

FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, September 10, 2024
Town Hall, 1st Floor Meeting Room
173 Main St, Groton, MA 01450
Approved 9/30/24

Finance Committee Members Present: Bud Robertson, Chair; Mary Linskey; Scott Whitefield; David Manugian; Mike Sulprizio, Gary Green, Kristina Lengyel

Also Present: Patricia Dufresne, Assistant Finance Director/Town Accountant; Mark Haddad, Town Manager, Judy Anderson, Resident; Art Cheeks, Fire Chief

Mr. Robertson called the Finance Committee to order at 7:00 p.m. & reviewed the meeting agenda.

Minutes - Members noted a spelling error to be corrected on the minutes from the candidate interview meeting on 7/15/24. On a motion by Mr. Manugian, seconded by Ms. Linskey, the Finance Committee voted unanimously to approve and release the minutes (as amended) from their 7/15/24 candidate interview meeting. (The Vote = 6-0-0 Mr. Whitefield was not present for this vote). On a motion by Mr. Manugian, seconded by Ms. Linskey, the Finance Committee voted unanimously to approve and release the minutes from their 7/15/24 joint meeting with the Select Board (The Vote = 6-0-0 Mr. Whitefield was not present for this vote).

Charter Review Committee Appointment – Mr. Robertson explained that the FinCom has two appointments that they can make for membership to this committee, and one of these can come from their own ranks, and one from the public, or both members can be chosen from public applications that are still being submitted for consideration. He noted that this is an important committee that is concerned with all operations of the Town (not just financial concerns) and he would encourage one of the FinCom members to volunteer to serve. Mr. Haddad noted that one of the topics to be taken up would be a change to the way Police and Fire Chiefs are appointed (to encourage promotion from within the organization). He went on to say that two candidates from the public had submitted applications for FinCom consideration thus far. Mr. Sulprizio declared an interest in serving on the Charter Review Committee. On a motion by Mr. Green, seconded by Mr. Manugian, the FinCom voted in the majority to appoint Mr. Sulprizio to the Charter Review Committee. (The Vote = 5-0-1 Mr. Sulprizio abstained; Mr. Whitefield was not present for this vote).

Review of Fall Town Meeting Warrant Articles

Article 2 #6 Fire Wages – Fire Chief Cheeks presented his dire assessment of the recent impact to Groton of the closure of the Nashoba Valley Medical Center. He noted that ambulance turnaround times are significantly higher (in some cases increasing from 20 minutes to 2 hours) and that many surrounding communities are facing similar challenges. Groton's experience has been particularly difficult as the department is relatively lightly staffed (based on N.F.P.A standards) and geographically equidistant from the hospitals most often used for transport. While there are different ideas being discussed by other neighboring Fire Chiefs, there is a need for an immediate stop-gap solution for Groton. The option of adopting an ALS service model is extremely expensive and as paramedics are very much in demand at the moment, may be difficult to achieve in the short run. Chief Cheeks said that he may be coming back with an FY26 budget proposal that includes permanently

