

SELECT BOARD / FINCOM MEETING MINUTES
HYBRID MEETING
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 2024
S.B. APPROVED / FINCOM APPROVED

SB Members Present: Matt Pisani; John Reilly; Peter Cunningham, Clerk; Alison Manugian, Chair;
SB Members Virtually Present: Becky Pine, Vice Chair;
Finance Committee Members Present: Bud Robertson, Chair; Mary Linskey; David Manugian; Scott Whitefield; Kristina Lengyel
Also Present: Mark Haddad, Town Manager; Kara Cruikshank, Executive Assistant to the Town Manager; Hannah Moller, Treasurer/Tax Collector; Patricia DuFresne, Assistant Director of Finance/Town Accountant; Melisa Doig, Human Resource Director; Fire Chief Arthur Cheeks; Tom Delaney, DPW Director; Brian Callahan, DPW Director in Training; Dawn Dunbar, Town Clerk; Megan Foster, Principal Assessor; Mike Hartnett, Assistant Tax Collector; Hannah Moller, Tax/Treasurer Collector; Takashi Tada, Land Use Director/Town Planner; Tom Orcutt, Groton Water Superintendent; Charlotte Steeves, Conservation Administrator; Michelle Collette.

Ms. Manugian called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chair Bud Robertson called the Finance Committee called the meeting to order.

Michelle Collette announced that the Nashoba Associated Boards of Health will hold their Annual Flu Clinics beginning September 24, 2024. The Groton Center will hold its clinic on Thursday, September 26th, from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m. Mr. Cunningham asked for an update regarding EEE and the West Nile Virus. Ms. Collette stated that the advisory was to wear repellent and long sleeves and to avoid going outdoors after dark.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD #1

None

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

1. Authorize the Town Manager to Sign the Affordable Housing Grant Agreement.

Mr. Haddad explained that the Affordable Housing Trust approved the CPA Affordable House Grant Agreement and authorized its Chair, Ms. Pine, to sign it on behalf of the trust. The agreement is similar to the grant agreement executed a year or so ago for the \$200k grant. The Trust has requested that the Select Board authorize the Town Manager to sign the Agreement on behalf of the Board. Once approved, the agreement will go to the Community Preservation Committee for their review and "acknowledgment" of the agreement.

Mr. Cunningham motioned to authorize the Town Manager to Sign the Affordable Housing Grant Agreement. Mr. Pisani seconded the motion. Roll call: Cunningham-aye; Pine-aye; Reilly-aye; Pisani-aye; Manugian-aye.

2. Update on Fiscal Year 2025 Budget.

Mr. Haddad provided an update on the Fiscal Year 2026 Budget during his Town Manager’s Report. He said the Town Manager’s and Town Administrator’s Tri-Comm Working Group held their first meeting to outline the FY 2026 Budget Process. They will meet again after the School Committee receives information on attempting to change the Regional Agreement. Once the School Committee provides guidance to the School Superintendent, they will meet to discuss the impact on the Towns of Groton and Dunstable. On September 30th, Mr. Haddad would like to meet in a joint session with the Finance Committee to discuss Collective Bargaining in an Executive Session. He explained that six union agreements are up this year, which will have a major impact on the FY 2026 Budget. He would coordinate with Finance Committee Chair Mr. Robertson and Select Board Chair Manugian to schedule the meeting.

3. Proposed Select Board Meeting Schedule through the End of the Year.

Monday, September 16, 2024	Finalize the 2024 Fall Town Meeting Warrant
Monday, September 23, 2024	No Meeting
Monday, September 30, 2024	Executive Session Collective Bargaining Guidance Interview Applicant- Charter Review Committee
Saturday, October 5, 2024	2024 Fall Town Meeting
Monday, October 7, 2024	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, October 14, 2024	No Meeting (Indigenous People’s Day)
Monday, October 21, 2024	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, October 28, 2024	In Joint Session with the Finance Committee-Provide FY 2026 Budget Guidance
Monday, November 4, 2024	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, November 11, 2024	No Meeting (Veteran’s Day)
Monday, November 18, 2024	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, November 25, 2024	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, December 2, 2024	No Meeting
Monday, December 9, 2024	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, December 16, 2024	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, December 23, 2024	No Meeting
Monday, December 30, 2024	No Meeting
Monday, January 6, 2024	Regularly Scheduled Meeting

ITEMS FOR SELECT BOARD CONSIDERATION AND APPROVAL

1. Authorize Gift Fund for the Invasive Species Committee.

Mr. Reilly motioned to accept the gift and authorize a Gift Fund for the Invasive Species Committee. Mr. Cunningham seconded the motion. Roll call: Cunningham-aye; Pine-aye; Reilly-aye; Pisani-aye; Manugian-aye.

2. Consider Approving a One-Day Wine and Malt Beverage License for the Friends of Prescott for Open Mic Night on Friday, September 13, 2024, from 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.

Mr. Pisani made a motion to approve a One-Day Wine and Malt Beverages License for the Friends of Prescott for Open Mic Night to be held on Friday, September 13, 2024, from 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. Mr. Cunningham seconded the motion. Roll Call: Cunningham-aye; Pine-aye; Reilly-aye; Pisani-aye; Manugian-aye.

6:15 p.m. In Joint Session with the Finance Committee- Public Hearing on the 2024 Fall Town Meeting Warrant.

Mr. Haddad read the Public Hearing notice into the record.

Mr. Haddad asked the Board to open the public hearing.

Mr. Cunningham made a motion to open the public hearing for the 2024 Fall Town Meeting Warrant. Mr. Pisani seconded the motion. Roll call: Cunningham-aye; Pine-aye; Reilly-aye; Pisani-aye; Manugian-aye.

Mr. Manugian moved to open the public hearing for the Finance Committee. Ms. Linskey seconded the motion. Roll Call: Robertson-aye; Linskey-aye; Manugian-aye; Whitefield-aye; Lengyel-aye.

Articles 1-10, with the exception of Article 2, will be presented as one Consent Motion.

Article 1: Prior Year Bills- There are no unpaid bills at this time.

Article 2: Amend the Fiscal Year 2025 Town Operating Budget-

Mr. Haddad provided the information and recommendations for the various Articles requesting funding in the 2024 Fall Town Meeting Warrant. He said this is the earliest that Free Cash has been certified. He congratulated Ms. DuFresne on her hard work in getting the cash balance sheet to the state to get the free cash certified earlier than usual due to the Town Meeting being earlier. The memorandum listed the balances in the Town's various Reserve Accounts. He read them off as follows:

Stabilization Fund:	\$2,649,708
Capital Stabilization Fund:	\$ 90,394
GDRSD Capital Stabilization Fund:	\$ 21,996
Unexpended Tax Fund:	\$ 62,811
Certified Free Cash:	\$ 2,757,118

6:20 p.m. Public Hearing- Road Layout Hearing- Monarch Path

Mr. Haddad read the Public Hearing notice into the record.

Mr. Haddad asked the Board to open the public hearing.

Mr. Reilly made a motion to open the public hearing for Monarch Path. Mr. Cunningham seconded the motion. Roll Call: Cunningham-aye; Pine-aye; Reilly-aye; Pisani-aye; Manugian-aye.

Mr. Haddad asked the Board to suspend the 2024 Fall Town Meeting Warrant public hearing. Mr. Reilly motioned to suspend the warrant's public hearing until after the Road Layout hearing for Monarch Path. Mr. Cunningham seconded the motion. Roll Call: Cunningham-aye; Pine-aye; Reilly-aye; Pisani-aye; Manugian-aye.

