

FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING
Groton Town Hall
173 Main St Groton, MA 01450
2nd Floor Meeting Room
Saturday, February 22, 2025
Approved 4/1/25

Present for the Finance Committee: Bud Robertson, Chair; Mary Linskey, Vice Chair; David Manugian, Scott Whitefield, Gary Green, Kristina Lengyel

Present for the Select Board: Alison Manugian, Chair; Rebecca H. Pine, Vice Chair; John Reilly, Peter Cunningham, Matthew F. Pisani

Also Present: Mark Haddad, Town Manager; Kara Cruikshank, Executive Assistant to the Town Manager; Lacey McCabe, Groton Dunstable School Committee Chair; Sherry Kersey, Groton Dunstable Regional School District Director of Business and Finance; Fire Chief Arthur Cheeks; Shawn Campbell, Groton Country Club's General Manager; Finance Team: Hannah Moller, Treasurer/Tax Collector; Patricia DuFresne, Assistant Director/Town Accountant; Megan Foster, Principal Assessor; Chief of Police Michael Luth, Lieutenant, Deputy Chief Rachael Bielecki, Tom Delaney, Director of Department of Public Works, Brian Callahan DPW Director in Training, Vanessa Abraham Library Director; and Helena Altzman

Absent: Michael Sulprizio, Finance Committee Member

Meeting Jointly with Select Board

Mr. Robertson, Chair of the Finance Committee called the meeting to order at 8:30AM.

Ms. Manugian, Chair of the Select Board called the meeting to order at 8:30 AM.

Minutes

Mr. Manugian moved to approve the meeting minutes from January 13, 2025, seconded by Ms. Lengyel. The motion passed.

Mr. Manugian moved to approve the meeting minutes from February 3, 2025, seconded by Ms. Lengyel. The motion passed.

Country Club

Sean Campbell provided an update on the Groton Country Club's performance, highlighting a record-breaking summer with total revenue reaching \$943,000—an increase of \$120,000 over the previous year. He emphasized the impact that weather can have on revenue and how it contributed to last year's success. He noted two major capital projects that have been completed including the pool deck renovation, which cost \$110,000, and parking lot improvements, totaling \$100,000. Looking ahead, Mr. Campbell expressed interest in upgrading the sprinkler system to enhance and stabilize the golf greens, which could justify an increase in membership fees. He reported that tee time bookings have increased, also leading to higher revenues.

Regarding parking, Mr. Campbell noted that there is an adequate amount of parking even with the pool reaching its capacity of 250 occupants. There were some lost spaces due to the reconfiguration of the parking lot.

Mr. Campbell explained that membership fees are collected upfront and are prorated throughout the season if necessary. Mr. Cunningham inquired about the racquet expenses, to which Mr. Campbell responded that it pertains to pickleball which generated approximately \$50,000 in revenue, after covering the expense of the instructor \$30,000, remained in the fund.

Ms. Lengyel inquired about the renewal contract for the Public House Restaurant. Mr. Campbell stated that the contract renews every three years and was last renewed in the previous year. Mr. Haddad raised the possibility of a longer-term lease and suggested it could be considered for inclusion in the next town meeting warrant. He also noted that the Public House restaurant pays a flat fee and covers electricity costs for both the function hall and the pool. Additionally, Mr. Haddad reminded the members that the town benefits from additional revenue through the meals tax. When asked about growth potential for the function hall, Mr. Campbell clarified that the restaurant is responsible for managing the facility rentals.

For FY26, Mr. Campbell highlighted the hiring of a new Superintendent, a Groton resident with a strong vision for the golf course's future, who will oversee the maintenance of the golf greens and tee boxes. As part of the capital improvement plan, he outlined a major irrigation system upgrade and suggested incorporating fairway drainage into the project. The combined cost for these improvements is estimated at \$1.8 million.

Mr. Haddad acknowledged a loss of revenue due to the pool project exceeding its initial estimate but noted that the previous year saw a revenue increase of \$120,000. He explained that while the Country Club is not an enterprise fund, it is tracked in a similar fashion. He remains committed to ensuring it continues contributing to the general fund and maintaining steady revenue growth prior to making any changes. Ms. Lengyel inquired about the possibility of leasing or privatizing the club. Mr. Haddad responded in 2014 a task force explored this option but found no interested parties. Ms. Lengyel recommended that the Town reevaluate the idea of leasing/privatizing the club in the near future.

Mr. Campbell also shared that he was able to add two additional spots at the driving range, expanding the capacity for the summer camp program. Additionally, he mentioned that the restaurant has expressed interest in installing golf simulators to enhance the facility's offerings.

Library Budget

Library Director Vanessa Abraham and Helena Altsman attended the discussion. Ms. Abraham noted that minor capital expenses have been removed from the budget. She stated that she is currently working with Mr. Haddad on replacing the water bubblers.

Regarding fixed expenses, Ms. Abraham highlighted a 9.9% increase in MVLC costs, primarily due to the addition of a new staff member at the central site. She explained that funding for books and materials is determined by a state formula, with the Library Trust Commissioners covering half of the required amount. For FY26, the commissioners have voted to contribute \$75,000, reducing the town's obligation by 55%.

Ms. Abraham also pointed out that offering Sunday hours for nine months of the year has resulted in budget savings of \$10,700 in books and materials spending (which helps to offset five months of Sunday staffing). \$2,000 has been allocated for heating costs based on last year's expenses. She confirmed a \$10,000 increase in operating costs, representing a 4.8% increase.

Ms. Abraham indicated that the budget is designed to maintain level services while also accounting for contractually obligated increases. Mr. Robertson noted that the performance increase is set at 4.5%, which is higher than the typical annual increase of 3%.

Two items that were requested but not included in the budget are the installation of the water bubblers and a salary/ promotion for an adult services coordinator. It was decided to await the recommendations from the Collins study before making further decisions. Mr. Haddad provided a brief overview of the Collins review study, which was made possible through a \$50,000 Community Compact Grant.

Mr. Green inquired about the library's strategic planning. Ms. Abraham explained that staff would rely on volunteers for projects such as digitizing historical records and optimizing team efforts. She expressed satisfaction with the library's current operations and direction. Future plans include redesigning the children's room to create additional space for older children. Ms. Lengyel asked if there were any library programs that the team hoped to expand. Ms. Abraham clarified that while the endowment would not cover operating expenses, it does allow for the expansion of programs. She highlighted the library's extensive offerings, including daily teen programs, Saturday activities, special programming during school vacation weeks, and outreach initiatives.

Addressing recent capital improvements, Mr. Green commented on the library's roof project. Ms. Abraham expressed satisfaction with the work completed. Mr. Haddad noted that an article on the Town Meeting warrant proposes reallocating surplus funds from the under-budget roof project. Ms. DuFresne confirmed that the project finished \$75,000 under budget, with \$50,000 redirected to the Police Department and \$25,000 to be allocated to the FloRo construction project.

Looking ahead, the library's capital budget includes repainting the facility, baseboards, and walls over the next two years. In years Y28 and Y29, the plan includes replacing the HVAC system, followed by elevator modernization in five years. Ms. Pine suggested reaching out to Groton Electric to explore alternatives to natural gas. Ms. Abrahams also highlighted significant cost savings achieved by transitioning to LED lighting through a Green Grant.

The overall budget reflects a 4.65% increase.

Police Department Budget

Chief of Police Michael Luth and Deputy Chief Rachael Bielecki attended the meeting to present the Police Department's budget.

Chief Luth explained that while salaries have increased by 4.39% due to contractual obligations, overall wages have decreased due to a staffing shortage of four personnel. Recently, two new officers were hired and are currently in field training, while two others are attending the academy. The department is expected to be fully staffed by next February. Additionally, three contracts—including those for the Chief and two Sergeants—are still under negotiation, the displayed salary figures are subject to change. The budgeted 2.2% increase includes the four recent hires.

Historically, the department has leased motorcycles at a rate of \$5,000 per year for three years. However, due to rising contract prices, purchasing a motorcycle for \$22,000 has become the more cost-effective option, with an expected lifespan of 8 to 10 years. As a result, this expense has been moved from the operating budget to capital expenditures.

Overall, department expenses have remained steady, though software costs have increased to accommodate a new scheduling system. This system streamlines payroll, enhances efficiency, and provides mobile access for officers.

Although dispatch operations have transitioned to a regional call center, the department still incurs costs for system maintenance contracts, fire alarm systems, and annual communication fees. Mr. Haddad noted that while the town will not be charged for regional dispatch services in FY26 and FY27, it must plan for \$175,000 expenditure in FY28. Last year, state grant funding covered some operational costs, but these funds are no longer available and must now be incorporated into the budget. While the transition to a regional call center has been highly effective for emergency calls, there remains some inefficiencies in handling routine business calls. The department currently has two part-time personnel staffing the front desk, covering a total of 40 hours per week. When staffed, customer service is satisfactory.

Minor Capital Requests total \$25,800 including the replacement of body armor – Required every five years (\$5,000 for multiple units). Heavy vests for active shooter scenarios – \$2,800 per vest, with a five-year lifespan, and Traffic safety camera pilot program – The department is testing cameras at three key intersections (Town line Road, Route 40 at Main Street, and Four Corners) for three months. If continued, the program will cost \$18,000 annually. These cameras will assist with traffic data collection for grant applications, identify high-risk areas, and improve road safety. No citations would be issued under this initiative. Existing speed signs throughout the town also collect valuable traffic data.

Chief Luth noted that the department has operated with 20 officers for the past decade, which is below recommended staffing levels. The current structure includes four Sergeants, 14 patrol officers, and one Detective. However, there are still five unfilled shifts per week, resulting in periods without supervisory oversight. The lack of supervision increases the town's liability due to potential training and oversight failures. Investigations, particularly sensitive cases, would also benefit from additional supervision. The department has only one Detective, and the investigative workload continues to grow. Background investigations alone require 40 hours per case, with 10–12 conducted annually—equating to approximately 10 weeks of work just for these responsibilities.

With four new officers recently hired, nearly 40% of the department has less than two years of experience, underscoring the need for mentorship and training. Deputy Chief Bielecki emphasized that without a Sergeant on duty, case follow-ups can be delayed. The absence of supervisory oversight presents operational challenges, particularly on evening shifts, where having an investigator or Sergeant available would greatly improve efficiency and response to critical incidents. Concerns were also raised regarding the inexperience of newer officers, which could lead to an increased risk of injuries. While morale remains high, strong mentorship is essential to ensure proper decision-making and adherence to best practices.

Ms. Pine clarified that the Police Department is requesting the addition of one Detective position in FY27. By then, the department aims to have a total of 21 officers, improving coverage, mentorship, and training. Mr. Haddad estimated that adding this position would cost between \$90,000 and \$100,000 and emphasized the importance of ensuring a Sergeant is available on every shift to oversee operations and handle calls appropriately. Mr. O'Reilly supported this, stating that in his experience, a lack of supervision can lead to officers neglecting responsibilities, operating under the mindset of "it's not my job." He stressed that every shift should have a designated supervisor.

Mr. Haddad noted that the original budget proposal included a public safety override for both police and fire, but this year's focus is on fire safety. As a result, requested police department additions would be phased in over the next several years.

Mr. Green inquired whether software improvements could help manage supervisory duties without reducing the number of patrolling officers. Chief Luth acknowledged that while technology can enhance efficiency, adequate supervision remains essential to maintaining proper oversight and department effectiveness.

DPW Budget

Tom Delaney and Brian Callahan attended the meeting to discuss the Department of Public Works (DPW) Operating and Capital Budget. A tentative agreement with the DPW union is expected to result in a 4.38% increase, excluding contractual obligations, as the town will be covering salaries for two DPW directors starting July 1st to ensure a smooth leadership transition. An additional \$55,000 is allocated for this transition, while the rest of the budget remains level-funded. A \$7,500 stipend is also included.

Mr. Delaney noted ongoing challenges in filling positions and anticipated additional vacancies due to upcoming retirements, which would result in a mostly new crew. Board members inquired about potential partnerships with the Technical High School and whether a summer work program exists. Mr. Callahan expressed interest in reaching out to contacts at the high school and vocational schools to identify students with interest in the field and provide them with training and licensing opportunities. However, it was highlighted that operating certain types of equipment requires employees to be at least 18 years old, which presents a challenge for summer hires.

Regarding departmental operations, Mr. Delaney mentioned a shift in responsibilities, potentially transitioning mowing duties to a designated parks unit. Mr. Callahan reported that a new truck has been ordered, designed to be operated without a CDL license, allowing all employees to drive it. The minor capital budget is set at \$25,000 for small repairs including roof and furnace maintenance.

Mr. Cunningham inquired about the DPW's electricity use. Mr. Callahan estimated a 10-14% increase this year but noted that time-of-use rates do not apply to DPW as it is not a residential entity. Mr. Delaney identified the town's highest electricity consumers as the Senior Center, Town Hall, Police Department, and Fire Department. Mr. Delaney reported that recent snowstorms led to a Snow and Ice budget deficit, with \$39,000 spent on overtime with just the last storm. Mr. Haddad mentioned that a warrant article has been introduced to eliminate the snow and ice deficit and has set aside \$150,000. However, there is no available funding to cover a deficit in FY26.