hiring an additional 8 full time fire fighter/EMTs. For the moment, he is requesting funding to pay 2 additional full time FireFighter/EMTs for the second half of fiscal FY25, as well as funding for their benefits and turnout gear. Mr. Robertson expressed concern that new hires don't always commit to staying with the Town. Chief Cheeks thought that their employment agreement can be written in such a way as to encourage longevity. In response to a question from Ms. Lengyel, he mentioned that he cannot rely on On-Call members (or mutual aid) to fill this gap, he needs permanent full-time officers. As it is, his team has fallen behind on inspections and educational programs are suffering. The group discussed the Governor's grant offer of \$250,000 to help mitigate this crisis, and noted that it was unfortunately a relatively insignificant amount and that this funding could only be used for equipment and not wages. Mr. Haddad said he would probably use it to offset the debt service for the new ambulance. Mr. Green asked about the number of ambulance trips taken daily; Chief Cheeks replied that there are between 5 and 7 trips daily. Ms. Lengyel asked about the lead time he is considering for these hires. The Chief replied that he would like to fill the positions within a month or so, and bring in academy-trained people if possible. He noted that even if the hospital is purchased immediately, it would take 6 to 12 months before it could re-open for business. Mr. Manugian wondered whether the amount requested would be enough given the competitive environment. The group discussed increasing the wage supplement, and decided to support an amount that was \$15,000 higher than the original request. The fire wage proposal was increased to \$154,411 to give the Chief latitude to hire officers at the 3rd year rate (which is more competitive) if he feels it is appropriate. Mr. Haddad cautioned that Fire Fighters are Group 4 employees, and therefore the Town will see a spike in pension costs in two years. Chief Cheeks said he would apply for the Federal Safer Grant which softens the blow to the budget over a period of 3 years. Mr. Green asked if there is sufficient call volume in Groton currently to consider adopting a paramedic model. Chief Cheeks replied that approximately 31% of calls could benefit from ALS. He reiterated that requiring paramedic training is expensive and it will take time to implement. He went on to say that he wants to educate the public about exactly what kinds of services our EMTs can perform. On a motion by Mr. Green, seconded by Ms. Linskey, the Finance Committee voted unanimously to support funding \$154,411 for FY25 Fire Wages from Free Cash. (The Vote= 7-0-0)

Article 2 #1 Select Board Expenses: Replacement Front Door Prescott Building \$28,500 - Mr. Haddad explained that this expenditure is critical for security purposes and is most likely ineligible for CPC funding as it is considered maintenance. On a motion by Mr. Manugian, seconded by Ms. Linskey, the Finance Committee voted unanimously to support funding \$28,500 for Prescott Doors from Free Cash in FY25. (The Vote = 7-0-0)

Article 2 #2 Town Mgr. Expenses: Electricity for Parks Shed \$8,100 – Ms. Lengyel wondered if there were any Parks user fees in place to offset the cost of bringing electric to this shed. Mr. Haddad replied that as of right now, there are no user fees. Mr. Green opposes this as it does not seem like a critical need. He suggested looking for alternative funding. Mr. Sulprizio agreed that user fees should be considered. On a motion by Mr. Whitefield, seconded by Mr. Green, the Finance Committee voted in the majority to support funding \$8,100 from Free Cash to bring electricity to the Parks shed. (The Vote= 6-0-1 Mr. Green voted against)

Article 2 #3 Town Counsel Expenses: Arbitration Costs \$40,000 – Mr. Haddad observed that it's not really an option not to pay these legal fees. If it is not adjusted to the budget now, there would have to be a Reserve Fund transfer request, or it would be raised on the Tax Recap. On a motion by Mr. Manugian, seconded by Ms. Linskey, the Finance Committee voted unanimously to support funding \$40,000 from Free Cash for FY25 Town Counsel expenses. (The Vote: 7-0-0)

Article 2 #4: Insurance & Bonding Expenses \$20,000 – On a motion by Mr. Manugian, seconded by Ms. Linskey, the Finance Committee voted unanimously to support funding of \$20,000 from taxation to increase the Insurance & Bonding FY25 line item. (The Vote= 7-0-0)

Article 2 #5: Police Expenses \$6,400 – Mr. Haddad explained that we have just filled 2 of the 3 vacancies in the Police Department. This expense is necessary to cover the \$3,200 cost for Academy training for each of them. Additionally, these new officers have signed agreements stating they will reimburse the Town for this cost if they leave within the next 3 years. Mr. Haddad said he had set the Police budget leaner than in previous years, which is why he is bringing this request forward now. Ms. Dufresne noted that the Police Department has already spent more than 35% of their training budget. On a motion by Mr. Green, seconded by Mr. Whitefield, the Finance Committee voted unanimously to support funding \$6,400 from Free Cash for the FY25 Police Expense line item. (The Vote= 7-0-0)

Article 2 #7: Fire Expenses \$7,425 – On a motion by Mr. Manugian, seconded by Ms. Linskey, the Finance Committee voted unanimously to support funding \$7,425 from Free Cash for FY25 Fire Expenses (turnout gear and uniforms). (The Vote= 7-0-0)

