

SELECT BOARD / FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2025
SB APPROVED/FINCOM APPROVED

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

Finance Committee Members Present: Bud Robertson, Chair; Kristina Lengyel; David Manugian; Jamie McDonald;

Finance Committee Members Absent: Scott Whitefield; Mary Linskey, Vice Chair; Gary Green;

Finance Team Members Present: Melisa Doig, Human Resources Director; Patricia DuFresne, Assistant Finance Director/Town Accountant; Katie Kajanjian, Treasurer/Tax Collector; Megan Foster, Principal Assessor

Also Present: Mark Haddad, Town Manager; Kara Cruikshank, Executive Assistant to the Town Manager.

Chair Pisani called the meeting to order at 6:45 p.m. and reviewed the agenda.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mr. Cunningham reviewed the School Committee Newsletter and announced that a very important Education Funding Forum, hosted by Representative Scarsdale, will be held on November 20th from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. at the Marion Stoddart Performing Arts Center.

Mr. Pisani announced that during trick-or-treating hours, the Fire Explorers would be offering drinks and hot dogs at the Union Congregational Church. Mr. Cunningham said that Trick-or-Treating will take place on Halloween night from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

An Indian Hill Road resident submitted to the Board a Citizens' Petition requesting to reduce the speed limit to 25 MPH (or lower) on Groton's Main Street from Old Ayer Road to School Street. She read the petition aloud to the Board and explained that they believe the speed of traffic through the town center significantly impacts the safety of Groton residents. They would like to discuss this request for a speed limit reduction with the Board at a future Select Board meeting. Mr. Haddad thanked the resident for the petition. He explained that the Board does not have the authority to just vote to set a speed limit. To set a speed limit, the Town must follow the process outlined by the Massachusetts Department of Transportation. This includes tracking vehicular traffic speed over an extended period of time. Based on the outcome of the Study, the speed limit would be set at the 85th percentile of recorded speeds on that roadway. He has been working closely with Mr. Cunningham and has applied for a \$30,000 state grant to hire an engineer to conduct a comprehensive study, including measuring speeds on that road. The resident added that many people are concerned about safety and thanked the Board for their time. Mr. Haddad said they expect to know if they received the grant in mid-November and that he would keep the residents informed.

Joni Parker Roach, a member of the Destination Groton Committee, invited the Select Board and community members to an event on Sunday, November 2nd, from 2:00 to 4:00 PM at the Prescott

Community Center. The Destination Groton Committee has invited author Don Ryan from Charlestown, who recently published a book entitled Colonel William Prescott: Heroic Commander of the Battle of Bunker Hill. Notably, Ms. Parker-Roach said that Colonel Prescott was a former resident of Groton.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

1. Update from the Town Manager on Town Meeting Follow-Up.

Mr. Haddad explained that now that the 2025 Fall Town Meeting has concluded, he wanted to take a few moments to update the Board on the actions taken in response to the approved Articles. He said the Town Meeting was a success and paid special attention and thanks for the work of Executive Assistant Kara Cruikshank who made sure Town Meeting went off without a hitch. As always, she did a phenomenal job and the Town is very lucky to have such a dedicated and hard-working employee. Additionally, the Town of Groton is fortunate to have Jason Kauppi as its Moderator. Mr. Haddad, who has attended or participated in 130 Town Meetings throughout his career, said that Jason Kauppi is the best; he runs and oversees an excellent Town Meeting. Mr. Haddad reviewed the following:

- a. The revised Groton Charter has been submitted to Representatives Scarsdale and Sena, as well as Senator Cronin. They have been asked to do everything in their power to secure approval from the General Court and the Governor for the amended Charter. Mr. Haddad stated that his office will stay in constant contact with our State Delegation to ensure its quick passage. He also mentioned that Representative Scarsdale has already begun working on this request.
- b. The request for Special Legislation to allow the Town to ban second-generation anticoagulant rodenticides in Groton has also been submitted to the Legislature for approval and that, like with the Charter, his office will stay in regular contact with the Delegation to ensure its passage as well.
- c. The Department of Public Works will start repairs on the Fitch's Bridge Headwall once fall paving is complete, likely within the next two weeks. Additionally, Mr. Delaney and Mr. Callahan have begun the process of hiring a company to install monitoring wells and carry out other essential maintenance at the former Nod Road Landfill.
- d. The Town Manager's Working Group met last week to continue developing improvements to the Cow Pond Brook Fields to make sure they are ready to submit a final project for approval at the 2026 Spring Town Meeting that will include funding from the Federal grant the Town received. Additional meetings, including public hearings, will be scheduled to gather as much input as possible on the final project. Mr. Haddad stated that the Park Commission will approve any final project proposal before it is submitted to the Community Preservation Committee (CPC). CPC member Richard Hewitt requested Mr. Haddad to contact the Town of Dunstable's CPC to inquire about potential funding assistance.