Article 24: Accept Monarch Path as a Town Way—

DPW Director Mr. Delaney, Town Planner Mr. Tada, and a representative from the Developer of Monarch Path attended the public hearing. Mr. Tada and Mr. Delaney provided memos to the Select Board regarding the Road Acceptance for Monarch Path. Mr. Haddad stated that the main issue that still needs to be addressed are the manhole covers that were covered when they paved the road. The manhole covers need to be exposed and reinspected by the Planning Board's engineer and the DPW. Mr. Delaney confirmed that the work was in process. The Planning Board has not made a recommendation to the Select Board because they need to receive the sign-off on the roadway first. The Select Board must decide to accept the layout at least seven days before the Town Meeting. Mr. Tada said they need to receive the final as-built plan from the engineer and conduct a site visit before listing this on the Planning Board's agenda. The Planning Board will meet on September 26th via Zoom, and Mr. Haddad suggested the Select Board continue the public hearing to that evening.

Ms. Pine motioned to continue the Road Acceptance public hearing for Monarch Path to Thursday, September 26, at 7:15 p.m. via Zoom. Mr. Pisani seconded the motion. Roll Call: Cunningham-aye; Pine-aye; Reilly-aye; Pisani-aye; Manugian-aye.

Mr. Haddad entertained a motion to reopen the public hearing on the 2024 Fall Town Meeting Warrant.

Mr. Cunningham motioned to reopen the public hearing on the 2024 Fall Town Meeting Warrant. Mr. Pisani seconded the motion. Roll Call: Cunningham-aye; Pine-aye; Reilly-aye; Pisani-aye; Manugian-aye.

Continued discussion on Article 2:

Mr. Haddad said that he recommended several budget transfers:

1. Select Board Expenses: As owners and Landlords of the Prescott School, The Town is responsible for any major capital expenditure/repairs. The front entrance doors are in disrepair and need to be replaced. The cost to replace the doors is estimated to be \$28,500. This one-time expense will come from the Excess and Deficiency Fund (Free Cash).
2. Town Manager Expenses: Mr. Haddad has been working with the Trails Committee and Park Commission to upgrade the Storage Shed at Town Field. The shed does not have electricity, and it will cost \$8,100 to bring electricity to it. This one-time expense will come from the Excess and Deficiency Fund (Free Cash).
3. Town Counsel Expenses: The Town is facing three Arbitration Cases with the Police Union, which are very expensive to defend. The Legal budget will need an additional \$40,000 for

this purpose. This one-time request of \$40,000 will come from the Excess and Deficiency Fund (Free Cash).

4. Insurance and Bonding: Due to a number of natural events (lightning strikes, etc.), the Town has seen an 18% increase in Liability Insurance for Fiscal Year 2025; there is currently an anticipated shortfall of \$20,000 in this Account. This funding will be a recurring cost from the Unexpended Tax Capacity.
5. Police Expenses: Two of three police department vacancies have been filled with new recruits. The cost to the Town for sending these recruits to the Academy is \$3,200 each, for a total of \$6,400. This funding will be a one-time expense from the Excess and Deficiency Fund (Free Cash).
6. Fire Wages: Fire Chief Cheeks unexpectedly left for an emergency before this discussion. Mr. Haddad said the closing of the Nashoba Valley Medical Center (NVMCC) has had an adverse impact on the Fire Department, creating a severe situation for emergency medical response by the department. To address this, the Fire Chief has requested funding for two additional Firefighters/EMTs for the remainder of Fiscal Year 2025. This short-term solution would allow the Department to guarantee staffing for a second ambulance, which is desperately needed. The increase to the budget would be an additional \$171,182 as follows:

Wages:	\$139,411
Gear and Clothing:	\$ 7,425
Health Insurance:	\$ 24,346

Mr. Haddad said that as the town is unsure of the final expense, he recommends that the initial funding come from Excess and Deficiency (Free Cash). Chief Cheeks will attend the Finance Committee meeting on Tuesday, September 10th, to discuss this proposal in more detail.

7. Fire Expenses: Please see Explanation #6 above.
8. Council on Aging Expenses: The Council on Aging Director has requested the mailing for a bi-monthly newsletter as well as a twice-per-year mailing to all registered voters in Groton. The cost is approximately \$7,500. This funding will be a recurring cost; therefore, it will come from the unexpended tax Capacity.
9. Weed Management—Groton Lakes- In 2012, the Town appropriated approximately \$410,000 to fund a major herbicide treatment of Lost Lake/Knops Pond to eradicate invasive weeds. In 2019, the Lakes required another major treatment, and this funding came from the Community Preservation Fund. Solitude Lake Management, the firm the Groton Lakes Association (GLA) utilizes to treat the Lakes, has determined that a major treatment is required in May 2025. The estimated cost for the treatment is \$123,500. To help offset the total cost, the GLA will privately raise \$35,000 towards the cost. The Town

would then need to appropriate \$88,500 for the Treatment. Since this is a one-time expense, the requested \$88,500 would come from the Excess and Deficiency Fund (Free Cash). Ms. Manugian inquired about the plan moving forward. Mr. Haddad mentioned that \$12,800 has been allocated in the operating budget for spot treatment, which should be enough to cover future treatments.

10. Debt Service: Mr. Haddad said that based on the final borrowing terms on FY 2025 Bond issues, the total Debt Service Budget will be reduced by \$125,159. The primary reduction, and good news for Groton Taxpayers, is the interest rate on the Bond Anticipation Note for the Florence Roche Elementary School Construction Project, came in less than the original estimate, saving the taxpayers \$255,614 in the Fiscal year 2025. He said the Debt Budget would be adjusted to reflect borrowing for the Fire Department Ambulance, approved at the 2023 Spring Town Meeting, and paying down the debt on the Highway Dump truck, approved at the 2022 Spring Town Meeting. The following is the proposed new Debt Budget for Fiscal Year 2025:

		<u>Original</u>	<u>Proposed</u>
2000	Long Term Debt - Principal Excluded	\$ 2,025,000	\$ 2,025,000
2001	Long Term Debt - Principal Non-Excluded	\$ 165,000	\$ 160,000
2002	Long Term Debt - Interest - Excluded	\$ 1,340,252	\$ 1,340,252
2003	Long Term Debt - Interest - Non-Excluded	\$ 110,364	\$ 106,974
2004	Short Term Debt - Principal - Town - Non Excluded	\$ 123,526	\$ 247,532
2005A	Short Term Debt - Interest - Town - Non Excluded	\$ 8,644	\$ 24,483
2005B	Short Term Debt - Interest - Town - Excluded	\$ 1,283,825	\$ 1,028,211
DEPARTMENTAL TOTAL		\$ 5,056,611	\$ 4,932,452

These issues will be funded as follows:

- Excluded Debt will be Decreased by \$255,614 from \$4,649,077 to \$4,393,463
- Debt within the Tax Levy will be decreased by \$8,390
- To fund the Short Term Principal and Short Term Interest Increases (total of \$139,845), \$104,955 will come from Ambulance receipts and \$34,890 will come from Free Cash.

Mr. Cunningham asked about ambulance receipts. Mr. Haddad mentioned that they generate about \$40,000 per month in ambulance receipts and allocate around \$350,000 to offset the Fire Department's Budget, specifically for EMS.

11. Health Insurance: See Explanation #6 above. The requested amount is: \$24,346

Article 3: Transfer Money into Capital Stabilization Fund—

Mr. Haddad stated that the current balance in this fund is \$90,394. If all recommended transfers and appropriations are approved under Article 2 of this Warrant, the total Fiscal year Operating Budget will be \$51,313,320. The Town's Financial Policies suggest keeping a balance in CapStab of 1.5% of the Operating Budget, which would amount to a Capital Stabilization Fund Balance of \$769,699. The

anticipated Fiscal year 2026 Capital Budget is \$898,991. Mr. Haddad is recommending a transfer of \$900,000 from Free Cash to add to this Fund.

Article 4: Transfer Money into the Stabilization Fund-

This Article is being left on the Warrant in the event of a market adjustment that would reduce the current fund to below the requisite 5%.

Article 5: Transfer money into the GDRSD Capital Stabilization Fund-

This Article is a placeholder in case the Town receives the anticipated Fiscal year 2026 Capital Plan of the Groton Dunstable Regional School District before the 2024 Fall Town Meeting.