Article 2 #8: COA Expenses \$7,500 – Mr. Haddad informed the group that this spending would be used for mailing a newsletter twice yearly to all Groton residents. Some of the members were concerned that this was not deferred until the FY26 budget cycle where it could be considered in the context of the entire budget. Mr. Haddad offered to find out whether the FY25 cost is prorated for a partial fiscal year. Mr. Haddad pointed out that Main Street Bank is now sponsoring a monthly lunch series that frees up \$500 to cover the costs of the building monitor. The COA Director is very proactively searching for ways to generate income to offset her programming needs. Mr. Manugian asked whether this could be done via a line-item transfer, but Mr. Haddad felt it was too early in the fiscal year to identify which line items might have sufficient surplus to draw on. On a motion by Mr. Manugian, seconded by Ms. Lengyel, the Finance Committee voted in the majority to support funding \$7,500 from Taxation for FY25 COA newsletter mailing expenses. (The Vote= 5-1-1 Mr. Whitefield deferred pending information on total annual cost, and Mr. Green voted against)

Article 2 #9: Weed Mgmt. Groton Lakes \$88,500 – Mr. Haddad noted that while this request should have been part of the Capital Budget, he is bringing it forward now because it is time sensitive. The spot treatment on the lake got a late start, and the summer heat subsequently exacerbated the weed problem. Waiting a year would be problematic, as the treatment needs to be done in the April time frame. He is pleased that the Lakes Association has agreed to partner with the Town to solve this problem and the GLA has promised to raise \$35,000 for the project. Mr. Green wondered if DPW could aid this effort; Mr. Haddad said it was not in their purview. Mr. Green was concerned that the Lakes Association has a conflict of interest on this matter. Ms. Anderson asked if other ponds receive this type of treatment, and Mr. Haddad replied that we treat other ponds for weeds regularly (i.e. Baddacook and Duck Pond). Mr. Sulprizio reiterated that the Town should be considering user fees here as well to help offset these maintenance costs. Mr. Manugian mentioned that other communities have noticed excessive weed growth due to the summer heat this past year. Mr. Green would like to hear what other relevant committees think about this spending before he takes a position. On a motion by Mr. Manugian, seconded by Ms. Linskey, the Finance Committee voted in the majority to support funding of \$88,500 from Free Cash for FY25 Weed Management treatment (The Vote = 5-1-1 Mr. Green deferred and Ms. Lengyel voted against).

Article 2 #10 Debt Service (\$124,159) – Mr. Haddad explained that the actual debt service to be paid on the Fire Truck came in lower than estimated, and the Town did not end up borrowing for PFAS. These factors have resulted in a lower debt service cost than was originally appropriated. Overall, excluded debt can be reduced by \$255,614, In-Levy Debt will decrease by \$8,390 and Short-Term Interest will increase by \$139,845 due to borrowing for the ambulance (\$104,955 will be funded from Ambulance Receipts and \$34,890 will be funded from Free Cash) On a motion by Mr. Manugian, seconded by Ms. Linskey, the Finance Committee voted unanimously to support reducing the Debt Service appropriation by \$124,159. (The Vote 7-0-0)

Article 2 #11 Health Insurance for Partial Year Fire Fighters \$24,346 – Full-Time Fire Fighters to be hired in response to the closure of the NVMC must be paid benefits including Health Insurance. The estimate of that cost for two new hires is \$24,346. On a motion by Mr. Manugian, seconded by Ms. Linskey, the Finance Committee voted unanimously to support funding \$24,346 from Free Cash for the FY25 Health Insurance line item. (The Vote: 7-0-0)

Article 3 Transfer to Capital Stabilization \$900,000– Given the current balance in the Cap Stab account, Mr. Haddad estimated that the Town would need to deposit \$900,000 to remain in compliance with Groton’s financial policy guidelines. Mr. Green felt this number was higher than normal. Mr. Haddad disagreed saying the last couple of years the capital investment has been trending upward. He added that the FY26 cost increase is largely driven by DPW equipment needs. He reminded the group that if the capital purchases are not made, the funds remain in the account. On a motion by Mr. Manugian, second by Ms. Lengyel, the Finance Committee voted unanimously to support a transfer of \$900,000 from Free Cash to Capital Stabilization. (The Vote 7-0-0)