- e. The Town Clerk has filed the Bylaw to regulate door-to-door solicitation to the Attorney General for approval. Mr. Haddad will work with the Chief of Police to refine the proposed amendments to Chapter 61, "Licenses and Permits," so it can be brought back to the 2026 Spring Town Meeting.

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

| | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Monday, November 3, 2025 | Regularly Scheduled Meeting |
| Monday, November 10, 2025 | No Meeting |
| Monday, November 17, 2025 | Tax Classification Hearing |
| Monday, November 24, 2025 | Regularly Scheduled Meeting |
| Monday, December 1, 2025 | No Meeting |
| Monday, December 8, 2025 | Regularly Scheduled Meeting |
| Monday, December 15, 2025 | Regularly Scheduled Meeting |
| Monday, December 22, 2025 | Regularly Scheduled Meeting |
| Monday, December 29, 2025 | No Meeting |
| Monday, January 5, 2026 | No Meeting |
| Monday, January 12, 2026 | Regularly Scheduled Meeting |

ITEMS FOR SELECT BOARD CONSIDERATION AND APPROVAL

- 1. Consider Approving a One-Day Wine and Malt Beverages License for the Friends of Prescott's Annual Spelling Bee to be held on Friday, November 14, 2025, from 7:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.**

Mr. Cunningham made a motion to approve a One-Day Wine and Malt Beverages License for the Friends of Prescott's Annual Spelling Bee to be held on Friday, November 14, 2025, from 7:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. Ms. Pine seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

7:00 p.m.- In Joint Session with the Finance Committee- Provide Budget Guidance to the Town Manager for the Creation of the Fiscal Year 2027 Proposed Operating Budget.

Finance Committee members, Bud Robertson (Chair), Kristina Lengyel, David Manugian, and Jamie McDonald, were in attendance.

Mr. Robertson called the Finance Committee to order.

Mr. Haddad provided the Select Board and Finance Committee with a summary of anticipated revenues and expenses for FY 2027 to assist them in developing Budget Guidance for FY 2027. He made the point that these numbers are preliminary and will change over the next several months. While they can be used for developing guidance, he cautioned them that these numbers are absolutely not set in stone. He explained that he worked closely with the Finance Team to develop these estimates. Mr. Haddad reviewed the Fiscal Year 2027 Preliminary Summary with the Board (also included with these minutes):

Mr. Haddad reported that after the Fall Town Meeting, there is \$11,270 in Unexpended Levy Capacity. He projected that the levy increase, including an estimated \$15 million in new growth, will be \$1,210,928. Additionally, Mr. Haddad explained that the anticipated increase in local receipts, estimated at 3.5%, is \$198,606. He also stated that the estimated increase in state aid is 2%, totaling \$23,654. As a result, the total available new revenue projected for Fiscal Year 2026 is approximately \$1,444,458 (about 3%).

Mr. Haddad stated that with a 60/40 split between the Municipality and the School District, the initial allocation for the Municipal Budget (40%) would be \$577,783. For the Groton-Dunstable Regional School District (GDRSD) Operational Assessment, the initial allocation would be approximately \$866,675. Mr. Haddad said that, based on the school district's five-year projection, the expected increase in the GDRSD Assessment, at 8.0%, amounts to approximately \$2,259,811.