Article 6: Revoke Opioid Settlements Special Purpose Stabilization Fund—

The Town of Groton has been eligible to receive settlement payments from various opioid makers for the prevention, harm reduction, treatment and recovery of individuals harmed by the use of opioids. Opioid settlement funds currently on deposit as well as all future settlement funds received will be deposited into the Special Revenue Fund. Groton is expecting to receive approximately \$40,000 through 2038. At the time of the initial settlement payments, the State had all Town's create a Special Purpose Stabilization Fund to receive and disburse funds. They have since simplified the process to allow Municipalities to create a Special Revenue Fund instead that will allow communities better access to the Funds for purposes identified in the settlement agreements. As the Special Purpose Stabilization Fund is no longer needed, this Article seeks to revoke its creation.

Article 7: Transfer Within the Water Enterprise Fund-

This Article is to transfer \$60,000 from the Water Enterprise Fund Surplus to pay for the Fiscal year 2025 Water Department's capital purchase of a new pick-up truck.

Article 8: Transfer Within the Center Sewer Enterprise Fund- This is a placeholder but most likely to be withdrawn

Article 9: Transfer Within the Four Corners Sewer Enterprise- This is a placeholder.

Article 10: Debt Service for the Middle School Track—Fiscal Year 2025—

The middle school track received two appropriations. The Community Preservation Committee (CPC) has paid off one million dollars and is currently paying the remaining \$1.4 million in debt service. The CPC would like to pay this off as soon as possible and would like to increase the principal paydown in FY 2025 by \$100,000 to \$335,072.

Article 11: Water Supply System for Heritage Landing—

Groton Water Superintendent Mr. Orcutt stated that the town has applied for a Mass Works grant. The water supply system for Heritage Landing would depend on receiving the grant, which is requested in the amount of \$2,509,600.

Article 12: Funding for Security Improvements at Sargisson Beach—

The Conservation Administrator, Ms. Charlotte Steeves, and the DPW Director in Training, Mr. Brian Callahan, worked with the IT Department regarding installing security cameras at Sargisson Beach. The beach is facing a trash dumping problem. Mr. Haddad believes installing good security would help solve this issue and considers the money well-spent to protect the town's assets. The Town will request \$40,000 from the Excess and Deficiency (Free Cash) Fund. Ms. Manugian asked at what point the town would shut down the beach. Ms. Steeves said that shutting down the beach would have been the best option, but it should have happened sooner. The Sargisson Beach Committee should put this on its agenda to address if the illegal dumping continues. Mr. Reilly said he had suggested the Committee charge a fee for years but didn't think they could regulate the parking. Finance Committee member Kristina Lengyel asked where the security feed would go. Mr. Haddad said that it goes to the Police Department. Ms. Pine said she was opposed to closing the beach.

Article 13: Funding to Purchase Budget Software for the Town of Groton—

Mr. Haddad uses Excel to prepare the budget and has suggested that the Town should consider planning for budgeting software for when the Town Manager retires. He expects that the conversion process will take a few years. Although it would likely be an annual expenditure, he believes it is a worthwhile investment. The Town will request \$35,000 to fund the software, with the funding coming from the Excess and Deficiency Fund (Free Cash). Mr. Haddad mentioned they have been in contact with ClearGov, and the estimated cost for implementing the software would be around \$8,900. For an entire year, the cost would be \$30,000. ClearGov has offered a discounted price of \$22,000 for 3/4 of a year. Therefore, the total cost for Fiscal Year 2026 would be \$31,000. Mr. Haddad will discuss with the Finance Committee how this would be funded. Ms. Pine inquired about the number of other towns in MA using ClearGov. Mr. Haddad said approximately 32 municipalities are using it. Ms. Pine asked Mr. Haddad to conduct further research on the software used in comparable towns.

Article 14: Engineering Funds for Complete Streets Grant Work—

Complete Streets has received over \$750,000 in grant funding from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts under its Complete Streets Program. It is seeking grant applications for two potential projects this fall. Mr. Takashi Tada said they will not be able to apply in the fall application round as Complete Streets is still in the process of completing the sidewalk projects on West Main Street and Lowell Road. The Committee requests \$35,000 to cover the engineering costs for projects they will be proposing next Spring. This funding would come from the Excess and Deficiency Fund (Free Cash).

Article 15: Amend Purpose of CPA Project for Improvements to Baseball Diamond—

The 2023 Spring Town Meeting appropriated \$80,000 for improvements to the major league diamond at Town Field. This funding is not enough to design and construct the improvements. This Article is to see if the Town will vote to amend the purpose of the CPC Proposal to allow for a comprehensive study and development of bid specifications for improvements to Town Field. Mr. Haddad said he had met with the Community Preservation Committee, and they were in favor of this project. He believes Town Field should be a showpiece in Groton. The Town Manager intends to submit a formal project to the CPC for Fiscal Year 2026.

Mr. Haddad explained that if the Select Board and Finance Committee approve all the proposed Free Cash transfers, the Town will require \$1,387,572, leaving an anticipated Free Cash balance of

\$1,369,546. In Spring 2025, the Town will need approximately \$300,000 in Free Cash to cover Debt Service, OPEB Trust Funds, and Department Head Performance Incentives, leaving a balance of \$1,069,546.

Article 16: Squannacook River Dam—

Mr. Haddad reported that the DPW conducted a feasibility study to determine whether removing or repairing the Squannacook River Dam was best. During a recent Select Board meeting, the study of the Squannacook River Dam was discussed. The Board decided they needed input from the Town Meeting to help them make a decision. Mr. Haddad clarified during the meeting that it might be too early to bring the matter to the Town Meeting. He explained that the Board required more information before making a decision. Mr. Haddad then asked the DPW Director in Training, Brian Callahan, and Conservation Administrator Charlotte Steeves to compile a list of the pros and cons of potentially removing or repairing the Squannacook River Dam (please see attached memo). The memo explains an issue of ownership that needs to be resolved. This is currently under review by the Town Counsel. Mr. Haddad said the estimated cost to repair the dam is \$800,000, and it is his understanding that there are no state grants out there to help fund it.

Mr. Haddad explained that it might be premature to bring this article forward at this time. He wanted to clarify that it is an advisory article and that the ultimate decision to remove the dam rests with the Select Board. Mr. Haddad said this article has been discussed and that there is a lot of information out there. Regardless of ownership, the Town of Groton will cover the cost of the dam repair due to an agreement that was signed when River Court purchased the property. The Town promised to protect River Court by maintaining the Dam. You can't just maintain half a dam. Mr. Cunningham said getting more information from Town Counsel is important. Ms. Manugian inquired about changing the article summary to "recommend the removal of the Squannacook River Dam" for clarity. The preliminary estimate is between \$500,000 and \$1 million. Mr. Delaney said the Board needs to decide which avenue to go to ensure it is safe. He said it could be rebuilt or removed. Ms. Pine believes the article should be removed from the Warrant before the Town Meeting and considers it premature. Mr. Delaney said many questions won't be answered until the next engineering round.

Public Comments

Ms. Ginger Vollmar agreed with Ms. Pine's statement. Ms. Vollmar stated that it wasn't communicated well that this Article would be on the warrant.

Resident Mr. Carl Canner from West Groton asked what the cost of repairing the Shirley side of the dam would be. Mr. Canner thinks more studies are needed to repair the dam and does not favor tearing it down.

Resident Ms. Michelle Collette said she loved the dam and that it is part of West Groton's character. She thinks a study of the cost of repairing the dam is a great first step. She would like to place it on the Warrant to find out how to repair the dam. Mr. Cunningham said he would be supportive of adding the Article.

Mr. Haddad mentioned that during their meeting with the state, they learned that the town must apply for the grant by December, but this application does not commit the town to removing the dam. Mr. Delaney will confirm this information. Mr. Haddad said there is a need for detailed engineering drawings to repair the dam. He mentioned that there is currently no appropriation to cover the cost of a study for dam repairs. He suggested a possible change to the article to appropriate funds for hiring an engineer for the dam repair. Mr. Delaney estimated that this would cost approximately \$139,000. Ms. Pine agreed with the idea of spending money to conduct a study to make an informed decision.