Article 4 Transfer to General Stabilization – Given the current balance in the General Stabilization account, Mr. Haddad believes that no additional deposit is necessary at this time. This may be re-evaluated after Market Value changes are posted in September. On a motion by Mr. Manugian, seconded by Ms. Linskey, the Finance Committee voted to recommend no transfer to General Stabilization at this time. (The Vote 7-0-0)

Article 5 Transfer to GDRSD Capital Stabilization – Mr. Haddad informed the group that GDRSD is not ready to share their capital plan; he is recommending that the Town fund this account at the Spring Town Meeting rather than tie up funds prematurely. On a motion by Mr. Manugian, seconded by Ms. Linskey, the Finance Committee voted to recommend no transfer be made to GDRSD Capital Stabilization at this time. (The Vote 7-0-0)

Article 6 Terminate Opioid Special Purpose Stabilization Fund – This special purpose stabilization fund was set up to receive State opioid remediation settlement payments before Governor Healey signed Chapter 77 of the Acts of 2023 which permit towns to use special revenue funds instead. Special revenue funds do not require Town Meeting appropriation, only the approval of the Select Board, giving the Town more flexibility in utilizing the funds. On a motion by Mr. Green, seconded by Ms. Linskey, the Finance Committee voted unanimously to support termination of the Opioid Special Purpose Stabilization Fund. (The Vote: 7-0-0)

Articles 7 Transfer to Water Enterprise Fund \$60,000 – On a motion by Mr. Green, seconded by Ms. Linskey, the Finance Committee voted unanimously to support a transfer of \$60,000 from Water E&D to Water Dept Operations for FY25. (The Vote: 7-0-0)

Articles 8 & 9 Transfer to Sewer & 4 Corners Sewer Enterprise Funds - On a motion by Mr. Green, seconded by Mr. Manugian, the Finance Committee voted unanimously to support a transfer of funds from either the Sewer Enterprise or 4 Corners Sewer Enterprise E&D to their respective Operating Accounts for FY25. Currently, no transfer requests have been received. (The Vote: 7-0-0)

Article 10 Debt Service for Middle School Track \$100,000 – Due to the failure at Spring Town Meeting of the Outdoor Fitness Court project, the CPC has additional funding that they would like to use to reduce the principal for the Middle School Track debt. The CPC has a plan to pay this debt off within 5 years. On a motion by Mr. Green, seconded by Ms. Linskey, the Finance Committee voted unanimously to support additional debt service of \$100,000 funded from CPC Unallocated Reserves. (The Vote 7-0-0)

Article 11 Water Supply Heritage Landing \$2,509,600 – Mr. Haddad explained that this project proposes to bring water mains down Cown Pond Brook Road almost as far as the DPW compound. This article authorizes borrowing, but that authorization is contingent on winning a grant award for the full amount from MassWorks. On a motion by Mr. Manugian, seconded by Ms. Lengyel, the Finance Committee voted unanimously to support authorization to borrow \$2,509,600 for the Heritage Landing Project contingent on receiving a MassWorks grant for the full cost. (The Vote: 7-0-0)

Article 12 Security at Sargisson Beach \$40,000 – The current cameras are not as useful as they could be due to the fact that they only take still pictures and are difficult to access and maintain. Given the recent resident complaints from that location, Mr. Haddad believes it is important to install hardwired cameras that will provide a live video feed and playback ability. This will be monitored by the police department and the Conservation Commission. Ms. Lengyel asked whether it was possible to prosecute based on this type of surveillance; Mr. Haddad was unsure but could research that. At the least, he expects to be able to assess fines for illegal dumping. Mr. Whitefield felt this was an expensive proposal. Mr. Haddad agreed this solution would be costly, but pointed out that the equipment will require a shed, and electricity. On a motion by Ms. Linskey, seconded by Mr. Manugian, the Finance Committee voted unanimously to support funding \$40,000 from Free Cash for security improvements at Sargisson Beach. (The Vote: 7-0-0)