There are no changes to the Tree Warden budget, and the DPW continues its collaboration with GELD. The municipal building and property maintenance budget includes a 2.01% increase in electricity-related expenses. Mr. Delaney emphasized the urgent need to replace the dry sprinkler system in Town Hall due to rust and pinhole leaks. The replacement project is estimated at \$118,000. Funding will come from the reserve fund or municipal building funds, which would later be replenished with free cash. The Lost Lake facility repairs are less critical and can be completed in phases. The replacement pipes will be galvanized steel for durability.

In terms of waste management, Black Earth composting has been beneficial, saving both time and resources. A long-term lease is being explored. Odor reduction efforts have yielded positive results, with the worst conditions lasting about 30 days. An EPA grant application is being pursued to fund further improvements.

For the capital budget, the DPW's top-priority equipment includes an excavator, which remains highly valuable and is due for replacement, a fully electric mini loader, and a pickup truck also needs replacement, with an estimated cost of approximately \$400,000 for these items. The battery life for the electric loader is expected to last approximately 10 years before requiring a replacement. The electric loader would only be used at the transfer station, while the existing unit would be replaced with a gas-powered mode.

Fire Department Budget

Mr. Haddad informed the board members that the main issue for FY26 revolves around the addition of 6 new positions, and requested that the Chief address this specific concern rather than focusing on any other aspects of the budget.

Mr. Robertson also raised a point regarding the drive to Emerson Hospital, questioning how the Fire Department can remain level funded with the ambulances now traveling three times the distance.

Chief Art Cheeks emphasized the importance of the community understanding the current challenges faced by the Fire Department. The department is struggling to provide services effectively and is experiencing significant shortfalls. Currently, the Fire Department has 8 new probationary firefighters and 25 call volunteer members, however with the closure of Nashoba Valley Medical Hospital there is added strain to its operations.

Despite these difficulties, the department has achieved several successes. Notably, it has obtained necessary credentials and secured grant awards totaling over \$286,000, which have enabled the purchase of new equipment.

The department has seen a 29% increase in call volume, with 65% of calls requiring emergency services and 35% related to fire incidents. This increase in demand, though significant, remains unexplained.

The department is operating on a level-funded budget. Many expenses, including postage, office supplies, travel, software, equipment maintenance, and medical supplies, remain unchanged. However, there have been increases in other areas such as vehicle costs, vehicle maintenance, and uniforms, resulting in a 6.36% increase, or an additional \$13,500.

To improve efficiency, the department is proposing the installation of a 1,000-gallon diesel fuel tank on-site, which would reduce the need to travel to the Highway Department.

The department's FY26 budget request is \$225,646, compared to the \$212,146 allocated in FY 2025. This budget request accounts for a 3% cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) and also had been adjusted for the two additional Firefighter/EMTs.

The Fire Department is responsible for several additional services, including plan reviews, sprinkler inspections, home sales, school inspections, S.A.F.E. program, and License renewals. In total, there were 514 inspections conducted in 2024. If an emergency call comes through, that is the priority and these additional services must be rescheduled. Mr. Green inquired if there is any possibility of increasing the fees for these inspections. It was confirmed that the fees are already at the States maximum allowed and cannot exceed the fee schedule. Inspections are typically conducted by Senior Lieutenants, or the Chief oversees the process. Regarding fire prevention, Chief Cheeks noted that other towns typically hire a dedicated person for this role, working 8-5, but the cost for such a position is unknown.

The closure of NVMC has had a profound negative impact on operations, leading to increased transportation times, delayed response times, overlapping calls, a greater reliance on mutual aid, escalating overtime costs, and rising fuel and vehicle expenses. The standard protocol requires six personnel to be dispatched within 14 minutes, but during daytime hours, the department may only have two personnel available to respond to calls. The first 10 minutes of a structural fire is the most critical, having only one person operating the truck and another conducting a house sweep is neither sufficient nor safe. It typically takes 12 firefighters to safely assist an injured firefighter. As a result, mutual aid is called in, causing delays of 20 to 30 minutes, especially given that neighboring towns are also understaffed. This staffing shortage is severely impacting the community's service, resulting in delayed treatment and longer response times for both fire and EMS incidents. Additionally, pre-hospital care is increasingly delayed. While a proposal to bring in an outside ambulance service was considered, Chief Cheeks confirmed outside ambulance services found it to be financially unviable. One of the key advantages of a fire-based EMS system is its ability to integrate seamlessly into the community. The residents have come to depend on a reliable and efficient response team, and any disruption to this service undermines community trust and safety.

Between September and December 2024, the Fire Department experienced an 18% increase in overlapping calls, with 112 incidents. In response, the Fire Department is seeking to optimize staffing by hiring six additional career firefighters/EMTs. This would allow daily staffing levels to increase from two to four firefighters/EMTs, ensuring both ambulances can be fully staffed.

Ms. Pine clarified that the Fire Department's request for six additional personnel would allow for a minimum of four full-time personnel on all shifts during a 24-hour period. Chief Cheeks confirmed this, noting that, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., both the chief and the deputy chief would also be on shift.

Mr. Green inquired about when the second ambulance is deployed. Chief Cheeks explained that the second ambulance is used in multi-vehicle accidents or when the first ambulance is already transporting a patient.

Mr. Manugian asked about the compensation received from mutual aid. Chief Cheeks clarified that it is a contract between towns. In the case of a structure fire, the department pays its own personnel. However, if the department transports a patient from another town, the department is compensated for the service.

There was a request for data on how often the Fire Department is unable to respond and how many days the department is impacted by mutual aid to other towns.

Mr. Whitefield questioned whether, when the department is double-staffed, the town would be subsidizing the response efforts of other towns. Chief Cheeks clarified that when the department responds, a minimum of four personnel is required. Additionally, a backfill is provided, and the department receives reciprocal support in return. Mr. Reilly remarked that the department is not meeting the required standards and stressed the need for four personnel to ensure safe and effective responses. He shared a personal experience where it took over 15 minutes for a response to an emergent situation, highlighting that every minute matters in such circumstances

Additional staffing has been a topic of discussion for the past five years. In FY25, staffing was increased to 16 personnel and with the closure of the nearest emergency room it has heightened the need for additional staff. To address these challenges, the Fire Department will require a budget increase of \$555,425, excluding the town's portion of health insurance and pensions.

The closure of Nashoba Hospital has had a ripple effect, significantly increasing travel time for emergency responses. The average drive time has now risen to 82 minutes, compared to the previous 37 minutes. As the Fire Department is responsible for life safety, it is failing to meet these critical needs, which could be considered negligent if the service is not provided. Chief Cheeks raised the question: "What does the community expect when they call for help? The department's ability to meet those expectations is increasingly compromised due to staffing shortages and extended response times.

Mr. Robertson noted that there has historically been a 14% overlap in calls, which has now increased to 18%. He inquired about the projected reduction in this percentage once the six additional positions are added. Chief Cheeks clarified that the rise in overlapping calls is due to an increase in call volume and longer ambulance return times which is causing that second caller to wait longer for a response. However, with two fully staffed ambulances, response times will improve. Mr. Green agreed that those two significant factors are contributing to the situation and suggested that further investigation into factual data is needed to determine whether adding six personnel would be justified.

Mr. Haddad emphasized that, regardless of Nashoba's closure, there is still an ongoing issue with the increased call volume and inadequate response times, underscoring the need for the six additional personnel. He raised the question of whether it is worth asking voters to approve \$800,000 in taxes to hire these six personnel, noting that the full amount would not be required in the first year, as the increased assessment from county retirement would not materialize for two years.

Mr. Cunningham pointed out that a letter requesting staffing support over the next two years had been submitted to the state, but there has been no response. Chief Cheeks expressed frustration with the state's lack of engagement regarding the impacts of Nashoba's closure. Mr. Haddad confirmed that

the task force formed by the governor did not provide any assistance. It is still crucial to maintain a public understanding of the situation and what the state has allowed to happen.

Mr. Manugian asked about the priorities regarding life and property safety. Chief Cheeks explained that life safety always comes first, followed by incident stabilization. Once stabilization is achieved, it influences the ability to conserve property.

Ms. Manugian stressed the importance of communicating to the public that the current level of service is what can be provided under the existing circumstances.

Ms. Pine asked if the town would be impacted by any federal grants. Mr. Haddad responded that the town is applying for two federal safety grants, which would provide approximately \$600,000 in funding.

Other Issues: Town Manager Summary, Revenue Update, Snow & Ice Deficit, School District

Mr. Haddad introduced Lacey McCabe, Chair of the Groton-Dunstable School Committee, and Sherry Kersey, Director of Business and Finance for the Groton-Dunstable Regional School District, to provide a brief update on the district's budget shortfall, which has been reduced from \$980,000 to \$820,000. He clarified that while the level-service budget remained unchanged; adjustments were made to the funding mechanisms.

Mr. Green expressed concern about the potential long-term impacts of budget cuts on student outcomes, noting that while the effects may not be immediately apparent, they could negatively impact the community over time. Ms. McCabe acknowledged the challenge of gathering concrete data on these impacts, emphasizing that such information often only becomes available after negative consequences have already occurred. She highlighted concerns about student mental health, pointing out that if counseling services become inaccessible, issues may go unnoticed. She also noted that while no immediate crises have emerged, there is a foreseeable risk of negative outcomes. The staff is experiencing significant stress, and overall morale is low. To address these concerns, a district-wide culture and climate study—including input from parents, students, and staff members—is currently underway, with results expected in the coming months. Additionally, school principals are actively working with staff to implement internal improvements.

Mr. Robertson commented on the recurring budget shortfall, noting that it remains an unresolved issue year after year. He highlighted the disparity between the Town's annual revenue growth of 3% and the school district's 6.5% increase in expenses, creating a persistent million-dollar gap. He questioned how this structural deficit could be effectively addressed.

Mr. Green pointed out that while an audit in 2017 identified cost savings, it was a one-time solution rather than a sustainable fix. He also noted that in previous years, many veteran teachers who had reached the highest salary steps retired and were replaced by first-year teachers, temporarily easing salary pressures.

Mr. Haddad emphasized that a significant portion of recent funding came from ARPA funds, which are not a long-term solution. He stressed that the state needs to take greater responsibility in providing additional funding for the schools.

Ms. Manugian raised a fundamental question: Is the education being provided truly satisfactory? The members collectively agreed that the current funding formula is placing undue strain on the community and is ultimately unsustainable.

Ms. Kersey explained that in August, the district had estimated funding levels, but when the Governor released the budget in January, Chapter 70 funding was set at \$75 per student. This adjustment helped reduce assessments. Additionally, the School Committee decided to hold off on subsidizing \$150,000 for full-day kindergarten, further easing budget pressures. Other state revenue sources, including transportation reimbursements outlined in the Cherry Sheets, also contributed to the financial picture. The state's net minimum contribution for the town of Dunstable notably changed by \$35,000, resulting in a financial benefit for the Town of Groton.

A School Committee meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, February 25, 2025, with the Finance Committee to discuss the budget.

Mr. Haddad reported that the Town of Dunstable has decided to include an override question on the ballot, though the specific amount has yet to be determined. Ms. McCabe confirmed that Dunstable is prepared to move forward with an override if needed to maintain a level-service budget. The School Committee must certify its final budget by March 12th.

Mr. Haddad also noted that the Groton Select Board must post a specific override amount on the ballot. Dunstable will wait for Groton's decision before finalizing its own approach. Ultimately, the Select Board must determine the school budget and whether an override will be necessary.

FY26 Budget Deliberation

Mr. Haddad reported that the health insurance provider remains firm on a 14.8% increase. He noted that there is still an outstanding budget gap of \$25,000 to \$50,000, which may be resolved through revenue adjustments without impacting the tax rate. However, there may be a need to allocate more than the current \$475,000.

Mr. Haddad stated that the Select Board and the Finance Committee are scheduled to meet with the School Committee on Tuesday, February 25, 2025.

On March 3, 2025, the Finance Committee will convene to discuss the proposed override and would need to finalize the town budget by March 17, 2025

Mr. Haddad has requested that the Finance Committee finalize the Town Budget by March 17, 2025.

The meeting adjourned at 12:52 PM.