Ms. Manugian suggested revising the Article to appropriate the necessary funds to hire professionals to study both options for repairing and removing the dam. Ms. Pine agrees with Ms. Manugian that they need credible, accurate information.

Ms. Pine moved to direct the Town Manager to create a new article requesting funds to obtain further information on the cost of repairing the dam and the potential cost of removing it. Mr. Pisani seconded the motion.

Discussion

Mr. Reilly said his biggest problem with this is the unknown ownership and that Groton doesn't own the whole thing. Mr. Haddad will draft an article and present it to the Board on Monday, September 16, 2024.

Roll call: Cunningham-aye; Pine-aye; Reilly-aye; Pisani-aye; Manugian-aye.

Mr. Manugian and Mr. Whitefield left the meeting at 8:20pm, and Ms. Lengyel left the meeting at 8:25pm. The Finance Committee no longer has a quorum and is adjourned.

Article 17: Disposition of Town-Owned Land on Hoyts Wharf Road—

The Affordable Housing Trust initiated this project. Ms. Pine stated that this Article will be removed from the Warrant due to the fact that there are still several unanswered questions, and they are not ready to bring this Article forward.

Article 18: Authorize the Lease of Town-Owned Land—

This Article is to see if the Town will vote to authorize the Select Board to dispose of a Lease for up to thirty years, a 5.24-acre portion of town-owned land located at 600 Cow Pond Brook Road.

Article 19: Amend Chapter 81, "Town Meetings" of the Code of the Town of Groton

This Article removes the quorum requirement for any Special Town Meeting and allows the Select Board to set the Annual or Town Election hours.

Article 20: Zoning Amendment—Firearms Retail Sales Establishment-

Mr. Tada said that the Planning Board provided a memo regarding this Article. He said Ms. Pine brought this up last year, a committee was formed, and they recommended this. (see included memo to these minutes)

Article 21: Zoning Amendment- Solar Parking Canopies-

Ms. Pine suggested the Country Club parking lot may be a great place to locate one.

Article 22: Zoning Amendment—Accessory Dwelling Units—

Mr. Tada explained that this Article will determine whether the Town votes to amend the Bylaw of the Town of Groton. State law will change in February 2025, and the new law will require different wording for accessory dwelling units to comply with the updated state regulations.

Article 23: Amend Chapter 198 Stormwater Management—Low Impact Development—

Ms. Collette said the Committee is proposing an amendment to the Stormwater Management By-law to update it so it is consistent with the new Massachusetts Stormwater Handbook and Regulation. Mr. Haddad sent the Board a copy of the redlined copy, and the Town Clerk's office will have a copy.

Article 24: Accept Monarch Path as a Town Way— See above.

Article 25: Citizens' Petition—Reduce Statutory Speed Limit from 30 MPH to 25 MPH—

Ms. Manugian requested Mr. Haddad to seek an opinion from Town Counsel regarding the proposed process outlined in the summary.

Mr. Cunningham motioned to continue the public hearing on Monday, September 16th, at 6:15 p.m. Mr. Pisani seconded the motion. Roll call: Cunningham-aye; Pine-aye; Reilly-aye; Pisani-aye; Manugian-aye.

OTHER BUSINESS

ON-GOING ISSUES

- A. PILOTs-Mr. Haddad reviewed a memo from him to the Board explaining the PILOT Working Group's progress made by the Town Manager's Working Group on Studying PILOTs. He explained that an important new category was added for Rules of Exemption. Another spreadsheet was created, breaking down the remaining parcels into various categories. These remaining parcels are the next focus of the Group's review (Please see the attached memo for more details regarding the PILOT review).

SELECT BOARD LIASON REPORTS

None

Public Comment Period #2

None

Approval of the Regularly Scheduled Meeting Minutes of August 26, 2024

Mr. Cunningham made a motion to approve the minutes of the regularly scheduled meeting of August 26, 2024. Mr. Pisani seconded the motion. Roll call: Cunningham-aye; Pine-aye; Reilly-aye; Pisani-aye; Manugian-aye.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:42 p.m. Respectively submitted by Kara Cruikshank, Executive Assistant to the Town Manager.



Town Manager
Mark W. Haddad

Town of Groton

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Select Board

Alison S. Manugian, *Chair*
Rebecca H. Pine, *Vice Chair*
Peter S. Cunningham, *Clerk*
John F. Reilly, *Member*
Matthew F. Pisani, *Member*

To: *Select Board
Finance Committee*

From: *Mark W. Haddad – Town Manager*

Subject: *2024 Fall Town Meeting Expenditures*

Date: *September 5, 2024*

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide the Select Board and Finance Committee with information and recommendations for the various Articles that will be requesting funding in the 2024 Fall Town Meeting Warrant. Please note the following balances in the Town's various Reserve Accounts:

Stabilization Fund:	\$2,617,198
Capital Stabilization Fund:	\$ 90,394
GDRSD Capital Stabilization Fund:	\$ 21,996
Unexpended Tax Capacity:	\$ 62,811
Estimated Free Cash:	\$2,663,000

These balances are important as we determine how to address the various requests. Please consider the following recommendations:

Article 1: Unpaid Bills

Requested: \$0

At this time, there are no unpaid bills.

Article 2: Amend the Fiscal Year 2025 Town Operating Budget

We have been reviewing the various budgets for any potential additions/reductions. As of the writing of this memorandum, we would request the following adjustments with recommended funding source:

1. Select Board Expenses **Requested: \$28,500**

As owners and Landlords of the Prescott School, the Town is responsible for and major capital expenditures/repairs. Currently the front entrance doors are in disrepair and need to be replaced. They are difficult to lock and are a security liability. The cost to replace the doors is estimated to be \$28,500. This funding, since it is a one-time expense, will come from the Excess and Deficiency Fund (Free Cash).

2. Town Manager Expenses **Requested: \$8,100**

I have been working with the Trails Committee and the Park Commission to upgrade the Storage Shed located at Town Field. The DPW Maintenance Division has made several improvements to the Shed. This Shed will be used by the Trails Committee and Park Commission. The Trails Committee has received funding from the Community Preservation Act to purchase tools to help them maintain the various trails in Town. Most of these new tools are battery powered, which will require re-charging the batteries. There is no electricity at the Shed. It will cost \$8,100 to bring electricity to the Shed. This funding, since it is a one-time expense, will come from the Excess and Deficiency Fund (Free Cash).

3. Town Counsel Expenses **Requested \$40,000**

The Town is currently facing three Arbitration Cases with the Police Union. These cases are very expensive to defend. Based on the number of hearings anticipated, the Legal Budget will need an additional \$40,000 for this purpose. This funding, since it is a one-time expense, will come from the Excess and Deficiency Fund (Free Cash).

4. Insurance and Bonding **Requested: \$20,000**

Due to a number of natural events (lightning strikes, etc.), the Town has seen an 18% increase in Liability Insurance for Fiscal Year 2025. When the original budget was set, the Town had not received the final estimate and did not budget enough to cover the increase. There is currently an anticipated shortfall of \$20,000 in this Account. This funding, since it is a recurring cost, will come from the Unexpended Tax Capacity.

5. Police Expenses **Requested: \$6,400**

At the beginning of the Fiscal Year, there were three vacancies in the Police Department. Two of those vacancies have been filled with new recruits who need to attend the Police Academy. The cost to the Town for sending these recruits to the Academy is \$3,200 each, for a total of \$6,400. This funding, since it is a one-time expense, will come from the Excess and Deficiency Fund (Free Cash).