Article 13 Purchase Budget Software \$35,000 – Mr. Haddad outlined his budget process which relies heavily on Excel spreadsheets. He is concerned that once he retires, there will be no one cable of spending the time this requires to produce an accurate and reliable budget document. He also mentioned the increased transparency and visual impact that a digital budget book will provide for the public and Town officials. The Finance Team had reviewed a number of budget software products about 5 years ago, and Clear Gov had impressed the group then, and is still the favorite. He described how well it has been working in the Town of Grafton. The initial (one-time) set up cost will be \$8,775 and the annual licensing fee is \$30,000 with a 3% increment yearly. The FY25 cost will be prorated for the partial year of use. Mr. Haddad mentioned that the cost was already available in the budget for FY25 due to a budgeting error in the Town Manager's wage line item. On a motion by Ms. Lengyel, seconded by Ms. Linskey, the Finance Committee voted unanimously to fund \$35,000 from Free Cash for the purchase of Budget Software. (The Vote: 7-0-0)

Article 14 Complete Streets Engineering \$35,000 – On a motion by Mr. Manugian, seconded by Ms. Linskey, the Finance Committee voted unanimously to fund \$35,000 from Free Cash for Complete Streets engineering relative to a new grant application due this fall. (The Vote: 7-0-0)

Article 15 Amend Purpose of CPA Baseball Diamond Project \$80,000 – Mr. Haddad informed the group that the bids received for the baseball diamond renovation exceeded the spending authorization. He has received permission from the CPC to utilize the project funding to hire a contractor to conduct a re-design of the entire area, including the gazebo and baseball field. No new spending is needed at this time; this request simply repurposes funds previously appropriated. Necessary updates to the field area will probably require about \$1 million. Mr. Manugian noted that any renovations to the field of that magnitude would almost certainly cause an increase to routine maintenance spending and utilities (such as electricity). On a motion by Ms. Linskey, seconded by Mr. Manugian, the Finance Committee voted unanimously to support repurposing of the CPA Baseball Diamond funds in order to re-design the Town Field area. (The Vote: 7-0-0)

Article 16 Squannacook River Dam \$200,000 – Mr. Haddad explained that this spending request would provide the additional information necessary to help the Select Board and the public understand the various costs (and environmental impacts) involved in either removing or repairing the Squannacook Dam. This information will then be brought back to a future Town meeting where the fate of the dam can then be determined. A recent report had described the Groton side of the dam to be in decent repair, but the Shirley side requires attention. Mr. Haddad has received estimates of approximately \$800,000 for those repairs that would be payable by Groton. Alternatively, the state will remove it at no cost to the Town, as they believe it is a safety issue. Mr. Sulprizio noted that Groton residents are hesitant to vote for tax overrides (which would be necessary to fund the dam repair); it makes sense to let the state remove it. Mr. Green said that removing the dam will lead to a change in the character of West Groton as many residents fear. Ms. Lengyel added that the final economic impacts of removing it are likely unpredictable. Ms. Linskey hopes the proposed study will help eliminate some of that unpredictability. Mr. Haddad noted that some residents feel that Shirley should be contributing to the repair effort, however he has heard from Town Counsel that it is likely that Groton owns the entire dam based on a previous agreement with River Court Residences. Mr. Robertson agreed that the study should be done in order to identify the costs of both potential solutions (repair or removal). Mr. Manugian was concerned about turning down \$2.5 Million in state funding, which might send the wrong message about the fiscal condition of the Town. On a motion by Mr. Green, seconded by Ms. Linskey, the Finance Committee voted to support spending \$200,000 from Free Cash to fund a study of repair versus removal costs & impacts relative to the Squannacook Dam. (The Vote: 7-0-0)

The Finance Committee took no position on the remaining warrant articles.