Respectfully submitted by Kristine Fox, Per Diem Minute Taker

Revised: 1-25-2025

TOWN OF GROTON FISCAL YEAR 2026

LINE	DEPARTMENT/DESCRIPTION	FY 2022 ACTUAL	FY 2023 ACTUAL	FY 2024 ACTUAL	FY 2025 APPROPRIATED	FY 2026 DEPARTMENT REQUEST	FY 2026 TOWN MANAGER BUDGET	PERCENT CHANGE
GENERAL GOVERNMENT								
MODERATOR								
1000	Salaries	\$ 65	\$ 65	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000	0.00%
1001	Expenses	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 80	\$ 80	\$ 80	0.00%
DEPARTMENTAL TOTAL		\$ 65	\$ 65	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,080	\$ 1,080	\$ 1,080	0.00%
SELECT BOARD								
1020	Salaries	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	0.00%
1021	Wages	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	0.00%
1022	Expenses	\$ 2,023	\$ 2,960	\$ 3,109	\$ 35,300	\$ 4,750	\$ 4,750	-86.54%
1023	Engineering/Consultant	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	0.00%
1024	Minor Capital	\$ 25,683	\$ 25,649	\$ 24,054	\$ 24,054	\$ -	\$ -	-100.00%
DEPARTMENTAL TOTAL		\$ 27,706	\$ 28,609	\$ 27,163	\$ 59,354	\$ 4,750	\$ 4,750	-92.00%
TOWN MANAGER								
1030	Salaries	\$ 237,258	\$ 243,254	\$ 252,037	\$ 258,863	\$ 262,550	\$ 262,550	1.42%
1031	Wages	\$ 114,378	\$ 111,392	\$ 111,472	\$ 141,837	\$ 107,625	\$ 107,625	-24.12%
1032	Expenses	\$ 41,993	\$ 14,240	\$ 14,534	\$ 20,200	\$ 12,100	\$ 12,100	-40.10%
1033	Engineering/Consultant	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	0.00%
1034	Performance Evaluations	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	0.00%
DEPARTMENTAL TOTAL		\$ 388,629	\$ 368,886	\$ 378,043	\$ 420,900	\$ 382,275	\$ 382,275	-9.18%

LINE	DEPARTMENT/DESCRIPTION	FY 2022 ACTUAL	FY 2023 ACTUAL	FY 2024 ACTUAL	FY 2025 APPROPRIATED	FY 2026 DEPARTMENT REQUEST	FY 2026 TOWN MANAGER BUDGET	PERCENT CHANGE
FINANCE COMMITTEE								
1040	Expenses	\$ 210 \$	214 \$	- \$	- \$	- \$	- \$	0.00%
1041	Reserve Fund	\$ 69,641 \$	49,400 \$	39,500 \$	150,000 \$	150,000 \$	150,000 \$	0.00%
DEPARTMENTAL TOTAL		\$ 69,851 \$	49,614 \$	39,500 \$	150,000 \$	150,000 \$	150,000 \$	0.00%
TOWN ACCOUNTANT								
1050	Salaries	\$ 96,408 \$	101,126 \$	115,615 \$	118,163 \$	125,385 \$	125,385 \$	6.11%
1051	Wages	\$ 50,864 \$	52,920 \$	54,285 \$	56,679 \$	79,344 \$	79,344 \$	39.99%
1052	Expenses	\$ 37,706 \$	40,199 \$	36,770 \$	50,523 \$	89,633 \$	83,633 \$	65.53%
DEPARTMENTAL TOTAL		\$ 184,978 \$	194,245 \$	206,670 \$	225,365 \$	294,362 \$	288,362 \$	27.95%
BOARD OF ASSESSORS								
1060	Salaries	\$ 81,993 \$	85,280 \$	94,300 \$	96,186 \$	105,000 \$	105,000 \$	9.16%
1061	Wages	\$ 59,949 \$	65,073 \$	66,873 \$	75,272 \$	80,460 \$	80,460 \$	6.89%
1062	Expenses	\$ 23,373 \$	29,012 \$	45,336 \$	47,032 \$	61,579 \$	61,579 \$	30.93%
1063	Legal Expense	\$ - \$	- \$	- \$	- \$	- \$	- \$	0.00%
DEPARTMENTAL TOTAL		\$ 165,315 \$	179,365 \$	206,509 \$	218,490 \$	247,039 \$	247,039 \$	13.07%
TREASURER/TAX COLLECTOR								
1070	Salaries	\$ 138,946 \$	141,733 \$	150,769 \$	153,977 \$	165,810 \$	165,810 \$	7.68%
1071	Wages	\$ 74,924 \$	74,499 \$	79,296 \$	82,940 \$	81,418 \$	81,418 \$	-1.84%
1072	Expenses	\$ 19,909 \$	24,546 \$	26,086 \$	28,637 \$	28,020 \$	28,020 \$	-2.15%
1073	Tax Title	\$ 1,557 \$	500 \$	260 \$	7,100 \$	7,100 \$	7,100 \$	0.00%
1074	Bond Cost	\$ 1,050 \$	500 \$	500 \$	2,300 \$	2,300 \$	2,300 \$	0.00%
DEPARTMENTAL TOTAL		\$ 236,386 \$	241,778 \$	256,911 \$	274,954 \$	284,648 \$	284,648 \$	3.53%

LINE	DEPARTMENT/DESCRIPTION	FY 2022 ACTUAL	FY 2023 ACTUAL	FY 2024 ACTUAL	FY 2025 APPROPRIATED	FY 2026 DEPARTMENT REQUEST	FY 2026 TOWN MANAGER BUDGET	PERCENT CHANGE
TOWN COUNSEL								
1080	Expenses	\$ 60,496	\$ 58,577	\$ 95,987	\$ 130,000	\$ 90,000	\$ 90,000	-30.77%
DEPARTMENTAL TOTAL		\$ 60,496	\$ 58,577	\$ 95,987	\$ 130,000	\$ 90,000	\$ 90,000	-30.77%
HUMAN RESOURCES								
1090	Salary	\$ 82,822	\$ 87,983	\$ 95,050	\$ 96,936	\$ 100,175	\$ 100,175	3.34%
1091	Expenses	\$ 14,376	\$ 14,927	\$ 18,674	\$ 12,400	\$ 14,400	\$ 14,400	16.13%
DEPARTMENTAL TOTAL		\$ 97,198	\$ 102,910	\$ 113,724	\$ 109,336	\$ 114,575	\$ 114,575	4.79%
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY								
1100	Salary	\$ 115,193	\$ 121,981	\$ 121,627	\$ 124,810	\$ 128,532	\$ 128,532	2.98%
1101	Wages	\$ 58,730	\$ 61,194	\$ 70,342	\$ 73,459	\$ 77,173	\$ 77,173	5.06%
1102	Expenses	\$ 20,031	\$ 21,455	\$ 24,588	\$ 24,800	\$ 24,800	\$ 24,800	0.00%
DEPARTMENTAL TOTAL		\$ 193,954	\$ 204,630	\$ 216,557	\$ 223,069	\$ 230,505	\$ 230,505	3.33%
GIS/STEERING COMMITTEE								
1120	Expenses	\$ 3,975	\$ 3,000	\$ 8,300	\$ 8,300	\$ 8,300	\$ 8,300	0.00%
DEPARTMENTAL TOTAL		\$ 3,975	\$ 3,000	\$ 8,300	\$ 8,300	\$ 8,300	\$ 8,300	0.00%
TOWN CLERK								
1130	Salaries	\$ 90,853	\$ 95,550	\$ 98,472	\$ 98,591	\$ 105,356	\$ 105,356	6.86%
1131	Wages	\$ 63,733	\$ 81,648	\$ 76,606	\$ 81,040	\$ 80,642	\$ 80,642	-0.49%
1132	Expenses	\$ 5,547	\$ 9,539	\$ 11,860	\$ 13,900	\$ 13,200	\$ 13,200	-5.04%
1133	Minor Capital	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	0.00%
DEPARTMENTAL TOTAL		\$ 160,133	\$ 186,737	\$ 186,938	\$ 193,531	\$ 199,198	\$ 199,198	2.93%

LINE	DEPARTMENT/DESCRIPTION	FY 2022 ACTUAL	FY 2023 ACTUAL	FY 2024 ACTUAL	FY 2025 APPROPRIATED	FY 2026 DEPARTMENT REQUEST	FY 2026 TOWN MANAGER BUDGET	PERCENT CHANGE
ELECTIONS & BOARD OF REGISTRARS								
1140	Stipend	\$ 6,065	\$ 27,416	\$ 17,385	\$ 33,053	\$ 5,933	\$ 5,933	-82.05%
1141	Expenses	\$ 6,700	\$ 15,597	\$ 23,119	\$ 21,088	\$ 16,124	\$ 16,124	-23.54%
1142	Minor Capital	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	0.00%
DEPARTMENTAL TOTAL		\$ 12,765	\$ 43,013	\$ 40,504	\$ 54,141	\$ 22,057	\$ 22,057	-59.26%
STREET LISTINGS								
1150	Expenses	\$ 4,706	\$ 4,818	\$ 5,698	\$ 5,950	\$ 7,200	\$ 7,200	21.01%
DEPARTMENTAL TOTAL		\$ 4,706	\$ 4,818	\$ 5,698	\$ 5,950	\$ 7,200	\$ 7,200	21.01%
INSURANCE & BONDING								
1160	Insurance & Bonding	\$ 282,024	\$ 286,667	\$ 310,032	\$ 350,000	\$ 363,000	\$ 350,000	0.00%
1161	Insurance Deductible Reserve - Liability	\$ 3,089	\$ 10,060	\$ 11,499	\$ 12,000	\$ 12,000	\$ 12,000	0.00%
1162	Insurance Deductible Reserve - 111F	\$ 6,449	\$ 3,744	\$ 1,238	\$ 25,000	\$ 25,000	\$ 25,000	0.00%
DEPARTMENTAL TOTAL		\$ 291,562	\$ 300,471	\$ 322,769	\$ 387,000	\$ 400,000	\$ 387,000	0.00%
TOWN REPORT								
1170	Expenses	\$ 1,364	\$ 1,472	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,500	0.00%
DEPARTMENTAL TOTAL		\$ 1,364	\$ 1,472	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,500	0.00%

LINE	DEPARTMENT/DESCRIPTION	FY 2022		FY 2023		FY 2024		FY 2025		FY 2026		PERCENT CHANGE
		ACTUAL	ACTUAL	ACTUAL	ACTUAL	ACTUAL	APPROPRIATED	DEPARTMENT REQUEST	TOWN MANAGER BUDGET	PERCENT CHANGE		
POSTAGE/TOWN HALL EXPENSES												
1180	Expenses	\$ 55,011	\$ 68,297	\$ 77,241	\$ 65,000	\$ 65,000	\$ 60,000					-7.69%
1181	Telephone Expenses	\$ 13,043	\$ 15,954	\$ 23,494	\$ 30,000	\$ 30,000	\$ 30,000					0.00%
1182	Office Supplies	\$ 24,835	\$ 25,433	\$ 17,793	\$ 17,000	\$ 17,000	\$ 17,000					0.00%
	DEPARTMENTAL TOTAL	\$ 97,889	\$ 109,684	\$ 118,528	\$ 112,000	\$ 112,000	\$ 107,000					-4.46%
	TOTAL GENERAL GOVERNMENT	\$ 1,991,972	\$ 2,077,874	\$ 2,225,701	\$ 2,574,970	\$ 2,549,489	\$ 2,525,489					-1.92%
LAND USE DEPARTMENTS												
CONSERVATION COMMISSION												
1200	Salary	\$ 69,481	\$ 73,972	\$ 70,533	\$ 79,070	\$ 81,047	\$ 81,047					2.50%
1201	Wages	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -					0.00%
1202	Expenses	\$ 6,260	\$ 4,597	\$ 8,749	\$ 8,270	\$ 8,270	\$ 8,270					0.00%
1203	Engineering & Legal	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -					0.00%
1204	Minor Capital	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -					0.00%
	DEPARTMENTAL TOTAL	\$ 75,741	\$ 78,569	\$ 79,282	\$ 87,340	\$ 89,317	\$ 89,317					2.26%
PLANNING BOARD												
1210	Salaries	\$ 84,016	\$ 89,237	\$ 95,171	\$ 97,696	\$ 97,928	\$ 97,928					0.24%
1211	Wages	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -					0.00%
1212	Expenses	\$ 9,877	\$ 8,844	\$ 9,309	\$ 9,625	\$ 9,625	\$ 9,625					0.00%
1213	M.R.P.C. Assessment	\$ 3,849	\$ 3,846	\$ 3,942	\$ 4,041	\$ 4,142	\$ 4,142					2.50%
1214	Legal Budget	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -					0.00%
	DEPARTMENTAL TOTAL	\$ 97,742	\$ 101,927	\$ 108,422	\$ 111,362	\$ 111,695	\$ 111,695					0.30%

