January 31	Public Hearing
February 7	School Committee Certifies Budget
February 27	First Budget Forum (Both Towns and School Districts)
March 6	Second Budget Forum (Both Towns and School District)
March 26	Potential Spring Town Meeting for Budgets
April 2	Potential ballot vote in both towns