Mr. Haddad said that the FY25 budget as amended in this warrant will be \$43,000 under the levy limit, and estimated tax bills for an average home will increase by \$300. He also informed the group that the Select Board has voted to adopt the State solution for the Island Road Bridge. They will install the larger culvert size and there will be no cost to the Town.

Mr. Robertson officially adjourned the meeting at 8:45 pm

Respectively submitted by Patricia Dufresne, Assistant Finance Director/Town Accountant

**FALL TOWN MEETING WARRANT
OCTOBER 5, 2024**

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

Greetings:

In the name of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, you are hereby required to notify and warn said inhabitants of the Town of Groton qualified to vote on Town affairs to assemble in the Marion Stoddart Building Auditorium, 344 Main Street, Groton, Massachusetts in said Town on Saturday, the fifth day of October, 2024 at Nine O'clock in the morning, to consider the following:

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*Will be presented as one motion as a Consent Agenda

Article 1: Prior Year Bills

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

Select Board

Select Board:

Finance Committee:

Summary: *Town Meeting approval is required to pay bills from a prior fiscal year. A list of unpaid bills will be provided at Town Meeting. Please see the Town Manager's Report starting on page 29 for additional information related to this Article.*

Article 2: Amend the Fiscal Year 2025 Town Operating Budget

To see if the Town will vote to amend the Fiscal Year 2025 Operating Budget as adopted under Article 15 of the May 18, 2024 Special Town Meeting and vote to raise and appropriate and/or transfer from available funds a sum or sums of money as may be necessary to defray the expenses of the Town for Fiscal Year 2025, or to take any other action relative thereto.

Finance Committee

Select Board

Town Manager

Select Board: *See Town Manager's Report for Recommendation Beginning on Page 29*

Finance Committee: *See Town Manager's Report for Recommendation Beginning on Page 29*

Summary: *The Fiscal Year 2025 Town Operating Budget was approved at the May 18, 2024 Special Town Meeting. Any changes to this Budget would have to be made prior to setting the tax rate. The purpose of this article is to make any necessary changes to balance the FY 2025 Operating Budget. Please see the Town Manager's Report starting on page 29 for additional information related to this Article.*

Article 3: *Transfer Money Into the Capital Stabilization Fund*

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

Select Board

Select Board:

Finance Committee:

Summary: *As of the printing of this Warrant, the Fund has a balance of \$90,394. The financial management goal is to achieve and maintain a balance in the Capital Stabilization Fund equal to 1.5% of the total annual budget. The target amount for the Capital Stabilization Fund will be provided at Town Meeting. Please see the Town Manager's Report starting on page 29 for additional information related to this Article.*

Article 4: *Transfer Money into the Stabilization Fund*

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

Select Board

Select Board:

Finance Committee:

Summary: *As of the printing of this Warrant, the balance in this fund is \$2,617,198. The financial management goal is to achieve and maintain a balance in the Fund equal to 5% of the total annual budget. The target amount for the Fund will be provided at Town Meeting. Please see the Town Manager's Report starting on page 29 for additional information related to this Article.*

Article 5: *Transfer Money into the GDRSD Capital Stabilization Fund*

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, transfer from available funds, and/or borrow, pursuant to any applicable statute, a sum or sums of money to be added to the sum already on deposit in the Town of Groton Capital Stabilization Fund for the Groton Dunstable Regional School District, or to take any other action relative thereto.

Town Manager

**Select Board:
Finance Committee:**

Summary: *As of the printing of the Warrant, the balance in this fund is \$21,996. This fund covers the Town of Groton’s share of the Groton Dunstable Regional School District Committee’s long-range Capital Plan to address its capital needs. The target amount will be provided at Town Meeting. Please see the Town Manager’s Report starting on page 29 for additional information related to this Article.*

Article 6: *Terminate Opioid Settlements Special Purpose Stabilization Fund*

To see if the Town will vote, pursuant to Chapter 40, Section 5B of the Massachusetts General Laws, to (i) transfer any funds held in the Opioid Settlement Stabilization Fund to the Opioid Special Revenue Fund and (ii) terminate the Opioid Settlement Stabilization Fund as created by Article 7 of the 2023 Spring Town Meeting, or to take any other action relative thereto.