LINE	DEPARTMENT/DESCRIPTION	FY 2022 ACTUAL	FY 2023 ACTUAL	FY 2024 ACTUAL	FY 2025 APPROPRIATED	FY 2026 DEPARTMENT REQUEST	TOWN MANAGER BUDGET	PERCENT CHANGE
ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS								
1220	Wages	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	0.00%
1221	Expenses	\$ 666	\$ 50	\$ 558	\$ 1,335	\$ 1,335	\$ 1,335	0.00%
	DEPARTMENTAL TOTAL	\$ 666	\$ 50	\$ 558	\$ 1,335	\$ 1,335	\$ 1,335	0.00%
HISTORIC DISTRICTS COMMISSION								
1230	Wages	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	0.00%
1231	Expenses	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	0.00%
	DEPARTMENTAL TOTAL	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	0.00%
BUILDING INSPECTOR								
1240	Salaries	\$ 94,254	\$ 104,758	\$ 105,059	\$ 107,030	\$ 107,263	\$ 107,263	0.22%
1241	Wages	\$ 57,054	\$ 55,067	\$ 62,238	\$ 63,935	\$ 67,500	\$ 67,500	5.58%
1242	Expenses	\$ 6,334	\$ 23,257	\$ 27,711	\$ 24,897	\$ 24,897	\$ 24,897	0.00%
1243	Minor Capital	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	0.00%
	DEPARTMENTAL TOTAL	\$ 157,642	\$ 183,082	\$ 195,008	\$ 195,862	\$ 199,660	\$ 199,660	1.94%
MECHANICAL INSPECTOR								
1250	Fee Salaries	\$ 41,430	\$ 54,800	\$ 43,360	\$ 39,000	\$ 39,000	\$ 39,000	0.00%
1251	Expenses	\$ 2,774	\$ 4,876	\$ 3,107	\$ 3,500	\$ 3,500	\$ 3,500	0.00%
	DEPARTMENTAL TOTAL	\$ 44,204	\$ 59,676	\$ 46,467	\$ 42,500	\$ 42,500	\$ 42,500	0.00%

LINE	DEPARTMENT/DESCRIPTION	FY 2022 ACTUAL	FY 2023 ACTUAL	FY 2024 ACTUAL	FY 2025 APPROPRIATED	FY 2026 DEPARTMENT REQUEST	FY 2026 TOWN MANAGER BUDGET	PERCENT CHANGE
EARTH REMOVAL INSPECTOR								
1260	Stipend	\$ 2,500	\$ 2,500	\$ 2,500	\$ 2,500	\$ 2,500	\$ 2,500	0.00%
1261	Expenses	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 300	\$ 300	\$ 300	0.00%
1262	Minor Capital	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	0.00%
DEPARTMENTAL TOTAL		\$ 2,500	\$ 2,500	\$ 2,500	\$ 2,800	\$ 2,800	\$ 2,800	0.00%
BOARD OF HEALTH								
1270	Wages	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	0.00%
1271	Expenses	\$ 308	\$ 983	\$ 877	\$ 1,575	\$ 3,575	\$ 1,575	0.00%
1272	Nursing Services	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 17,798	\$ 21,047	\$ 21,047	18.25%
1273	Nashoba Health District	\$ 61,933	\$ 51,483	\$ 55,345	\$ 43,081	\$ 45,921	\$ 45,921	6.59%
1274	Mental Health	\$ 8,000	\$ 8,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	100.00%
1275	Eng/Consult/Landfill Monitoring	\$ 9,133	\$ 9,133	\$ 9,433	\$ 13,834	\$ 13,834	\$ 13,834	0.00%
DEPARTMENTAL TOTAL		\$ 79,374	\$ 69,599	\$ 65,655	\$ 76,288	\$ 84,377	\$ 82,377	7.98%
SEALER OF WEIGHTS & MEASURES								
1280	Fee Salaries	\$ 1,090	\$ 680	\$ 300	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	0.00%
1281	Expenses	\$ 440	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 3,262	\$ 3,900	\$ 3,900	19.56%
DEPARTMENTAL TOTAL		\$ 1,530	\$ 680	\$ 300	\$ 3,262	\$ 3,900	\$ 3,900	19.56%
TOTAL LAND USE DEPARTMENTS		\$ 459,399	\$ 496,083	\$ 498,192	\$ 520,749	\$ 535,584	\$ 533,584	2.46%

LINE	DEPARTMENT/DESCRIPTION	FY 2022 ACTUAL	FY 2023 ACTUAL	FY 2024 ACTUAL	FY 2025 APPROPRIATED	FY 2026 DEPARTMENT REQUEST	TOWN MANAGER BUDGET	PERCENT CHANGE
PROTECTION OF PERSONS AND PROPERTY								
POLICE DEPARTMENT								
1300	Salaries	\$ 291,262	\$ 283,207	\$ 291,224	\$ 305,889	\$ 319,324	\$ 319,324	4.39%
1301	Wages	\$ 1,956,346	\$ 2,067,435	\$ 1,957,470	\$ 2,222,071	\$ 2,217,197	\$ 2,217,197	-0.22%
1302	Expenses	\$ 185,392	\$ 207,915	\$ 195,295	\$ 270,952	\$ 278,400	\$ 269,900	-0.39%
1303	Lease or Purchase of Cruisers	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000	\$ 22,000	\$ -	-100.00%
1304	PS Building (Expenses)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	0.00%
1305	Minor Capital	\$ 11,000	\$ 7,588	\$ 6,420	\$ 12,984	\$ 26,550	\$ 26,550	104.48%
DEPARTMENTAL TOTAL		\$ 2,449,000	\$ 2,571,145	\$ 2,455,409	\$ 2,816,896	\$ 2,863,471	\$ 2,832,971	0.57%

LINE	DEPARTMENT/DESCRIPTION	FY 2022 ACTUAL	FY 2023 ACTUAL	FY 2024 ACTUAL	FY 2025 APPROPRIATED	FY 2026 DEPARTMENT REQUEST	TOWN MANAGER BUDGET	PERCENT CHANGE
FIRE DEPARTMENT								
1310	Salaries	\$ 235,000	\$ 256,900	\$ 290,302	\$ 292,712	\$ 282,144	\$ 282,144	-3.61%
1311	Wages	\$ 1,035,806	\$ 1,165,166	\$ 1,150,339	\$ 1,314,572	\$ 1,367,470	\$ 1,367,470	4.02%
1312	Expenses	\$ 124,201	\$ 202,231	\$ 209,902	\$ 219,571	\$ 225,646	\$ 225,646	2.77%
DEPARTMENTAL TOTAL		\$ 1,395,007	\$ 1,624,297	\$ 1,650,543	\$ 1,826,955	\$ 1,875,259	\$ 1,875,259	2.64%

LINE	DEPARTMENT/DESCRIPTION	FY 2022 ACTUAL	FY 2023 ACTUAL	FY 2024 ACTUAL	FY 2025 APPROPRIATED	FY 2026 DEPARTMENT REQUEST	TOWN MANAGER BUDGET	PERCENT CHANGE
GROTON WATER FIRE PROTECTION								
1320	West Groton Water District	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	0.00%
1321	Groton Water Department	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	0.00%
DEPARTMENTAL TOTAL		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	0.00%

LINE	DEPARTMENT/DESCRIPTION	FY 2022 ACTUAL	FY 2023 ACTUAL	FY 2024 ACTUAL	FY 2025 APPROPRIATED	FY 2026 DEPARTMENT REQUEST	TOWN MANAGER BUDGET	PERCENT CHANGE
ANIMAL INSPECTOR								
1330	Salary	\$ 2,082	\$ 2,082	\$ 2,082	\$ 2,082	\$ 2,082	\$ 2,082	0.00%
1331	Expenses	\$ 20	\$ 270	\$ 266	\$ 400	\$ 400	\$ 400	0.00%
DEPARTMENTAL TOTAL		\$ 2,102	\$ 2,352	\$ 2,348	\$ 2,482	\$ 2,482	\$ 2,482	0.00%

LINE	DEPARTMENT/DESCRIPTION	FY 2022 ACTUAL	FY 2023 ACTUAL	FY 2024 ACTUAL	FY 2025 APPROPRIATED	FY 2026 DEPARTMENT REQUEST	FY 2026 TOWN MANAGER BUDGET	PERCENT CHANGE
ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICER								
1340	Salary	\$ 2,082	\$ 2,082	\$ 2,082	\$ 2,082	\$ 2,082	\$ 2,082	0.00%
1341	Expenses	\$ 40	\$ 270	\$ 266	\$ 400	\$ 400	\$ 400	0.00%
	DEPARTMENTAL TOTAL	\$ 2,122	\$ 2,352	\$ 2,348	\$ 2,482	\$ 2,482	\$ 2,482	0.00%
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY								
1350	Salary	\$ 4,000	\$ 4,000	\$ 4,000	\$ 4,000	\$ 4,000	\$ 4,000	0.00%
1351	Expenses	\$ 9,998	\$ 10,000	\$ 40,000	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000	0.00%
1352	Minor Capital	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	0.00%
	DEPARTMENTAL TOTAL	\$ 13,998	\$ 14,000	\$ 44,000	\$ 14,000	\$ 14,000	\$ 14,000	0.00%
DOG OFFICER								
1360	Salary	\$ 15,000	\$ 15,000	\$ 15,000	\$ 17,500	\$ 20,000	\$ 20,000	14.29%
1361	Expenses	\$ 2,356	\$ 2,929	\$ 2,929	\$ 3,000	\$ 3,000	\$ 3,000	0.00%
	DEPARTMENTAL TOTAL	\$ 17,356	\$ 17,929	\$ 17,929	\$ 20,500	\$ 23,000	\$ 23,000	12.20%
POLICE & FIRE COMMUNICATIONS								
1370	Wages	\$ 453,495	\$ 444,288	\$ 455,726	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	0.00%
1371	Expenses	\$ 10,826	\$ 20,382	\$ 14,018	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	0.00%
1372	Minor Capital	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	0.00%
	DEPARTMENTAL TOTAL	\$ 464,321	\$ 464,670	\$ 469,744	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	0.00%
	TOTAL PROTECTION OF PERSONS AND PROPERTY	\$ 4,343,906	\$ 4,696,745	\$ 4,642,321	\$ 4,683,315	\$ 4,780,694	\$ 4,750,194	1.43%

LINE	DEPARTMENT/DESCRIPTION	FY 2022 ACTUAL	FY 2023 ACTUAL	FY 2024 ACTUAL	FY 2025 APPROPRIATED	DEPARTMENT REQUEST	FY 2026 TOWN MANAGER BUDGET	PERCENT CHANGE
REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT BUDGETS								
NASHOBA VALLEY REGIONAL TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL								
1400	Operating Expenses	\$ 807,474	\$ 810,037	\$ 762,656	\$ 966,719	\$ 911,000	\$ 911,000	-5.76%
DEPARTMENTAL TOTAL		\$ 807,474	\$ 810,037	\$ 762,656	\$ 966,719	\$ 911,000	\$ 911,000	-5.76%
GROTON-DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT								
1410	Operating Expenses	\$ 24,023,134	\$ 24,802,222	\$ 25,937,716	\$ 26,412,384	\$ 27,777,948	\$ 27,777,948	5.17%
1411	Debt Service, Excluded	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 406,982	\$ 384,622	\$ 110,389	\$ 110,389	-71.30%
1412	Debt Service, Unexcluded	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 58,814	\$ 60,534	\$ -	\$ -	-100.00%
1413	Operating Grant	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 619,000	\$ -	\$ -	0.00%
1414	Capital Assessment	\$ 217,298	\$ 577,026	\$ 552,203	\$ 295,767	\$ 278,643	\$ 278,643	-5.79%
DEPARTMENTAL TOTAL		\$ 24,240,432	\$ 25,379,248	\$ 26,955,715	\$ 27,772,307	\$ 28,166,980	\$ 28,166,980	1.42%
TOTAL SCHOOLS		\$ 25,047,906	\$ 26,189,285	\$ 27,718,371	\$ 28,739,026	\$ 29,077,980	\$ 29,077,980	1.18%
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS								
HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT								
1500	Salaries	\$ 113,785	\$ 120,670	\$ 120,293	\$ 122,664	\$ 174,625	\$ 174,625	42.36%
1501	Wages	\$ 685,051	\$ 750,224	\$ 731,227	\$ 753,789	\$ 750,409	\$ 750,409	-0.45%
1502	Expenses	\$ 138,154	\$ 136,529	\$ 129,073	\$ 136,900	\$ 136,900	\$ 136,900	0.00%
1503	Highway Maintenance	\$ 73,852	\$ 81,712	\$ 71,282	\$ 80,000	\$ 80,000	\$ 80,000	0.00%
1504	Minor Capital	\$ -	\$ 5,526	\$ 15,000	\$ 15,000	\$ 25,000	\$ 15,000	0.00%
DEPARTMENTAL TOTAL		\$ 1,010,842	\$ 1,094,661	\$ 1,066,875	\$ 1,108,353	\$ 1,166,934	\$ 1,156,934	4.38%