6. Fire Wages

Requested: \$139,411

The closing of the Nashoba Valley Medical Center (NVMC) has had an adverse impact on the Fire Department creating a severe situation for emergency medical responses by the Department. The NVMC was only three miles from the Center Fire Station. The Department now has the following distances to new primary hospitals: Emerson Hospital - 26 minutes at 18.5 miles; Leominster Hospital - 26 minutes at 16.3 miles; and St. Joseph Nashua - 23 minutes at 13.2 miles. In addition, other alternative hospitals have the following distances: Lowell General Hospital - 30 minutes at 14.2 miles; and Southern New Hampshire Medical Center - 30 minutes at 14.4 miles. These distances and travel times are from the geographic center of Town; thus the actual times and distances will vary. Depending on the time of day and traffic conditions, these locations can add as much as 15 minutes to the transport time. The Department has already seen the impact of delayed response times based on these distances and the influence this has had on the health and safety of Groton residents. On Tuesday, August 27th, between 6:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m., the Department made several transports to Emerson and St. Joseph's Hospitals. During those transports, the Ambulance averaged 1 hour 30 minutes total transport time. What is not included is the additional 20 minutes to refuel the ambulance prior to returning to the Station. The Station is not staffed for two hours during these transports, which is unacceptable, especially if another emergency call is received. This very situation happened and what is usually a 1-2 minute response time to leave the station is now taking over 10 minutes (Call EMTs or Mutual Aid Response). To address this, the Fire Chief has requested funding for two additional Firefighter/EMTs for the remainder of Fiscal Year 2025. This is a short-term solution and allows the Department to guarantee staffing for that second ambulance which is desperately needed. The increase to the budget would be an additional \$171,182.00 as follows:

Wages:	\$139,411
Gear and Clothing:	\$ 7,425
Health Insurance:	\$ <u>24,346</u>
 Total	 \$171,182

This additional staffing will provide the time needed for the Department/Town to evaluate the total impact of the closure of NVMC and bring back a formal proposal to the 2025 Spring Town Meeting as part of the Fiscal Year 2026 Budget. As the Town is unsure of the final expense at this time, I am recommending that the initial funding come from the Excess and Deficiency Fund (Free Cash) until a final formal proposal is presented.

7. Fire Expenses

Requested: \$7,425

See Explanation #6 above.

8. Council on Aging Expenses

Requested: \$7,500

The Council on Aging Director has requested funding for the mailing of a bi-monthly newsletter as well as a twice per year mailing to all registered voters in Groton . The goal of this newsletter mailing is to allow for more inclusivity, greater reach and to enhance community involvement in The Groton Center. The cost is approximately \$7,500. The bi-monthly newsletter mailing would be available to Groton residents aged 60 and older; those younger and/or residing outside of Groton will be encouraged to receive their newsletter in person at The Groton Center, or to access it online. The twice yearly newsletter mailing would be mailed to all registered voters in the town of Groton. At least once per year, this mailing will include a programming survey to determine the needs and wants of residents. Currently, the Council produces a bi-monthly newsletter that contains information on ongoing and upcoming programs as well as outreach information, such as health insurance reminders and updates, financial assistance programs and mental health resources. This newsletter is available via email, on the COA website as well as at the Center. A small number of Groton residents (6 currently) pay a \$5 per year fee to receive the newsletter via USPS. This cost is often a barrier for many Seniors who live on a limited income. In 2023 The Groton Center hosted 884 residents 16,526 times for various programs, events and outreach purposes. In order to reach those who are not currently visitors of The Groton Center, those who visit infrequently and those who are not able to utilize a computer/email or have transportation limitations, mailing the newsletter is a vital piece of the puzzle. This funding, since it is a recurring cost, will come from the Unexpended Tax Capacity.

9. Weed Management – Great Lakes

Requested: \$75,000

In 2012, the Town appropriated approximately \$100,000 to fund a major herbicide treatment of Lost Lake/Knops Pond to eradicate invasive weeds. This was a very successful endeavor. In 2019, the Lakes required another major treatment and this funding came from the Community Preservation Fund. Solitude Lake Management, the firm utilized by the Groton Lakes Association (GLA) to treat the Lakes, has determined that a major treatment is required in May 2025. The Community Preservation Committee (CPC) has determined that these periodic treatments are “maintenance” and not “preservation”, therefore CPA funds cannot be used again. While this is something that could be added to the Capital Budget, the optimal treatment time is May. Capital Budget Funds are not available until July. Waiting another year would be disastrous according to our consultant. To that end, funding is being requested at the 2024 Fall Town Meeting. The estimated cost for the treatment is \$100,000. To help offset the total cost, the GLA will privately raise \$25,000 toward the cost. The Town would then need to appropriate \$75,000 for the Treatment. This funding, since it is a one-time expense, will come from the Excess and Deficiency Fund (Free Cash).

10. Debt Service

Requested: (\$124,159)

Based on final borrowing terms on FY 2025 Bond issues, the total Debt Service Budget will be reduced by \$125,159. The primary reduction, and good news for Groton's Taxpayers, is the interest rate on the Bond Anticipation Note for the remaining Florence Roche Elementary School Construction Project came in under the original estimates, saving the taxpayers \$255,614 in Fiscal Year 2025. The Debt Budget will be adjusted to reflect borrowing for the Fire Department Ambulance approved at the 2023 Spring Town Meeting, as well as paying down the debt on the Highway Dump Truck approved at the 2022 Spring Town Meeting. The following is the proposed new Debt Budget for Fiscal Year 2025:

			<u>Original</u>	<u>Proposed</u>
2000	Long Term Debt - Principal Excluded	\$	2,025,000	\$ 2,025,000
2001	Long Term Debt - Principal Non-Excluded	\$	165,000	\$ 160,000
2002	Long Term Debt - Interest - Excluded	\$	1,340,252	\$ 1,340,252
2003	Long Term Debt - Interest - Non-Excluded	\$	110,364	\$ 106,974
2004	Short Term Debt - Principal - Town - Non Excluded	\$	123,526	\$ 247,532
2005A	Short Term Debt - Interest - Town - Non Excluded	\$	8,644	\$ 24,483
2005B	Short Term Debt - Interest - Town - Excluded	\$	1,283,825	\$ 1,028,211
DEPARTMENTAL TOTAL		\$	5,056,611	\$ 4,932,452

These issues will be funded as follows:

- Excluded Debt will be Decreased by \$255,614 from \$4,649,077 to \$4,393,463
- Debt within the Tax Levy will be decreased by \$8,390
- To fund the Short Term Principal and Short Term Interest Increases (total of \$139,845), \$104,955 will come from Ambulance receipts and \$34,890 will come from Free Cash.

11. Health Insurance

Requested: \$24,346

See Explanation #6 above.

Article 3: Transfer - Capital Stabilization Fund

Requested: \$900,000

The current balance in this fund is \$90,394. The Town's Financial Policies call for a balance in this Fund of 1.5% of the Operating Budget. If all the transfers and appropriations are approved under Article 2 of this Warrant, the total Fiscal Year Operating Budget will be \$51,299,820. This would require a Capital Stabilization Fund Balance of \$769,497. However, the anticipated Fiscal Year 2026 Capital Budget is \$898,991. Therefore, I am recommending that we transfer \$900,000 from Free Cash to add to this Fund.

Article 4: Transfer - Stabilization Fund

Requested: \$0

The current balance in the Stabilization Fund is \$2,617,198. Our Financial Policies state that this Fund should have a balance of five (5%) percent of our Operating Budget (\$51,299,820). This would require a balance of \$2,564,991. Therefore, I am recommending we not add anything to the fund at this time. This Article is being left on the Warrant in the event there is a market adjustment that would reduce the current fund to a level below the requisite 5%.

Article 5: Transfer - GDRSD Capital Stabilization Fund

Requested: \$0

The current balance in the GDRSD Capital Stabilization Fund is \$21,996. As of the writing of this report, the Town has not received the anticipated Fiscal Year 2026 Capital Plan of the Groton Dunstable Regional School District. This Article should be considered a place holder in the event we receive the Plan prior to the 2024 Fall Town Meeting. Should we not receive the Plan, funding for the District's Capital Plan will be provided at the 2025 Spring Town Meeting.

Article 7: Transfer Money into Water Enterprise Fund

Requested: \$60,000

This Article seeks the transfer of \$60,000 from the Water Enterprise Fund Surplus to the Fiscal Year 2025 Water Department's General Expense for the purchase of a new Pick-Up Truck for the Water Department.