Mr. Haddad then reviewed the anticipated increases in the Municipal Budget:

Anticipated Increase in Municipal Budget

| | |
|--|------------|
| Salaries/Wages-All Union Contracts Call from 3% COLA | \$ 329,858 |
| Pension-Increase set at 6.54% | \$ 144,813 |
| Health Insurance-MIIA Directs and an Increase of 14% | \$ 265,080 |
| Anticipated Increase in Nashoba Associated Boards of Health Assessment | \$ 20,091 |
| Anticipated Increase in Nashoba Tech (2 ½ % increase- Enrollment Stable) | \$ 22,712 |
| Total | \$ 793,554 |

Anticipated FY 2027 Preliminary Surplus (Deficit) (8.03% Increase for GDRSD) \$(1,608,907)

Mr. Robertson explained that the Finance Committee met on Tuesday, October 21st, and discussed anticipated revenues and expenses for FY 2027 with Mr. Haddad. He said they voted unanimously on the following guidance to the Town Manager:

- A. The Town Manager shall provide a Balanced Budget with no consideration of an Override for Fiscal Year 2027. Any Municipal Spending Increase shall be kept to no more than forty (40%) percent of anticipated new revenues for Fiscal Year 2027. The remaining new revenues shall be set aside for the Fiscal Year 2027 Proposed Operating Assessment of the Groton Dunstable Regional School District.
- B. The Town Manager shall provide a complete listing/summary of any reductions to the Budget to comply with this Guidance.

Mr. Robertson stated that the Finance Committee believed this guidance would be a fair starting point, based on the 60/40 split between expenses and revenues. He clarified that this approach would provide both the municipality and the school with a 3.1% increase. Mr. Haddad said he liked the guidance and emphasized that he will continue to work collaboratively with the School District and the Town of Dunstable to develop a solution with everyone at the table. Ms. Manugian said she would like to see a worst-case scenario as a starting point and explore the potential outlook if there is no growth in the municipal budget. She wants to see all options on the table to understand the impacts.

After the Finance Committee and Select Board deliberated, the Finance Committee expressed its desire to uphold the Guidance it voted on for the Town Manager at its Tuesday, October 21, 2025, meeting. Mr. Haddad asked if the Select Board supported the Finance Committee's Guidance proposal and then

provided an overview of the upcoming FY 2027 budget schedule: the budget guidance to the Town Manager is being discussed this evening; the Budget Kickoff meeting is scheduled for November 13th; budgets are due the week after Thanksgiving; and the budgets will be presented to the Board by January 31st. Mr. Haddad proposed scheduling another joint meeting to review and update the FY 27 Preliminary Summary after all budgets have been reviewed.

Ms. Manugian stated that she would not support the Finance Committee's Guidance to the Town Manager and expressed her desire to have all the data upfront to understand the challenges they would face fully. Ms. Pine explained that it was important to understand that nobody is discussing an override; however, that doesn't mean the Town doesn't need one. The choice they face is between implementing an override or making drastic cuts. Mr. Haddad stated that the Town of Groton has been consistent in its position with regards to Operational Overrides. While the voters generally support Debt Exclusion Overrides, they have never supported a General Override of Proposition 2½ during his time in Groton. He does not think they should discuss an override.

The Select Board Vote

Ms. Pine moved to provide the following guidance from the Finance Committee to the Town Manager:

- A. The Town Manager shall provide a Balanced Budget with no consideration of an Override for Fiscal Year 2027. Any Municipal Spending Increase shall be kept to no more than forty (40%) percent of anticipated new revenues for Fiscal Year 2027. The remaining new revenues shall be set aside for the Fiscal Year 2027 Proposed Operating Assessment of the Groton Dunstable Regional School District.*
- B. The Town Manager shall provide a complete listing/summary of any reductions to the Budget to comply with this Guidance.*

Mr. Cunningham seconded the motion, subject to change. The motion carried 4 in Favor, 1 Against- Manugian.

Mr. Robertson reiterated that the Finance Committee voted unanimously on the Guidance.

Mr. Pisani emphasized the importance of attending the Education Funding Forum on November 20th and stated that the focus should be on State Aid.

OTHER BUSINESS

None

On-Going Issues

- A. PFAS Issue- None
- B. UMass Satellite Emergency Facility –None
- C. Fire Department Staffing – None
- D. West Groton Dam-None

SELECT BOARD LIASON REPORTS

Approval of the Regularly Scheduled Meeting of October 6, and Special Meeting of October 18, 2025

Mr. Cunningham made a motion to approve the regular meeting minutes of October 6, 2025. Mr. Reilly seconded the motion. The motion carried 4 in Favor, 1 abstained-Pine.

Ms. Pine made a motion to approve the special meeting minutes of October 18, 2025. Ms. Manugian seconded. Mr. Reilly seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

The Select Board adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

Respectively submitted by Kara Cruikshank, Executive Assistant to the Town Manager.