LINE	DEPARTMENT/DESCRIPTION	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2026	PERCENT CHANGE
		ACTUAL	ACTUAL	ACTUAL	APPROPRIATED	DEPARTMENT REQUEST	TOWN MANAGER BUDGET	
STREET LIGHTS								
1510	Expenses	\$ 12,209	\$ 12,202	\$ 14,598	\$ 15,000	\$ 15,000	\$ 15,000	0.00%
DEPARTMENTAL TOTAL		\$ 12,209	\$ 12,202	\$ 14,598	\$ 15,000	\$ 15,000	\$ 15,000	0.00%
SNOW AND ICE								
1520	Expenses	\$ 154,236	\$ 171,937	\$ 153,024	\$ 165,000	\$ 165,000	\$ 165,000	0.00%
1521	Overtime	\$ 291,882	\$ 268,100	\$ 228,416	\$ 140,000	\$ 140,000	\$ 140,000	0.00%
1522	Hired Equipment	\$ 55,369	\$ 45,349	\$ 45,400	\$ 35,000	\$ 35,000	\$ 35,000	0.00%
DEPARTMENTAL TOTAL		\$ 501,487	\$ 485,386	\$ 426,840	\$ 340,000	\$ 340,000	\$ 340,000	0.00%
TREE WARDEN BUDGET								
1530	Salary	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	0.00%
1531	Expenses	\$ 2,499	\$ 3,000	\$ 1,773	\$ 3,000	\$ 3,000	\$ 3,000	0.00%
1532	Trees	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,500	0.00%
1533	Tree Work	\$ 8,322	\$ 9,515	\$ 31,370	\$ 30,000	\$ 30,000	\$ 30,000	0.00%
DEPARTMENTAL TOTAL		\$ 10,821	\$ 12,515	\$ 33,143	\$ 34,500	\$ 34,500	\$ 34,500	0.00%
MUNICIPAL BUILDING AND PROPERTY MAINTENANCE								
1540	Wages	\$ 150,671	\$ 156,174	\$ 138,182	\$ 162,845	\$ 170,064	\$ 170,064	4.43%
1541	Expenses	\$ 263,725	\$ 257,888	\$ 270,921	\$ 270,950	\$ 282,950	\$ 282,950	4.43%
1542	Minor Capital	\$ 9,941	\$ 9,849	\$ 25,000	\$ 25,000	\$ 50,000	\$ 15,000	0.00%
DEPARTMENTAL TOTAL		\$ 424,337	\$ 423,911	\$ 434,103	\$ 458,795	\$ 503,014	\$ 468,014	2.01%

LINE	DEPARTMENT/DESCRIPTION	FY 2022 ACTUAL	FY 2023 ACTUAL	FY 2024 ACTUAL	FY 2025 APPROPRIATED	FY 2026 DEPARTMENT REQUEST	FY 2026 TOWN MANAGER BUDGET	PERCENT CHANGE
SOLID WASTE DISPOSAL								
1550	Wages	\$ 140,322	\$ 145,954	\$ 145,954	\$ 157,651	\$ 158,964	\$ 158,964	0.83%
1551	Expenses	\$ 45,741	\$ 38,661	\$ 38,661	\$ 45,686	\$ 45,686	\$ 45,686	0.00%
1552	Tipping Fees	\$ 133,758	\$ 139,668	\$ 139,668	\$ 145,000	\$ 145,000	\$ 145,000	0.00%
1553	North Central SW Coop	\$ 3,088	\$ 5,850	\$ 5,850	\$ 5,850	\$ 5,850	\$ 5,850	0.00%
1554	Minor Capital	\$ 4,312	\$ 4,717	\$ 4,717	\$ 5,000	\$ 10,000	\$ 5,000	0.00%
DEPARTMENTAL TOTAL		\$ 327,221	\$ 334,850	\$ 334,850	\$ 359,187	\$ 365,500	\$ 360,500	0.37%
PARKS DEPARTMENT								
1560	Wages	\$ 15,817	\$ 13,804	\$ 12,664	\$ 17,922	\$ -	\$ -	0.00%
1561	Expenses	\$ 57,700	\$ 55,272	\$ 55,578	\$ 55,759	\$ 77,177	\$ 55,759	0.00%
DEPARTMENTAL TOTAL		\$ 73,517	\$ 69,076	\$ 68,242	\$ 73,681	\$ 77,177	\$ 55,759	-24.32%
TOTAL DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS		\$ 2,360,434	\$ 2,432,601	\$ 2,378,651	\$ 2,389,516	\$ 2,502,125	\$ 2,430,707	1.72%
LIBRARY AND CITIZEN SERVICES								
COUNCIL ON AGING								
1600	Salaries	\$ 73,786	\$ 87,986	\$ 148,800	\$ 162,023	\$ 171,205	\$ 171,205	5.67%
1601	Wages	\$ 57,873	\$ 116,035	\$ 45,585	\$ 55,733	\$ 70,526	\$ 70,526	26.54%
1602	Expenses	\$ 15,517	\$ 12,384	\$ 11,417	\$ 20,200	\$ 20,200	\$ 20,200	0.00%
1603	Minor Capital	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	-
DEPARTMENTAL TOTAL		\$ 147,176	\$ 216,405	\$ 205,802	\$ 237,956	\$ 261,931	\$ 261,931	10.08%

LINE	DEPARTMENT/DESCRIPTION	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2026	PERCENT CHANGE
		ACTUAL	ACTUAL	ACTUAL	APPROPRIATED	DEPARTMENT REQUEST	TOWN MANAGER BUDGET	
SENIOR CENTER VAN								
1610	Wages	\$ 42,865	\$ 62,342	\$ 74,885	\$ 76,611	\$ 82,100	\$ 82,100	7.16%
1611	Expenses	\$ 12,865	\$ 16,823	\$ 15,488	\$ 21,023	\$ 21,023	\$ 21,023	0.00%
	DEPARTMENTAL TOTAL	\$ 55,730	\$ 79,165	\$ 90,373	\$ 97,634	\$ 103,123	\$ 103,123	5.62%
VETERAN'S SERVICE OFFICER								
1620	Salary	\$ 5,192	\$ 6,000	\$ 6,120	\$ 6,242	\$ 6,429	\$ 6,429	3.00%
1621	Expenses	\$ 25	\$ -	\$ 50	\$ 1,100	\$ 1,100	\$ 1,100	0.00%
1622	Veterans' Benefits	\$ 17,062	\$ 18,919	\$ 22,771	\$ 25,000	\$ 25,000	\$ 25,000	0.00%
1623	Minor Capital	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	0.00%
	DEPARTMENTAL TOTAL	\$ 22,279	\$ 24,919	\$ 28,941	\$ 32,342	\$ 32,529	\$ 32,529	0.58%
GRAVES REGISTRATION								
1630	Salary/Stipend	\$ 250	\$ 250	\$ 250	\$ 250	\$ 250	\$ 250	0.00%
1631	Expenses	\$ 760	\$ 760	\$ 750	\$ 760	\$ 1,060	\$ 1,060	39.47%
	DEPARTMENTAL TOTAL	\$ 1,010	\$ 1,010	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,010	\$ 1,310	\$ 1,310	29.70%
CARE OF VETERAN GRAVES								
1640	Contract Expenses	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,500	0.00%
	DEPARTMENTAL TOTAL	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,500	0.00%
OLD BURYING GROUND COMMITTEE								
1650	Expenses	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 800	\$ 800	\$ 800	0.00%
	DEPARTMENTAL TOTAL	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 800	\$ 800	\$ 800	0.00%

LINE	DEPARTMENT/DESCRIPTION	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2026	PERCENT CHANGE
		ACTUAL	ACTUAL	ACTUAL	APPROPRIATED	DEPARTMENT REQUEST	TOWN MANAGER BUDGET	
LIBRARY								
1660	Salary	\$ 411,697	\$ 426,346	\$ 435,562	\$ 453,631	\$ 480,538	\$ 480,538	5.93%
1661	Wages	\$ 290,240	\$ 331,618	\$ 319,135	\$ 355,706	\$ 366,043	\$ 366,043	2.91%
1662	Expenses	\$ 199,361	\$ 214,238	\$ 225,435	\$ 219,966	\$ 245,546	\$ 230,546	4.81%
1663	Minor Capital	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	0.00%
DEPARTMENTAL TOTAL		\$ 901,298	\$ 972,202	\$ 980,132	\$ 1,029,303	\$ 1,092,127	\$ 1,077,127	4.65%
COMMEMORATIONS & CELEBRATIONS								
1670	Expenses	\$ 50	\$ 263	\$ 253	\$ 500	\$ 500	\$ 500	0.00%
1671	Fireworks	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	0.00%
DEPARTMENTAL TOTAL		\$ 50	\$ 263	\$ 253	\$ 500	\$ 500	\$ 500	0.00%
WATER SAFETY								
1680	Wages	\$ 3,927	\$ 2,520	\$ 1,290	\$ 4,560	\$ 4,560	\$ 5,000	9.65%
1681	Expenses and Minor Capital	\$ -	\$ 2,887	\$ -	\$ 4,683	\$ 31,900	\$ 3,950	-15.65%
1682	Property Maint. & Improvements	\$ 1,323	\$ 9,000	\$ 7,108	\$ 10,900	\$ 2,400	\$ 2,400	-77.98%
DEPARTMENTAL TOTAL		\$ 5,250	\$ 14,407	\$ 8,398	\$ 20,143	\$ 38,860	\$ 11,350	-43.65%
WEED MANAGEMENT								
1690	Wages	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	0.00%
1691	Expenses: Weed Harvester	\$ 12,562	\$ 22,000	\$ 17,666	\$ 22,000	\$ 22,000	\$ 22,000	0.00%
1692	Expenses: Great Lakes	\$ 2,385	\$ 12,001	\$ 9,965	\$ 100,885	\$ 22,385	\$ 22,385	-77.81%
DEPARTMENTAL TOTAL		\$ 14,947	\$ 34,001	\$ 27,631	\$ 122,885	\$ 44,385	\$ 44,385	-63.88%

LINE	DEPARTMENT/DESCRIPTION	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026	TOWN MANAGER BUDGET	PERCENT CHANGE
		ACTUAL	ACTUAL	ACTUAL	APPROPRIATED	DEPARTMENT REQUEST		
GROTON COUNTRY CLUB								
1700	Salary	\$ 162,122	\$ 170,866	\$ 172,568	\$ 177,727	\$ 205,094	\$ 205,094	15.40%
1701	Wages	\$ 176,746	\$ 234,595	\$ 253,111	\$ 243,941	\$ 295,791	\$ 295,791	21.26%
1702	Expenses	\$ 180,650	\$ 193,969	\$ 223,824	\$ 167,774	\$ 235,885	\$ 235,885	40.60%
1703	Minor Capital	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	0.00%
DEPARTMENTAL TOTAL		\$ 519,518	\$ 599,430	\$ 649,503	\$ 589,442	\$ 736,770	\$ 736,770	24.99%
LOCAL ACCESS CABLE DEPARTMENT								
1710	Salaries	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 71,048	\$ 71,050	\$ 71,050	100.00%
1711	Wages	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 61,219	\$ 68,232	\$ 68,232	100.00%
1712	Expenses	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 18,175	\$ 14,270	\$ 14,270	0.00%
1713	Minor Capital	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000	0.00%
DEPARTMENTAL TOTAL		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 155,442	\$ 158,552	\$ 158,552	100.00%
TOTAL LIBRARY AND CITIZEN SERVICES		\$ 1,668,758	\$ 1,943,302	\$ 1,993,533	\$ 2,288,957	\$ 2,472,387	\$ 2,429,877	6.16%

LINE	DEPARTMENT/DESCRIPTION	FY 2022 ACTUAL	FY 2023 ACTUAL	FY 2024 ACTUAL	FY 2025 APPROPRIATED	DEPARTMENT REQUEST	FY 2026 TOWN MANAGER BUDGET	PERCENT CHANGE
DEBT SERVICE								
DEBT SERVICE								
2000	Long Term Debt - Principal Excluded	\$ 1,229,153	\$ 2,267,786	\$ 2,023,506	\$ 2,025,000	\$ 2,045,000	\$ 2,045,000	0.99%
2001	Long Term Debt - Principal Non-Excluded	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 160,000	\$ 165,000	\$ 165,000	3.13%
2002	Long Term Debt - Interest - Excluded	\$ 674,914	\$ 1,332,573	\$ 1,493,326	\$ 1,340,252	\$ 1,258,527	\$ 1,258,527	-6.10%
2003	Long Term Debt - Interest - Non-Excluded	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 106,974	\$ 97,444	\$ 97,444	-9.19%
2004	Short Term Debt - Principal - Town	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 247,532	\$ 122,685	\$ 122,685	-50.44%
2005A	Short Term Debt - Interest - Non-Excluded	\$ 3,740	\$ 13,803	\$ -	\$ 24,483	\$ 21,851	\$ 21,851	-10.75%
2005B	Short Term Debt - Interest - Excluded	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 1,045,344	\$ 1,028,211	\$ 1,845,196	\$ 1,845,196	100.00%
DEPARTMENTAL TOTAL		\$ 1,907,807	\$ 3,614,162	\$ 4,562,176	\$ 4,932,452	\$ 5,555,403	\$ 5,555,403	12.63%
TOTAL DEBT SERVICE		\$ 1,907,807	\$ 3,614,162	\$ 4,562,176	\$ 4,932,452	\$ 5,555,403	\$ 5,555,403	12.63%

EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

LINE	DEPARTMENT/DESCRIPTION	FY 2022 ACTUAL	FY 2023 ACTUAL	FY 2024 ACTUAL	FY 2025 APPROPRIATED	DEPARTMENT REQUEST	FY 2026 TOWN MANAGER BUDGET	PERCENT CHANGE
EMPLOYEE BENEFITS								
GENERAL BENEFITS								
3000	County Retirement	\$ 2,385,255	\$ 2,538,910	\$ 2,494,280	\$ 2,653,019	\$ 2,640,116	\$ 2,640,116	-0.49%
3001	OPEB Unfunded Liability	\$ 177,094	\$ 177,094	\$ 185,000	\$ 190,000	\$ 200,000	\$ 200,000	5.26%
3002	Unemployment	\$ 9,891	\$ 19,465	\$ 678	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000	0.00%
INSURANCE								
3010	Health Insurance/Employee Expenses	\$ 1,749,313	\$ 1,811,069	\$ 2,017,056	\$ 2,185,497	\$ 2,305,641	\$ 2,087,511	-4.48%
3011	Life Insurance	\$ 3,549	\$ 3,642	\$ 3,627	\$ 3,820	\$ 3,820	\$ 3,820	0.00%
3012	Medicare/Social Security	\$ 142,291	\$ 153,710	\$ 154,288	\$ 157,000	\$ 162,000	\$ 162,000	3.18%
DEPARTMENTAL TOTAL		\$ 4,467,393	\$ 4,703,890	\$ 4,854,929	\$ 5,199,336	\$ 5,321,577	\$ 5,103,447	-1.84%
TOTAL EMPLOYEE BENEFITS		\$ 4,467,393	\$ 4,703,890	\$ 4,854,929	\$ 5,199,336	\$ 5,321,577	\$ 5,103,447	-1.84%
GRAND TOTAL - TOWN BUDGET		\$ 42,247,575	\$ 46,153,942	\$ 48,873,874	\$ 51,328,321	\$ 52,795,239	\$ 52,406,682	2.10%



Groton Fire Department

Fire ~ EMS ~ Rescue

"Together We Serve the Community"

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Fiscal Year 2026 Budget Narrative

As the Groton Fire Department looks back on the last few years, we have experienced a constant increase in calls for service and our department members have been able to step up to meet the need. Fiscal Year 2025, however, has hit us with a new challenge. With the closure of Nashoba Medical Center the department has been stretched to provide level services. In fact, one could argue that without adding an additional shift during the overnight hours, we would essentially have reverted our response to the days prior to establishing a 24/7-staffed department.

This new challenge has created extended transport times that have more than tripled the amount of time our ambulance is unavailable for the next request for service. With incidences where time is of the essence, a delay due to the lack of available response will prove to be costly.

To approach this situation, the question that needs to be asked is "*What is the community's expectation when individuals pick up the phone and call 911?*" The easy answer is that our citizens expect an immediate response and for ambulance or fire crews to arrive within 5-8 minutes depending on the location of the incident. When assessing the need for 24/7 staffing, one of the driving forces for the change was response times. If you recall, when the response time study was done the average response time during the evenings was an average of 12 minutes in 2017. If we now take into account a transport to Emerson Hospital, the possibility of a delay in getting an initial response to the scene of up to 15 minutes is not out of the question.

Our on-call personnel remain engaged and active; however, we do continue to experience inactivity of several members at any given time. Our most recent recruit class of 8 on-call firefighters continue to be all-in on training and responding to calls for service. What we do lack is depth of on-call EMT personnel. We currently have three EMT only on-call personnel, one is on a leave of absence and another is in the on-boarding phase of their probationary period. The remaining on-call firefighter/EMTs take on per-diem shifts and respond when available. With the increased demands and transport times due to the Nashoba closure, the EMT response of the on-call personnel becomes more problematic and a decrease in response of those individuals for 2nd or 3rd requests for medical assistance can be considered a direct correlation.

Providing professional, efficient, and committed service to our community is the goal of the Groton Fire Department. In order to accomplish this pledge, we need to be able to provide a consistent level of service regardless of the time of day. Emergencies are unpredictable and if we wish to maintain our ability to provide immediate response for the citizens of the Town of Groton, we need to grow as a department. Over the last 5 years one of the consistent messages that the leadership of the Groton Fire Department had trumpeted was the need for an increase of career

staffing. The immediate need for staffing levels to be bolstered was immediately felt with the closure of Nashoba Medical Center. This can be viewed as a curse and a blessing. It is unfortunate that our community emergency, routine, and inpatient care facility closed its doors and the ripple effect continues to be felt by all of our surrounding communities. The blessing however is that; One: this has brought all of our community stakeholders together for a shared single purpose of exploring a solution to re-open the doors of the hospital at some level; and Two: the closure has opened the eyes of all of our communities to the need for increased staffing for our emergency service providers.

The Groton Fire Department has been very fortunate in that our community has stepped up to support the request for increased career staffing. With the approval to hire two additional career firefighter/EMTs, we have made a small step toward achieving the goal of level service. Our on-call personnel will remain a key component of our departmental response. That message should never be misconstrued. With that said however, being able to continue to have the department staffed to provide an immediate response while one of our ambulances is delayed due to the increased transport times becomes more of a reality with the new hires. We will continue to work with our on-call members, mutual aid partners and stakeholders to maintain efficient and expedient response, but they are feeling the same pressures of the hospital closure and are experiencing their own staffing shortages as well.

Even with the two additional hires, we will not fully achieve a level of service of care and response. In order to successfully achieve level service day or night we would need to hire an additional 6 career Firefighter/EMTs to bring our staffing to a total of 16. This allows both ambulances to be staffed for response, as well as provides an expedient and safer initial response to fire calls. Calls for EMS categorized response totals approximately 75% of our call volume. Coupled with the growth of the community, we have hit the inflection point where this staffing is now needed. To assist with the plan to budget for more staffing, we will be applying for the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Grant. If awarded, this grant will create some relief for the community by having 3 years of the staffing paid for upfront. At the end of the 3-year timeframe, the town however would have to absorb these positions.

Payroll

The increases to the payroll are to reflect contractual obligations and to provide a 3% increase to the on-call staff. This is reflected in the net change of \$32,345.84 for FY25 to FY26. As stated previously, the staffing issue has reached a critical point and, in an effort, to create a bit of a stop gap in staffing as a result of the Nashoba closure the request was made to hire on two additional firefighter/EMTs. This addition of two firefighter/EMTs will increase the payroll by another \$135,353.92

Overtime has taken a significant hit during the first half of FY'25. This was the result of a move to add one staffed shift during the overnight hours to provide some form of guaranteed response with two firefighter/EMTs being out of town and unable to respond due to the extended transport times. With this provision, the need to look closely at the amount allocated for overtime is warranted. With increased staffing and firefighters required to attend the Massachusetts Career Firefighting Academy, overtime is expected to be utilized in effort to create a continuity of coverage.

The call department continues to be a critical part of our department. The Groton Fire Department was founded as a call-volunteer department and many of us began our time on the fire service as call members. Our on-call personnel strive to maintain a high level of preparedness and have proven themselves time and time again as being ready to provide second due and, in some instances, first due fire coverage for the town. We as a department have remained strong in our ability to keep our call members engaged and foster their growth in fire related skills. The seriousness of the decline in volunteerism nationwide is a real challenge and I am proud to say that despite the dwindling numbers, we are still able to attract new on-call personnel. Attrition has been an issue in recent years, and given the youth of the newest recruits we may again see a handful of them seek out full time career opportunities. It would be great to keep some of our "homegrown" talent.

Training is the backbone of what we do as emergency response providers. Lack of training leads to knowledge gaps, inability to perform the simple tasks on the firegrounds and medical scenes, or proper response in rescue operations. It can also lead to loss of property, injury or even death. It is easy to state that training should be as much a part of our job as responding to emergencies is. We continue to hold a high standard of proficiency of skills and the training requirements and encourage continued learning.

Expenses:

The FY '26 operating budget has been developed to include the addition of 2 firefighter/EMTs. Also reflected are required increases to the line items for fuel and vehicle maintenance. These increases are due to the extended travel times and wear and tear that our two ambulances will encounter. In the 3 short months that Nashoba Medical Center has been closed, the mileage that each ambulance has driven has matched the number of miles for the previous 8 months. The positive note is that, with the delivery of the new expected this month, our oldest ambulance will only be two years old. This places us in a good position having newer and more reliable medical apparatus.

Postage is unchanged. Postage is utilized for delivery of letters of violation or other certified mailing needs.

Office Supplies is unchanged to support office product needs.

Dues and Memberships is unchanged. The Groton Fire Department maintains memberships to the National Fire Protection Association, International Fire Chiefs, Massachusetts Fire Chiefs and District 6 Fire Mutual Aid. These entities provide extensive resources such as continuing education, access to fire codes and standards and resources from other communities.

Travel and Conferences is unchanged and is used to pay for members to attend classes and conferences.

Equipment Maintenance is unchanged. This allocation matches our current need to provide more maintenance and testing on our SCBA (breathing air), hoses and ladders. These tests are required to adhere to NFPA guidelines. The primary driver of this increase is the SCBA which is on the capital plan for replacement. We have applied for the Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) the last four years and have yet to be selected for the award. We are currently in the process of reapplying for the grant again for this cycle. These systems are responsible for providing fresh breathing air in hazardous environments.

Software is unchanged. The account is used for maintenance of software for staff scheduling, EMS reporting, as well as fire reporting and tracking.

Training is unchanged. The account is used for training of new members to the department, leadership training, on-line education, National Core EMS training, and supplies for training of department members.

Vehicle Cost is increased to \$25,000 (\$5,000). This line is used for fuel and is often found to be short and has been addressed by transfers later in the year. With the increased travel times for transports, there will be an increase in fuel expenditures.

Other Expenses is unchanged. The account provides for items not classified under other lines such as incident rehab materials, drinking water and decontamination supplies. This line could sustain a small decrease however could become detrimental to the wellbeing of personnel if it compromises our ability to provide decontamination and rehabilitation at fires.

Vehicle Maintenance is increased to \$40,000 (\$4,000). Vehicle maintenance covers the cost to keep EMS and Fire vehicles in service and safe for operations. We typically range between \$40,000 and \$46,000 for yearly maintenance.

Medical Supplies is unchanged. Medical supplies are the costs associated with keeping the ambulances stocked with oxygen, bandages, and medications needed for patient care.

Uniforms is increased to \$29,550 (\$2250 per person first year) to meet the needs of the additional career personnel. A majority of this money is contractually obligated. The remaining will be used to supply on-call staff with uniforms.

Books and Periodicals is unchanged and is used to maintain trade journals and purchase books needed for classes attended by personnel.

Parts and Equipment is unchanged. This line maintains the non-motorized equipment such as hoses, nozzles, hand tools, fire extinguishers and ladders.

Minor Capital:

Minor capital is an annual appropriation for the replacement of firefighter gear. We have seen an increase of over 30% in recent years, however with the call department shrinking the amount allocated can remain unchanged. It is also important to note that there is a push from the National Fire Prevention Administration (NFPA), as well as the state level, for fire departments to make the transition to outfitting their firefighters with PFAS free gear. We have made a request for approval through the capital plan to add appropriations for the new gear to the Capital budget for FY'26.

Capital:

We have continued to delay the purchase of an interface engine (Forestry 4/Engine 7 replacement) given the budgetary adjustments needed to counter both the replacement of our SCBA and the new legislation related to PFAS free gear. With that said, the Interface Engine is on the capital plan for FY'27. The multirole capabilities of an interface engine will better serve the unique challenges when it comes to brush fires in Groton. For decades Groton has maintained 3 forestry trucks that are utilized for brush fires. An interface engine again fills the void of a mid-sized fire engine that can bridge the gap between a full-sized engine and a brush truck. This new vehicle will be highly capable in attacking a building fire as well as a brush fire. This ability coupled with a short wheelbase and four-wheel-drive allows the department flexibility that was previously only achieved by utilizing two vehicles at the same time.

The threat of wildfires in our region became reality this fall. Throughout the months of October and November, firefighters throughout Massachusetts were deployed to battle over 646 wildfires. This was an unprecedented number of fires for New England let alone our state. The Groton Fire Department was able to send several crews to assist DCR and other area departments to battle these fires covering over 3500 acres of wildland.