Article 8: Transfer Money into Center Sewer Enterprise Fund

Requested: \$0

At this time, the Center Sewer Enterprise does not anticipate a need and will wait until Spring, 2025 to fund any need that arises. At this time, this article will remain on the Warrant should some need arise. In the event there is no need, this Article will be withdrawn.

Article 9: Transfer Into Four Corners Sewer Enterprise Fund

Requested: \$0

Similar to the Center Sewer Enterprise, the Four Corner Enterprise Article will most likely be withdrawn and dealt with in the Spring, 2025. Nevertheless, this Article will remain on the Warrant should some need arise.

Article 10: Debt Service for Middle School Track

Requested: \$100,000

From the Summary in the Warrant: Article 7 of the May 21, 2021 Spring Town Meeting appropriated \$1,405,374 for the new Middle School Track. The May 18, 2024 Special Town Meeting appropriated \$235,072 for Debt Service for this project. The Community Preservation Committee would like to increase this amount by \$100,000 to \$335,072 by increasing the amount toward the principal debt.

Article 11: Water Supply System – Heritage Landing

Requested: \$2,509,600

From the Summary in the Warrant: This article will allow the Select Board to borrow \$2,509,600 for the design and construction of a water supply system on Cow Pond Brook Road for the Heritage Landing Housing Development Project. The Town would borrow these funds contingent upon a successful award of a Mass Works Development Grant from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Said funds shall not be expended unless the grant is awarded to the Town.

Article 12: Security Improvements at Sargisson Beach

Requested: \$40,000

From the Summary in the Warrant: For the past two years, Sargisson Beach and the Parking Area has seen an increase in illegal dumping of trash and other related items that has impacted not only the ecosystem, but the recreational integrity of the Beach. The Town has taken some steps to improve security, but better cameras and related equipment is necessary to provide protection and oversight of the area. The Town does not have the personnel to patrol the area at all times and these security improvements will mitigate these issues at the Beach and parking area. The Town will be requesting \$40,000 to fund these security improvements. This funding will come from the Excess and Deficiency Fund (Free Cash).

Article 13: Purchase Budget Software

Requested: \$35,000

From the Summary in the Warrant: This Article seeks funding for the Town's Finance Department to purchase software for the creation of the Town's Annual Operating and Capital Budgets. For the last 16 years, the Town Manager has relied on Excel to create the Town's Budget. While this has been an adequate format, it is time to move the Town forward. With the current Town Manager expected to retire in the next few years, establishing a new formal Budget Process with strong historical data will allow for a seamless transition with regard to budgeting. The Town will be requesting \$35,000 to fund the Software. This funding will come from the Excess and Deficiency Fund (Free Cash).

Article 14: Complete Streets Grant Engineering

Requested: \$35,000

From the Summary in the Warrant: The Complete Streets Committee has successfully received over \$750,000 in grant funding from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts under their Complete Streets Program. Some of the projects covered by the funding have been sidewalks on West Main Street and Lowell Road, along with Pedestrian Crossing Devices along Main Street. The Committee is in the process of preparing another Grant Application this Fall. One of the requirements for this

program is that the Town has to cover engineering costs for any approved project. The Committee is seeking \$35,000 for this purpose. This funding will come from the Excess and Deficiency Fund (Free Cash).

Article 15: Amend Purpose of CPA Project – Baseball Diamond Requested: \$80,000

From the Summary in the Warrant: The 2023 Spring Town Meeting appropriated \$80,000 for improvements to the major league diamond at Town Field. This funding is not enough to design and construct the improvements. The Town Manager has approached the Community Preservation Committee and asked them to use these funds to conduct a comprehensive study of Town Field and come back with proposed improvements to enhance the recreational facility. It is the intent of the Town Manager to submit a formal project to the CPC for Fiscal Year 2026.

Should the Select Board and Finance Committee agree with all the proposed Free Cash Transfers, we will need to use \$1,374,072 leaving an anticipated Free Cash balance of \$1,288,928. In the Spring of 2025, we will need about \$300,000 in Free Cash to cover Debt Service, OPEB Trust Fund and Department Head Performance Incentives, leaving a balance of \$988,928 in anticipated Free Cash. The one issue that will need to be addressed is the GDRSD Capital Plan. The request is usually around \$500,000, so there should be a sufficient amount of Free Cash to cover that expense as well. Based on final anticipated new Growth for FY 2025 and the Final Cherry Sheet Estimates received from the State, the Budget approved at Town Meeting is currently \$62,811 under the anticipated FY 2025 Levy Limit. For the line items that are reoccurring and will be funded through taxation, we estimate utilizing \$19,110 from this amount, which will leave the Town \$43,701 under the anticipated Levy Limit for Fiscal Year 2025. We had estimated a tax rate of \$15.61 at the May 18, 2024 Special Town Meeting. Based on the changes at the Fall Town Meeting that we are recommending, the anticipated tax rate is \$15.53. The following chart is a breakdown of the anticipated rate:

	<u>Actual</u> <u>FY 2024</u>	<u>Proposed</u> <u>FY 2025</u>	<u>Dollar</u> <u>Change</u>	<u>Percent</u> <u>Change</u>
Levy Capacity Used	\$ 36,587,742	\$ 38,096,508	\$ 1,508,766	4.12%
Tax Rate on Levy Capacity Used	\$ 13.36	\$ 13.80	\$ 0.44	3.29%
Average Tax Bill	\$ 9,284	\$ 9,590	\$ 306	3.29%
Excluded Debt	\$ 4,732,786	\$ 4,776,976	\$ 44,190	0.93%
Tax Rate on Excluded Debt	\$ 1.73	\$ 1.73	\$ -	0.00%
Average Tax Bill	\$ 1,202	\$ 1,202	\$ -	0.00%
Final Levy Used	\$ 41,320,528	\$ 42,873,484	\$ 1,552,956	3.76%
Final Tax Rate	\$ 15.09	\$ 15.53	\$ 0.44	2.92%
Average Tax Bill	\$ 10,487	\$ 10,792	\$ 306	2.92%

Attached to this memorandum is the updated Tax Levy Calculation that notes changes from what was proposed in the Spring, 2024. I look forward to discussing this in more detail with the Select Board and Finance Committee at Monday's Public Hearing.

MWH/rjb

cc: Patricia DuFresne – Assistant Finance Director/Town Accountant
Hannah Moller – Treasurer/Tax Collector
Michael Hartnett – Assistant Treasurer/Tax Collector
Megan Foster – Principal Assessor
Melisa Doig – Human Resources Director
Kara Cruikshank – Executive Assistant

FISCAL YEAR 2025 LEVY LIMIT CALCULATION

Revised: 9/5/2024

TO CALCULATE THE FY 2024 LEVY LIMIT

FY 2023 LEVY LIMIT	\$	35,383,886	
ADD AMENDED FY 2023 NEW GROWTH	\$	-	
ADD TWO AND ONE HALF PERCENT	\$	884,597	
ADD FY 2024 NEW GROWTH	\$	564,180	
ADD FY 2024 OVERRIDE	\$	-	
FY 2024 SUBTOTAL	\$	36,832,663	\$ 36,832,663 FY 2024 LEVY LIMIT
FY 2024 LEVY CEILING	\$	68,459,320	

TO CALCULATE THE FY 2025 LEVY LIMIT

FY 2024 LEVY LIMIT	\$	36,832,663	
ADD AMENDED FY 2024 NEW GROWTH	\$	-	
ADD TWO AND ONE HALF PERCENT	\$	920,817	
ADD FY 2025 NEW GROWTH	\$	343,028	Increased by \$41,228 based on current expected New Growth of \$22,732,120
ADD FY 2025 OVERRIDE	\$	-	
FY 2025 SUBTOTAL	\$	38,096,508	\$ 38,096,508 FY 2025 LEVY LIMIT
FY 2025 LEVY CEILING	\$	68,459,320	