Town Manager

**Select Board:
Finance Committee:**

Summary: *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 the 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*

To see if the Town will vote to transfer a sum or sums of money from the Water Enterprise Fund Surplus to the Fiscal Year 2025 Water Enterprise Budget, or to take any other action relative thereto.

Board of Water Commissioners

Select Board:

Finance Committee:

Summary: *This Article will seek a transfer from the Water Enterprise Fund Surplus to the Fiscal Year 2025 Water Department's General Expense Budget for the purchase of a new Pick-Up Truck as identified in the Capital Plan. Please see the Town Manager's Report starting on page 29 for additional information related to this Article.*

Article 8: *Transfer Within the Center Sewer Enterprise Fund*

To see if the Town will vote to transfer a sum or sums of money from the Center Sewer Enterprise Fund Surplus to the Fiscal Year 2025 Center Sewer Enterprise Department Budget, or to take any other action relative thereto.

Board of Sewer Commissioners

Select Board:

Finance Committee:

Summary: *This article allows the Sewer Department to transfer money from its surplus account to cover any deficit in the Fiscal Year 2025 Center Sewer Budget. Please see the Town Manager's Report starting on page 29 for additional information related to this Article.*

Article 9: *Transfer Within the Four Corners Sewer Enterprise Fund*

To see if the Town will vote to transfer a sum or sums of money from the Four Corners Sewer Enterprise Fund Surplus to the Fiscal Year 2025 Four Corners Sewer Enterprise Department Budget, or to take any other action relative thereto.

Board of Sewer Commissioners

Select Board:

Finance Committee:

Summary: *This article allows the Sewer Department to transfer money from its surplus account to cover any deficit in the Fiscal Year 2025 Four Corners Sewer Budget. Please see the Town Manager's Report starting on page 29 for additional information related to this Article.*

Article 10: *Debt Service for Middle School Track – Fiscal Year 2025*

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate and/or transfer from available funds, an additional sum or sums of money, pursuant to Chapter 44B, Section 5, of the Massachusetts General Laws, for debt service for Fiscal Year 2025 for the Middle School Track Project, as authorized under Article 7 of the May 1, 2021 Spring Town Meeting, or to take any other action relative thereto.

Community Preservation Committee

Select Board:

Finance Committee:

Summary: *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 for Heritage Landing*

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, transfer from available funds and/or borrow, pursuant to any applicable statute, a sum or sums of money, to be expended by the Town Manager, for the design, bid specifications, bidding, construction, and construction administration of a water supply system at Heritage Landing at Cow Pond Brook Road, and to authorize the Town Manager to apply for a MassWorks Development Grant for such project; provided, that no funds may be expended hereunder for construction purposes unless and until the Town has received a MassWorks Development Grant reimbursing the Town for all costs associated with the project, or to take any other action relative thereto.

Board of Water Commissioners

Select Board:

Finance Committee:

Summary: *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: Funding for Security Improvements at Sargisson Beach

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, transfer from available funds, and/or borrow, pursuant to any applicable statute, a sum or sums of money, to be expended by the Town Manager, for security improvements at Sargisson Beach and the Sargisson Beach Parking Area, including the purchasing of cameras, servers, installation of a structure to house equipment, and all related equipment and expenses to carry out these improvements, or to take any other action relative thereto.

Town Manager

Select Board:
Finance Committee:

Summary: *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. Please see the Town Manager's Report starting on page 29 for additional information related to this Article.*

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

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, transfer from available funds, and/or borrow, pursuant to any applicable statute, a sum or sums of money, to be expended by the Town Manager, to purchase budget software, and all costs incidental and related thereto, for the Town of Groton, or to take any other action relative thereto.