A bigger more urgent need is for the replacement of our Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA). This project would replace our 14+ year old SCBA with new, compliant, apparatus. The SCBA is necessary for providing clean breathing air to firefighters during fire incidents as well as hazardous materials operations. Our current SCBA have gone beyond their useful life expectancy. They have been serviced and re-certified for the current year, however we are at the point where they are out of compliance and another cycle of re-certification is no longer an option for us. The replacement of these units will also require an upgrade to the filling station which will come at an additional cost over the previous \$500,000. While the need for these units is justified, the replacement of all the components makes it a desirable award for federal grants. As stated previously, the application for a federal grant to fund the replacement of the SCBA is in the process. This grant continues to be very competitive and is not guaranteed. This grant would cover most of the upgrade costs with the town responsible for a small percentage.

The Future:

The Groton Fire Department remains in a strong place. We have remained a cohesive group of career and on-call firefighters and EMTs and we will continue to focus on a "service first" mentality. The town's growth, increased requests for service (projected to top 10% over last year's totals), and the loss of Nashoba Medical Center has created an increased need for more staffing. It is understood that this is a difficult time for budgets not just for the Town of Groton, but across the Commonwealth, and the request for increased staffing is difficult to fund. I will go back to my opening statement; *"What is the community's expectation when individuals pick up the phone and call 911?"* What is an acceptable response when minutes count? The answer unfortunately is not with the addition of more volunteer firefighters. When you take into account the need for institutional knowledge of the town's buildings, response area, mutual aid and district information, we cannot make that expectation of our on-call members. Recruiting career firefighters/EMTs is now the answer. This is a proactive step to the emergency response request trends of our town. Our community members deserve the best that we can offer. That is our goal.

Lastly, I wish to quote Author and Nationally Renowned Speaker, Simon Sinek who states, . . .
"People don't buy what you do, they buy why you do it."

Why do the members of the Groton Fire Department respond day in and day out? Why do our on-call members continue to attend training and leave their dinner tables and family time after working a full day at the job that puts a roof over their heads?

We do it because we are committed to service to others. We do it because of our desire to be part of something way bigger than us and that can give so much back to our community. We hope to inspire others to do the same. It's not about the "T-shirt" or our last name on our gear. It is about what is stitched over our hearts on the left side of our job shirts and on the upper back of our gear. "Groton" what it means to be part of a team and a community.



Art Cheeks
Fire Chief
Town of Groton.



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6 Firefighters needed. A Justification

Over the last several months you have heard the uptick in requests for increased staffing for the fire department. It comes without question that life safety and emergency response should be a priority and it is those key components that help drive the staffing request.

Justification for staffing is data driven. Yes, it has become a necessity since the closure of Nashoba Valley Medical Center, but with a heavy impact on budgets the need to provide information to the community so that all questions can be answered as to why the need is so critical at this time. We have graciously been allowed the ability to immediately hire two career firefighter/EMTs. While helpful, this only serves as a stop gap which the information within this memo will provide a better insight as to why.

Current Staffing Levels:

The Groton Fire Department is staffed with 4 groups of 2 firefighter/EMTs providing 24/7 fire and EMS coverage for the community. This means at any given time of day there are only 2 members that are on shift to respond. During the day time hours 8am - 4pm Monday thru Friday, the Fire Chief and Deputy Chief (for now we are filling this position with a career firefighter/EMT at their overtime rate) are staffing the building and, there *may* be a per-diem on shift to assist. The Call/Volunteer firefighters and EMTs respond to fire and EMS calls as they are available, but this response will vary on time of day and shall *not* be assumed as a guaranteed full response. The Call/Volunteer members are a vital part of our department and shall never be thought of as a less than needed resource.

Current Developments affecting the need for increased staffing:

Over the last six years, the Groton Fire Department's career staffing levels have been less than ideal. This has a direct impact on response, life safety and the overall fire protection of the community. Not to mention the impact it has on our FF/EMTs well-being.

In 2024 the Fire Department saw a staggering increase in calls for service. During the last 5 years, the annual increase for fire or EMS response averaged only 2%. This year alone the increase jumped 16%. This has nothing to do with the closure of Nashoba Medical Center and quite frankly it is difficult to point out a clear reason for the increase, but what we can say is that it has put a certain strain on the department's ability to maintain and keep up with all aspects of daily operations.

What the majority of the public doesn't see: Daily Operations

The fire department performs numerous other tasks that make up our daily operations. The involvement and time needed to perform Fire Prevention activities can take up quite a bit of time. Over the 2024 calendar year the department was responsible for conducting over 630 Inspections and building plan reviews.

- When I served as the Deputy Chief much of the plan review and inspections was part of my responsibility. I was also considered a riding deputy which meant that I also had to respond to most calls for service. Once again, if the fire department had an emergency call this meant a disruption in completing the inspections or plan reviews I was working on.
- The State of Massachusetts requires that all schools must complete a minimum of 4 fire or emergency response drills. We also must do pre-opening of school inspections that are typically performed in the days leading up to the start of school. The town of Groton consists of a total of over 28 school buildings that need to be inspected. The typical time needed to complete a school building can exceed 2 hours.
- Fire drills are often forced to be performed when the school's officials find it convenient, as to create the least amount of disruption to the school day which may vary term to term. Thus, the coordination that it takes to complete these drills takes quite a bit of time and energy to organize, and if we receive any emergency call during those times, the process needed to reschedule the drill at an appropriate time is often difficult. That totals over 30 if there are emergency drills that must be completed throughout the year.

All of the above must be completed as well as daily trainings and regular maintenance of our apparatus and equipment. Ensuring that our ambulances are in compliance and stocked with the appropriate levels of supplies and equipment, completing required training to maintain certifications and licensures both for individuals as well as departmental, and activities to maintain our skills with firefighting and EMS operations.

Supporting Data:

As I stated previously the closure of Nashoba has had a tremendous impact on fire department operations. Simultaneously the department saw a largest increase in requests for service it has seen in years. To provide further insight we have broken down several data points to also help justify the need.

The fire department responded to 1,720 calls in 2024 compared to 1,470 calls just one year prior. Of the 1,720 requests, 53% were classified as EMS which was a 30% increase from 2023. Those requests were significantly higher than the previous year. One of the worst things we are finding is that we have had 122 overlapping requests for service. This meant that of the 371 requests that were made post Nashoba's closure, 32% involved calls in which we may have not been able to provide an immediate response due to the lack of staff available. This resulted in delays in response, initial assessment and essentially a delay in care.

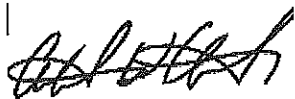
If we take into account that the survival rate of an adult suffering from cardiac arrest decreases an average of 7-10% for every minute. Simple math then states that if care is delayed for 10 minutes, the likelihood of survival is near 0%. Minutes count.

The rule of thumb is that fire doubles in size every minute. If a 100 sq. ft room contains a small fire and the time for the initial apparatus to be en-route is 10 minutes, that room would be fully involved by the time that first arriving crew is on scene. This does not take into consideration the time it may take to deploy hose lines to put water on the fire. Minutes count. For instance, on September 3rd of 2024 we were requested to respond to a fire alarm activation. Our ambulance was already occupied with a patient and en-route to Emerson Hospital. The time for the first fire response apparatus to arrive on scene for the alarm activation was over 18 minutes. There have been numerous occurrences of response times north of 12, 15 and even a 20-minute response time. This is not acceptable.

Over the last 4 months I have often been asked how the Nashoba closure has impacted the Groton Fire Department. The easy and obvious answer is that when we went to Nashoba it was a 23-minute turnaround time but now if we go to Emerson Hospital, we are averaging 93 minutes as well as wear and tear on our vehicles and our firefighters/EMTs.

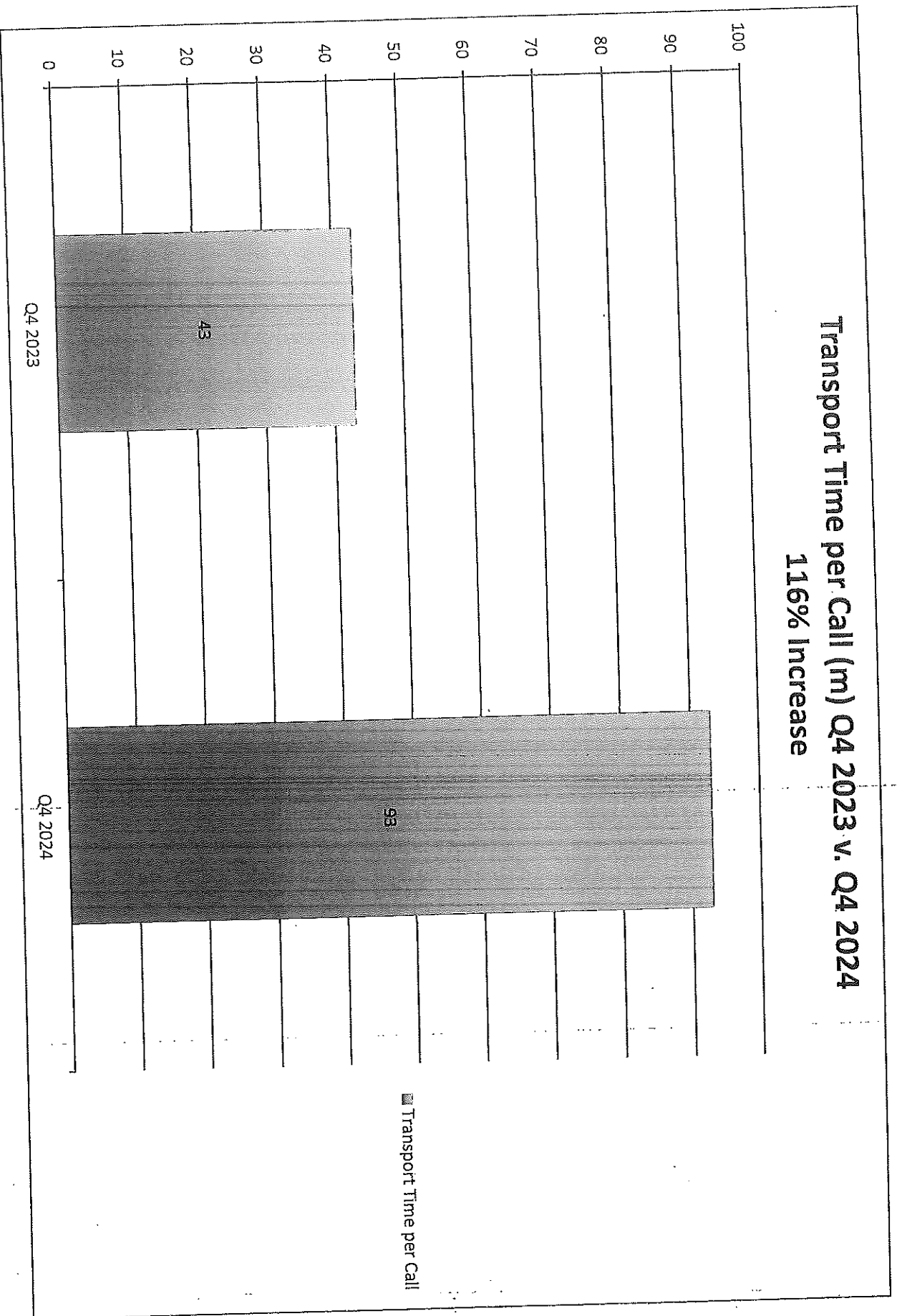
What the community members need to know and understand that I stand behind my fellow firefighters and EMTs and I wouldn't be doing my job if I don't express my concerns about the wellbeing of our Firefighter/EMTs.

I took the position of Fire Chief and in doing so took an oath to make every effort to do what is best for the residents of Groton and sometimes doing what is right may not be popular. I also have a personal oath and promise to invest in those whom I work with. My position is centered on being able to create and maintain systems that enable our fire department to continue to provide the services that our community expects and the care that they deserve. With that in mind, I cannot keep asking our firefighters and EMTs to perform their jobs if they are exhausted and burnt out. The mental health and wellbeing of our first responders is a responsibility that we need to recognize is real. Just recently a firefighter paramedic for the town of Avon committed suicide. The specifics behind his history of mental health issues are not known, but my point is that being a firefighter, EMT, Paramedic, law enforcement officer, military veteran, comes with hidden injuries. PTSD is a key component of our mental health, and burnout is another key contributor as first responders. We as a town are negligent if we do not provide the proper staffing to allow some relief for our Firefighters/EMTs. Our community expects our responders to be both physically and mentally prepared to respond at all times. Let's acknowledge that and do the right thing for our community and those who serve our community.