Revised: 9/5/2024

TOWN OF GROTON, MASSACHUSETTS FY 2025 TOTAL TAX LEVY CALCULATION

FY 2025 LEVY LIMIT	\$	38,096,508
CAPITAL EXCLUSION	\$	-
DEBT EXCLUSION - TOWN	\$	4,393,463
FY 2025 EXCLUDED BOND REDUCTION	\$	(1,109)
DEBT EXCLUSION - SEWER	\$	-
DEBT EXCLUSION - WATER	\$	-
DEBT EXCLUSION - GDRSD	\$	384,622
SUB-TOTAL - EXCLUSIONS	\$	4,776,976
TOTAL TAX LEVY	\$	42,873,484

Decreased by
\$255,614 based
on lower interest
rate on FloRo
Short Term Debt

**TOWN OF GROTON
FISCAL YEAR 2025
REVENUE ESTIMATES**

	BUDGETED FY 2024	ESTIMATED FY 2025	CHANGE
PROPERTY TAX REVENUE	\$ 36,832,663	\$ 38,096,508	\$ 1,263,845
DEBT EXCLUSIONS	\$ 4,732,786	\$ 4,776,976	\$ 44,190
CHERRY SHEET - STATE AID	\$ 1,116,143	\$ 1,152,082	\$ 35,939
UNEXPENDED TAX CAPACITY	\$ 244,920	\$ -	\$ (244,920)
LOCAL RECEIPTS:			
General Revenue:			
Motor Vehicle Excise Taxes	\$ 1,820,583	\$ 1,820,583	\$ -
Meals Tax and Room Occupancy Tax	\$ 400,000	\$ 400,000	\$ -
Marijuana Revenue	\$ 150,000	\$ 75,000	\$ (75,000)
Penalties & Interest on Taxes	\$ 110,000	\$ 110,000	\$ -
Payments in Lieu of Taxes	\$ 371,500	\$ 395,443	\$ 23,943
Other Charges for Services	\$ 99,000	\$ 15,000	\$ (84,000)
Fees	\$ 392,000	\$ 400,000	\$ 8,000
Rentals	\$ 40,000	\$ 55,000	\$ 15,000
Library Revenues	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Other Departmental Revenue	\$ 800,000	\$ 854,063	\$ 54,063
Licenses and Permits	\$ 429,300	\$ 429,300	\$ -
Fines and Forfeits	\$ 20,000	\$ 10,000	\$ (10,000)
Investment Income	\$ 90,000	\$ 243,744	\$ 153,744
Recreation Revenues	\$ 700,000	\$ 750,000	\$ 50,000
Miscellaneous Recurring	\$ 75,000	\$ 94,000	\$ 19,000
Sub-total - General Revenue	\$ 5,497,383	\$ 5,652,133	\$ 154,750
Other Revenue:			
Free Cash	\$ 818,137	\$ 1,062,205	\$ 244,068
Capital Stabilization Fund for GDRSD	\$ 253,407	\$ 295,767	\$ 42,360
Stabilization Fund for Tax Rate Relief	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Capital Asset Stabilization Fund	\$ 620,142	\$ 683,500	\$ 63,358
EMS/Conservation Fund Receipts Reserve	\$ 525,951	\$ 454,955	\$ (70,996)
Community Preservation Funds	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Water Department Surplus	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Sewer Department Surplus	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Insurance Reimbursements	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Bond Surplus Transfer	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Coronavirus Recovery Funds	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Sub-total - Other Revenue	\$ 2,217,637	\$ 2,496,427	\$ 278,790
WATER DEPARTMENT ENTERPRISE	\$ 2,090,822	\$ 2,310,267	\$ 219,444
SEWER DEPARTMENT ENTERPRISE	\$ 889,499	\$ 1,250,475	\$ 360,976
LOCAL ACCESS CABLE ENTERPRISE	\$ 230,137	\$ -	\$ (230,137)
FOUR CORNER SEWER ENTERPRISE	\$ 77,811	\$ 98,040	\$ 20,229
STORMWATER UTILITY ENTERPRISE	\$ 242,520	\$ 247,851	\$ 5,331
TOTAL ESTIMATED REVENUE	\$ 53,929,802	\$ 56,080,758	\$ 2,150,956

Increased by \$364,072 to reflect various Line Item Increases:
 Select Board - \$28,500
 Town Manager - \$8,100
 Town Counsel - \$40,000
 Police Expenses - \$6,400
 Fire Wages - \$139,411
 Fire Expenses - \$7,425
 Weed Management - \$75,000
 Short Term Prin - \$34,890
 Health Ins. - \$24,346

Increased by \$104,955 for New Ambulance Debt Service

**FISCAL YEAR 2025
TAX LEVY CALCULATIONS**

Revised: 9/5/2024

FY 2025 PROPOSED EXPENDITURES

TOWN MANAGER - Proposed Budget

General Government	\$	2,574,970
Land Use Departments	\$	520,749
Protection of Persons and Property	\$	4,668,315
Regional School Districts	\$	28,739,026
Department of Public Works	\$	2,389,516
Library and Citizen Services	\$	2,275,457
Debt Service	\$	4,932,462
Employee Benefits	\$	5,199,336

Increased by
\$96,600 - Select
Board by \$28,500;
Town Manager by
\$8,100; Town
Counsel by \$40,000;
and Insurance by
\$20,000

Increased by
\$153,236 - Police -
\$6,400; Fire Wages -
\$139,411; and Fire
Expenses - 7,425

Increased by
\$82,500 - COA -
\$7,500; and Weed
Management -
\$75,000

Increased by
\$24,346 for Health
Insurance

Sub-Total - Operating Budget

- A. TOTAL DEPARTMENTAL BUDGET REQUESTS
- B. CAPITAL BUDGET REQUESTS
- C. ENTERPRISE FUND REQUESTS
- D. COMMUNITY PRESERVATION REQUEST

Decreased by
(\$124,159) - Long
Term Prin -
(\$5,000); Long
Term Int. -
(\$3,390); Short
Term Prin -
\$124,006; Short
Term Int - \$15,839;
and Short Term
Excluded -
(\$255,614)

\$	51,299,820
\$	51,299,820
\$	862,144
\$	3,590,968

OTHER AMOUNTS TO BE RAISED

- 1. Amounts certified for tax title purposes
- 2. Debt and interest charges not included
- 3. Final court judgments
- 4. Total Overlay deficits of prior years
- 5. Total cherry sheet offsets
- 6. Revenue deficits
- 7. Offset Receipts
- 8. Authorized deferral of Teachers' Pay
- 9. Snow and Ice deficit
- 10. Other

E. TOTAL OTHER AMOUNTS TO BE RAISED	\$	32,678
F. STATE AND COUNTY CHERRY SHEET CHARGES	\$	101,446
G. ALLOWANCE FOR ABATEMENTS AND EXEMPTIONS	\$	150,000

TOTAL PROPOSED EXPENDITURES \$ 56,037,057

FY 2025 ESTIMATED RECEIPTS

ESTIMATED TAX LEVY

Levy Limit	\$	38,096,508
Debt Exclusion	\$	4,776,976

A. ESTIMATED TAX LEVY	\$	42,873,484
B. CHERRY SHEET ESTIMATED RECEIPTS	\$	1,152,082
C. LOCAL RECEIPTS NOT ALLOCATED	\$	5,652,133
D. OFFSET RECEIPTS	\$	-
E. ENTERPRISE FUNDS	\$	3,906,632
F. COMMUNITY PRESERVATION FUNDS	\$	-
G. FREE CASH	\$	1,062,205

OTHER AVAILABLE FUNDS

1. Stabilization Fund	\$	-
2. Capital Asset Fund	\$	683,500
3. GDRSD Capital Asset Fund	\$	295,767
4. EMS/Conservation Fund	\$	454,955
5. Bond Surplus Transfer	\$	-
6. Coronavirus Recovery Funds	\$	-

H. OTHER AVAILABLE FUNDS	\$	1,434,222
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TOTAL ESTIMATED RECEIPTS \$ 56,080,758