Town Manager

Select Board:
Finance Committee:

Summary: *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. Please see the Town Manager's Report starting on page 29 for additional information related to this Article.*

Article 14: *Engineering Funds for Complete Streets Grant Work*

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, transfer from available funds, and/or borrow pursuant to any applicable statute, a sum or sums of money, to be expended by the Town Manager, for the purpose of paying engineering costs, and other related costs, for work associated with successfully receiving grant funding from the Commonwealth under the Complete Streets Grant Program, or to take any other action relative thereto.

Complete Streets Committee

Select Board:
Finance Committee:

Summary: *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.*

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

To see if the Town will vote to amend the purpose of CPC Proposal D "Rebuild Major League Baseball Diamond", as voted under Article 14 of the 2023 Spring Town Meeting, to allow for a comprehensive study and development of bid specifications for improvements to Town Field, including the Major League Diamond, Little League Field, Gazebo and Playground, and all costs associated and related thereto, or to take any other action relative thereto.

Community Preservation Committee
Town Manager

Select Board:
Finance Committee:

Summary: *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.*

Article 16: Squannacook River Dam

To see if the Town will vote to authorize Select Board and the Town Manager to remove the Squannacook River Dam and to authorize the Town Manager to apply for and spend any and all State and Federal Grants to pay for said removal, and to authorize the Town Manager to take all necessary steps for said removal, or to take any other action relative thereto.

Select Board

**Select Board:
Finance Committee:**

Summary: *This Article is being brought before the Town Meeting to advise the Select Board on the matter of the future of the Squannacook River Dam. The Dam, located in West Groton near the RiverCourt Residences, has two owners. The Town of Groton, which owns half the Dam, has spent funds to repair and annually test the Dam. This half is in reasonably good shape. The other owner, a Shirley Resident (half the Dam is located in Shirley), has neglected the other half of the Dam and it is not in good shape. The Town of Groton is faced with either finding a way to repair the Shirley side of the Dam or move forward with its removal. The Town applied for a State Grant that conducted a Study on removing the Dam and its environmental impact. While there is still the opportunity for repair, removal is a reasonable alternative. More information on the impact of removal and the cost of repair will be provided at Town Meeting.*

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

To see if the Town will vote to authorize the Select Board to dispose of by sale, or lease for a period not to exceed 99 years, that certain property or portions thereof located off Hoyts Wharf Road containing approximately 22 acres consisting of portions of Assessors Parcels 249-51 and 249-57, as shown on the concept plan entitled "Plan of Land in Groton Massachusetts for the Record Owner Town

of Groton, Massachusetts” by Dillis & Roy, dated August 22, 2024, a copy of which is on file in the Town Clerk’s office, for such minimum consideration and on such terms and conditions as the Select Board deems advisable, for the purpose of providing affordable housing, or to take any other action relative thereto.

Affordable Housing Trust

Select Board:
Finance Committee:

Summary: *The Affordable Housing Trust has identified a parcel of Town owned land containing two buildable lots suitable for development of affordable housing. The purpose of this article is to allow the Affordable Housing Trust to issue a Request for Proposals to invite a response from a developer to create affordable housing on this site. More information will be shared at the Town Meeting.*

Article 18: *Authorize the Lease of Town Owned Land*

To see if the Town will vote to authorize the Select Board to dispose of by lease for a period of up to thirty (30) Years a 5.24 acre portion of Town owned land located at 600 Cow Pond Brook Road consisting of portions of Assessors’ Parcel 248 -41, as shown on the plan entitled “Sketch Plan of Compost Facility at DPW Facility” dated August 30, 2024, a copy of which is on file in the Town Clerk’s office, for such minimum consideration and on such terms and conditions as the Select Board deems advisable, for the purpose of providing a composting facility, or to take any action relative thereto.

Town Manager
DPW Director

Select Board:
Finance Committee:

Summary: *The Town entered into a lease arrangement with Black Earth to install a composting center at the DPW Facility on Cow Pond Brook Road. The facility has been successful and the operator has been working with the DPW and Board of Health to address neighborhood concerns. The Town would like to solicit proposals to have a composting center at this location. The Town would like to be able to offer a longer term lease for up to Thirty (30) years. Town Meeting approval is required for leases of land.*