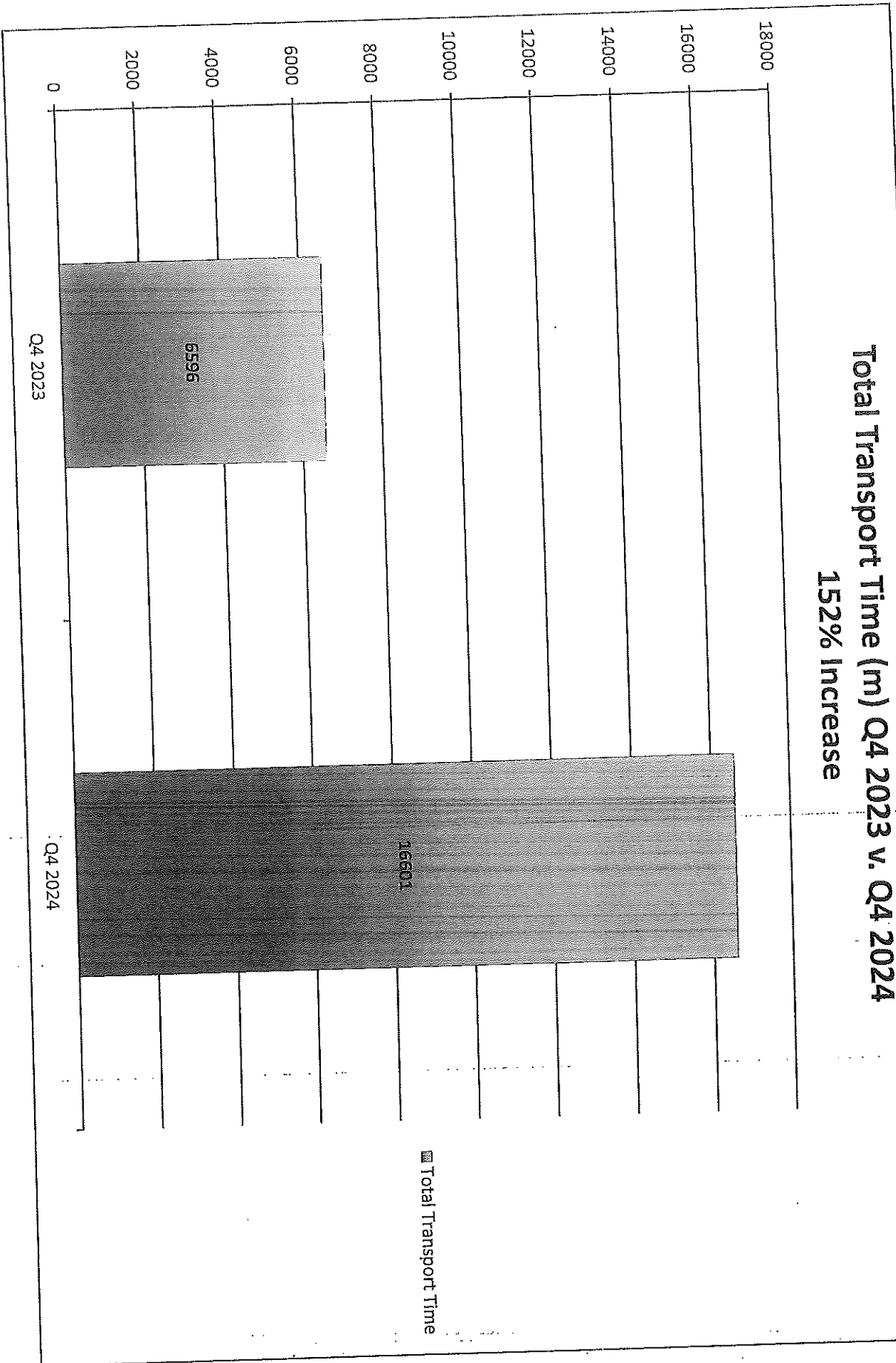


Art Cheeks
Fire Chief
Town of Groton.

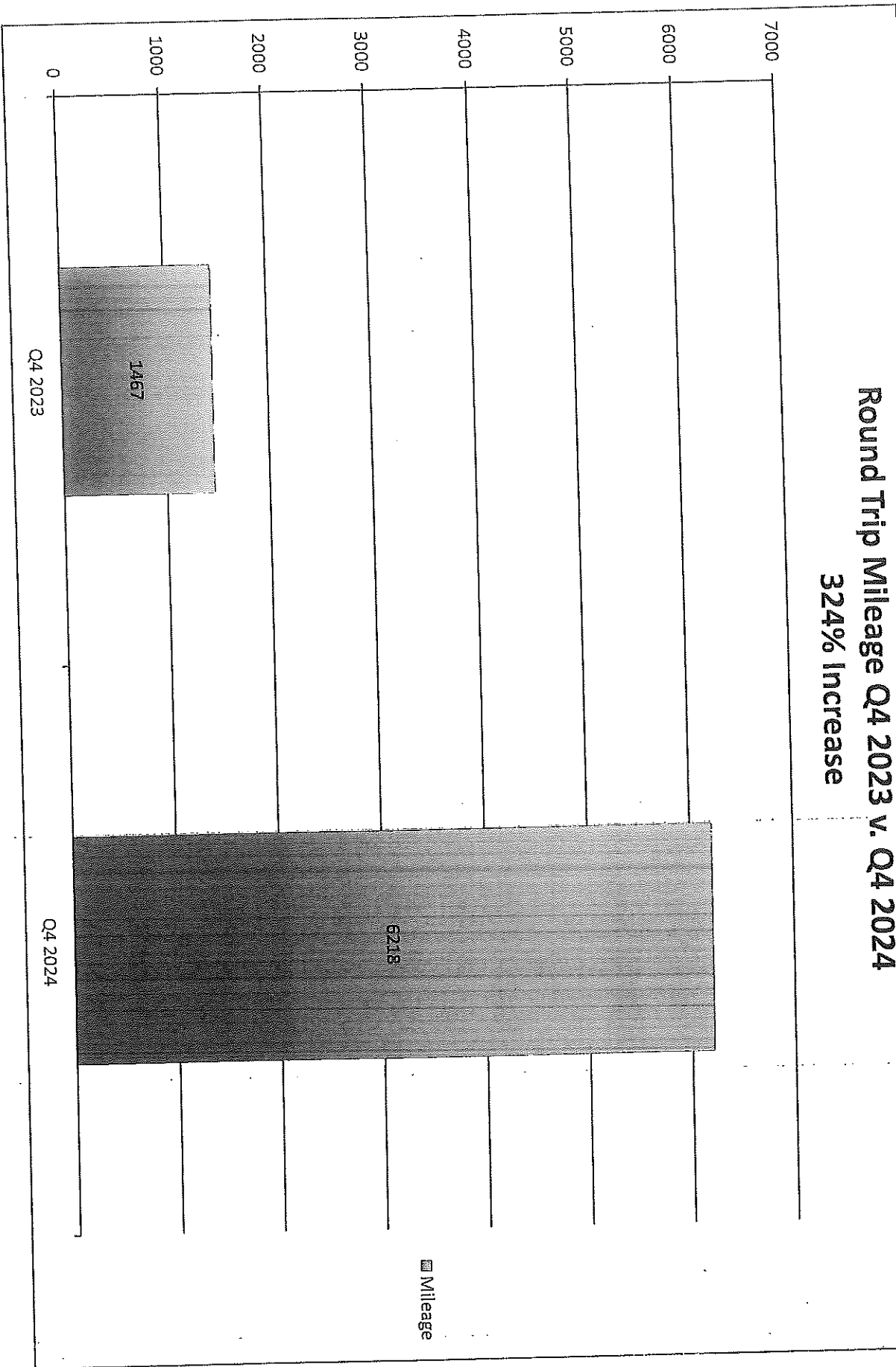
Transport Time per Call (m) Q4 2023 v. Q4 2024 116% Increase



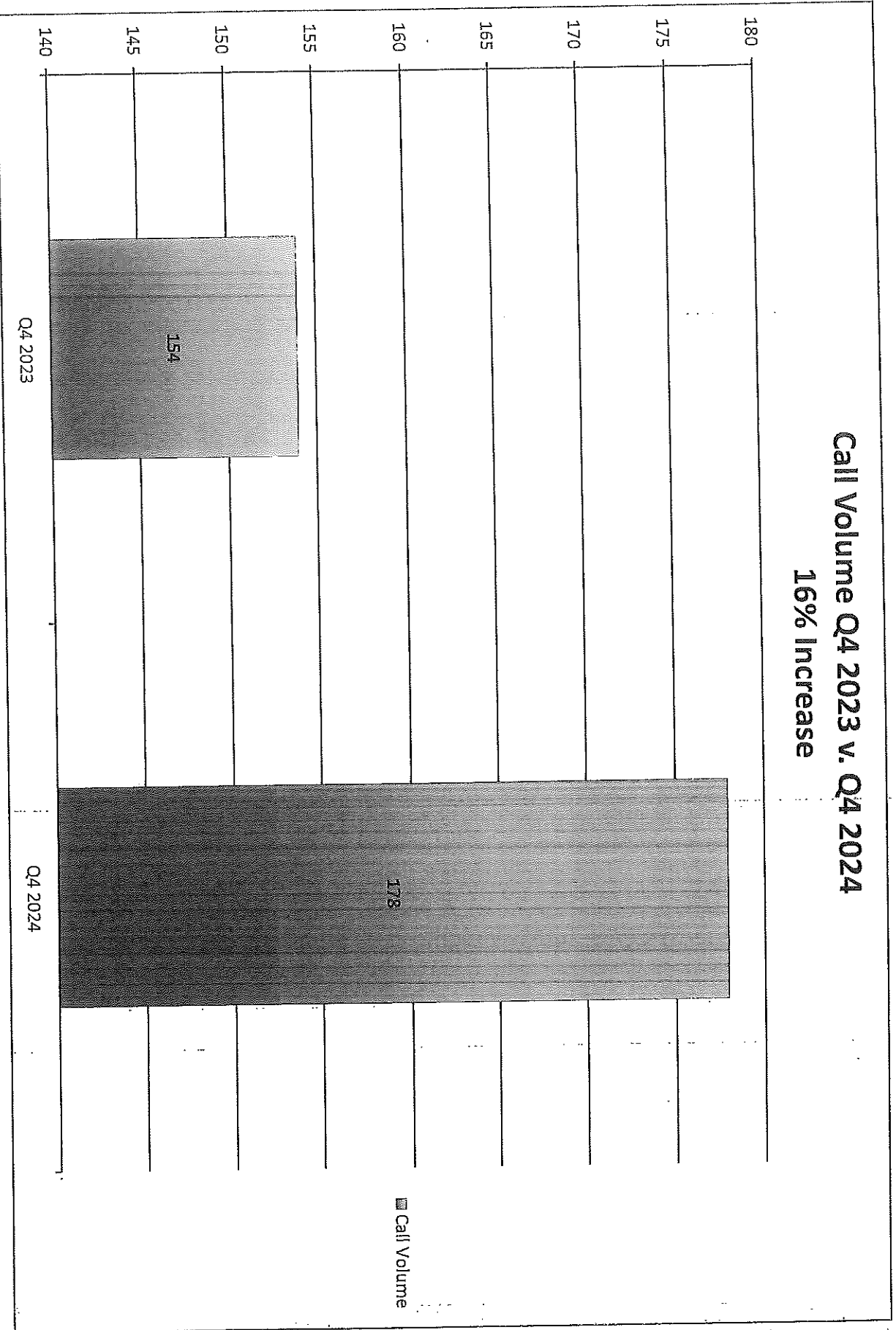
Total Transport Time (m) Q4 2023 v. Q4 2024 152% Increase



Round Trip Mileage Q4 2023 v. Q4 2024 324% Increase



Call Volume Q4 2023 v. Q4 2024 16% Increase



Survey taken February 10-

14, 2025

	Population	Sq Mileage	Dept Type	total Call	Total FT	how many of shift	how many calls a year	EMS	Fire	increase Hosp Times	call increase %
<u>Ayer</u>	8,400	9.8	Combo	12	19	4	2044	1070	974	12.36	9.3%
<u>Dunstable</u>	3,408	16.7	Call	30	0	0	447	179	268		5.0%
<u>Groton</u>	11,315	32.54	Combo	33	9	2	1720	1125	595	60	17.0%
<u>Littleton</u>	10,084	17.6	combo	11	23	5	2458	1510	948	7	6.7%
<u>Pepperell</u>	11,696	22.99	Combo	40	4	2	1668	1069	599	4.7	4.3%
<u>Townsend</u>	9,000	33.1	Combo	29	10	2	1506	1100	406	5	

Head to Head Q4 2023 v. Q4 2024				
	Q4 2023	Q4 2024	Delta	% Increase
Call Volume	154	178	24	16%
Transport Time per Call	43	93	50	116%
Total Transport Time	6596	16601	10005	152%
Mileage	1467	6218	4751	324%

Some possible conclusions:

- We have increased our per call average transport by 50 minutes (116%). This led to a 10K minute increase in Q4 24 alone (152%) which translates to 7 person-days and as we are required by law to transport with 2 EMTs, 14 additional person-days per quarter in transport time alone.
 - At current staffing levels this is a 1::1 correlation of an additional 14 person-days per quarter the town is not able to staff an ambulance, or safely staff any fire apparatus to meet the response time standard.
- Mileage on our ambulances is now 3x what it was, possibly indicating we will require replacement 3x faster than we did before.