FY 2025 SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) \$ 43,701

**TOWN OF GROTON, MASSACHUSETTS
DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE
TAX RATE RECAPITULATION**

I. TAX RATE SUMMARY

la. Total amount to be raised (from IIe)	\$	56,037,056.72
lb. Total estimated receipts and other revenue sources (from IIIe)	\$	13,207,274.45
lc. Tax levy (Ia minus Ib)	\$	42,829,782.27
ld. Distribution of Tax Rates and Levies		

CLASS	(b) Levy Percentage (from LA -5)	(c) C above times each percent in col (b)	(d) Valuation by Class (from LA -4)	(e) Tax Rates (c)x(d)x1000	(f) Levy by Class (d)x(e)/1000
RESIDENTIAL	95.1073%	\$ 40,734,244.23	\$ 2,623,413,570.00	\$ 15.53	\$ 40,734,244.23
NET OF EXEMPT					\$ -
OPEN SPACE	0.0000%	\$ -	\$ -		\$ -
COMMERCIAL	3.4766%	\$ 1,489,032.91	\$ 95,898,407.00	\$ 15.53	\$ 1,489,032.91
NET OF EXEMPT					\$ -
INDUSTRIAL	0.4695%	\$ 201,103.52	\$ 12,951,700.00	\$ 15.53	\$ 201,103.52
SUBTOTAL	99.0535%		\$ 2,732,263,677.00		\$ 42,424,380.66
PERSONAL	0.9465%	\$ 405,401.61	\$ 26,109,140.00	\$ 15.53	\$ 405,401.61
TOTAL	100.0000%		\$ 2,758,372,817.00		\$ 42,829,782.27

Revised: 9/5/2024

Operating Budget Comparison - Fiscal Year 2024 Vs. Fiscal Year 2025

<u>Category</u>	<u>FY 2024</u>	<u>FY 2025</u>	<u>Dollar Difference</u>	<u>Percentage Change</u>
Municipal Wages	\$ 8,853,135	\$ 9,051,606	\$ 198,472	2.24%
Employee Benefits	\$ 4,930,663	\$ 5,199,336	\$ 268,673	5.45%
Sub-Total - Wages and Benefits	\$ 13,783,798	\$ 14,250,942	\$ 467,145	3.39%
Municipal Expenses	\$ 3,106,592	\$ 3,377,400	\$ 270,808	8.72%
Sub-Total -	\$ 16,890,390	\$ 17,628,342	\$ 737,953	4.37%
Debt Service - In-Levy Only	\$ 474,605	\$ 538,989	\$ 64,384	13.57%
Total - All Municipal	\$ 17,364,995	\$ 18,167,331	\$ 802,337	4.62%
Nashoba Tech	\$ 762,656	\$ 966,719	\$ 204,063	26.76%
Groton-Dunstable Operating	\$ 25,937,716	\$ 26,412,384	\$ 474,668	1.83%
Groton Operating Grant	\$ -	\$ 619,000	\$ 619,000	100.00%
Groton-Dunstable Debt	\$ 58,814	\$ 60,534	\$ 1,720	2.92%
Sub-Total - Education	\$ 26,759,186	\$ 28,058,637	\$ 1,299,451	4.86%
Grand Total - Town Budget	\$ 44,124,181	\$ 46,225,968	\$ 2,101,788	4.76%



Town of Groton

173 Main Street
Groton, Massachusetts 01450-1237
Tel: (978) 448-1162
Fax: (978) 448-1123

Department of Public Works

Brian Callahan
DPW Director-In-Training

To: Mark W. Haddad – Town Manager
From: Brian Callahan – DPW Director-In-Training
Subject: Squannacook River Dam Removal/Repair
Date: August 26, 2024

The purpose of this Memorandum is to update/advise you on the potential removal/repair of the Squannacook River Dam. In spring of 2023, DPW Director, Tom Delaney, began the process of applying for a grant to determine if it is feasible to remove the Dam on the Squannacook River, in West Groton. In the Fall of 2023, the feasibility study was started and on June 2024, the study found in favor of removing the Dam. The ownership of the Dam is split in ½ with the Town of Groton owning one side and Helmar Neilson owning the second half - the Shirley side. The Dam on the Shirley side is privately owned and the Town of Shirley will not work with the Town of Groton on cost of the Dam removal or improvements. Attached is a list of advantages for keeping and or removing The Squannacook Dam.

BC/jh
Enclosure

Advantages of Removal of The Squannacook Dam:

- **The Town of Groton is responsible for inspection of the Dam.**

With it being classified as a high hazard Dam, there is a yearly inspection at a cost of \$1,500. At the completion of the inspection, a Report on the Dam's condition is sent into the Department of Conservation and Recreation's Office of Dam Safety.

- **Every 5 years the Town of Groton needs to upgrade the Emergency Action Plan for the Dam.**

As stated, the Dam is a high hazard Dam – this means the Dam is located where failure of the Dam could cause loss of life and damage to home(s), industrial or commercial facilities, secondary highway(s) or railroad(s), or cause the interruption of the use or service of relatively important facilities. Another major concern if the Dam fails is the loss of the Route 225 Bridge over the Squannacook River, as the head wall of the Dam supports the Bridge.

- **Unpredictable costs may materialize.**

In addition to the above mentioned costs, there are other issues that arise from time to time that the Town is responsible to handle. For example, in the spring of 2024, removal of trees was needed at the top of Dam. The DPW had to hire a contractor and crane at a cost of \$3,400.00. In addition, in 2015 the Town of Groton had already made improvements to the Groton side of the Dam at a cost of \$300,000. A recent Engineering Report has estimated the cost of repairing the remaining Dam (Shirley side) would be between \$500,000 and \$800,000.

- **Other Factors**

- The removal of Dam will have positive impact on the fishery and wildlife.
- The Town can apply for grants to cover the cost of removal of the Dam. The Town would be required to provide a financial contribution (match) to any grant. The Town's match could include in-kind services (DPW time and labor) or an annual contribution of \$35,000 to \$70,000 over a two to five year period. The DPW would also need to help with removal of debris.
- Removal of the Dam will result in restoring the aquatic habitat of the Squannacook River.
- Liability will be eliminated from the town.
- The Squannacook River is a cold-water fish resource. Removing the Dam is expected to lead to higher dissolved oxygen in the former Dam impoundment and lower water temperatures both in the former impoundment and up to 0.8 miles downstream from the Dam. Both water quality changes would enhance the river habitat for cold - water fish.

Advantages of Keeping the Squannacook Dam:

- The Squannacook Dam is in the center of West Groton and offers a beautiful waterfront view from route 225 and RiverCourt Residences.
- Removal construction will be a burden on RiverCourt Residences and local homes.
- With removal of the Dam the water level will drop the water in the pond to approximately 3 feet.
- Some wells in Shirley would be of concern and would possibly need attention.
- At one time, the Dam was used for hydro power for the mill. It is possible that this may again be an option.
- Once major repairs of the Dam are completed, it is estimated that annual maintenance costs will only be approximately \$5,000 a year.

Other issues for consideration

- Town Counsel has begun a review of the issues related to repairing/removing the Squannacook River Dam. An issue that has arisen is the actual ownership of the Dam in Shirley. According to Town Counsel's current review, a Deed from 2000 states that the Town of Groton sold 10.1 acres of land with the mill buildings to RiverCourt Limited Partnership. The deed specifically excludes the Dam as shown on a 1978 plan. The Town also agreed to maintain the Dam at its cost to prevent loss or damage to RiverCourt. The reservation is for the entire Dam, not just the portion located in Groton. While Town Counsel is still trying to determine if the Town acquired the entire interest in the Dam, it appears that the Town could only reserve the entire Dam if it owned the entire Dam in the first place. He expects to find that Groton owns the entire Dam.
- Should it be determined that the Shirley side of the Dam remains in private ownership, the Town could sue the owner for the other portion, either in contribution for costs or for nuisance. The Town cannot compel the Town of Shirley to take the Dam through the tax foreclosure procedure. That said, the Town of Groton can purchase the Shirley side of the Dam from the current owner.