

SELECT BOARD / FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, DECEMBER 22, 2025
S.B. APPROVED / FINCOM APPROVED

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

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

Also Present: Mark Haddad, Town Manager; Kara Cruikshank, Executive Assistant to the Town Manager; Patricia DuFresne, Assistant Finance Director/Town Accountant; Katie Kazanjian, Treasurer/Tax Collector; Melisa Doig, Human Resources Director; Britt McKinley and Thomas Guilick, Trails Committee

Chair Pisani called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and reviewed the agenda.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mr. Haddad announced the Massachusetts Clean Water Trust has informed the Town that it will be eligible for 5% loan forgiveness for the High School Water Main project. This is very good news for the taxpayers as it will reduce the amount of debt to be repaid. Mr. Haddad read a public service announcement into the record to inform residents that the Town only removes snow from sidewalks in the Town Center and the West Groton village. Sidewalks on all other road, including the various subdivisions in Town are the responsibility of the property owners. He requested that residents be vigilant. Mr. Haddad announced that during the week between Christmas and New Years the Town Hall will be closed to the public based on the number of employees on vacation during this period. Employees who are not on vacation will be working either remotely or at Town Hall and will respond to email and phone messages.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

None

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

1. Appointments

Mr. Haddad has appointed W. David Nelson as a Per Diem Van Driver and Brecan Novak to the Country Club Golf Staff and asked that the Select Board consider ratifying those appointments.

Ms. Pine made a motion to ratify the Town Manager's appointments of W. David Nelson and Brecan Novak. Ms. Manugian seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

2. FY 2027 Budget Update

Mr. Haddad stated that he would discuss the Budget update during the joint meeting with the Finance Committee later in the meeting. However, the Board has received an email from resident Janet Landry Shea making various suggestions to assist in managing the Town Budget. Mr. Haddad

appreciated her suggestions and wanted to review them in some detail with the Board. Her first suggestion was to sell the Prescott Building to the Friends of Prescott. Mr. Haddad stated that the Board could consider this, however at this time there is no taxpayer subsidy to operate the building and that the Friends rent covered the insurance on the building. The Friends paid for all other expenses. The Town would be responsible for any major issue, but at this time, the building was operating at no taxpayer expense. Ms. Manugian wondered if it made sense to explore the sale before the Town needed to expend funds on major repairs. Her second suggestion was to operate the Country Club as an enterprise fund. Mr. Haddad stated that the Town does treat it that way without making it formal and it has returned a profit to the Town for the last several years but was not in favor of making it an enterprise fund. He wanted the Club to continue to repay the General Fund and help bolster the Town's Free Cash position. Her third suggestion was to lower the CPA Assessment to allow for taxpayer support of other budget items. Mr. Haddad stated this was an interesting idea that warrants further consideration. Mr. Cunningham stated that the Town has made great use of CPA funds for various projects and would like to see it continue. Her fourth suggestion was to consider job sharing and reducing the work week. Mr. Haddad was not in favor of this as it would impact the Town's lowest paid employees and there is currently job sharing among many positions and departments. Her final suggestion was to work with the legislature to reform PILOT payment regulations. Mr. Haddad stated that this is currently happening.

3. Select Board Meeting Schedule through the Spring Town Meeting

Mr. Haddad proposed the following meeting schedule (subject to change as necessary) through the 2026 Spring Town Meeting:

Monday, January 5, 2026 -	No Meeting
Monday, January 12, 2026 -	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, January 19, 2026	No Meeting (Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday)
Monday, January 26, 2026 -	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, February 2, 2026 -	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, February 9, 2026 -	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, February 16, 2026 -	No Meeting – (President's Day Holiday)
Monday, February 23, 2026 -	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, March 2, 2026 -	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, March 9, 2026 -	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, March 16, 2026 -	No Meeting
Monday, March 23, 2026 -	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, March 30, 2026	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, April 6, 2026 -	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, April 13, 2026 -	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, April 20, 2026 -	No Meeting – (Patriot's Day Holiday)
Mon, April 27, or Sat, May 2, 2026 -	2026 Spring Town Meeting

ITEMS FOR SELECT BOARD CONSIDERATION AND APPROVAL

1. Adopt Penny Policy

Town Treasurer/Tax Collector Katie Kazanjian was present at the meeting and is recommending that the Select Board consider adopting a formal “Penny Policy” due to the anticipated shortage of pennies following the U.S. Mint’s decision to discontinue production of pennies. The proposed policy (copy attached to these minutes for reference) would establish clear guidance on rounding practices for cash transactions of all Town Departments.

Mr. Haddad asked the Select Board to consider waiving the Select Board’s Policy requiring that the Board wait a week before approving a new policy due to the fact that the Select Board does not meet again until January 12, 2026 and that residents will start paying third quarter tax bills on January 5, 2026. Ms. Pine agreed that this should be done as she does not believe this policy will impact anyone negatively and does not anticipate receiving any recommended changes to the Policy.

Mr. Cunningham moved that the Select Board waive its Policy requiring a waiting period before adopting a new policy. Ms. Pine seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Pine moved that the Select Board adopt the Penny Policy as submitted by Treasurer Kazanjian. Mr. Cunningham seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

6:15 p.m. Trails Committee Update

Mr. Haddad stated that Paul Funch was unable to attend the meeting this evening, but Vice Chair Britt McKinely and Thomas Guilick were present to update the Board on their work over the last year. Mr. McKinely presented the Board with a summary of all their work over the last year. (Copy of summary attached to these minutes for reference). Mr. Reilly thanked the Committee for their efforts. Mr. Haddad stated that Paul Funch really does a great job of overseeing the Committee and all the work they do maintaining the trails. The Board thanked the Committee for their hard work.

6:30 p.m. T.R.E.A.D. Committee Update

Treasurer/Tax Collector Katie Kazanjian was present to update the Board on the T.R.E.A.D. Committee (Tax Relieve for the Elderly and Disabled). She stated that the Committee currently has three members, herself, Don Black and Pascal Miller. They are looking for two more members. They are in the process of raising fund to support elderly and disabled residents in need. Currently they have \$17,000 in the fund and they have received some applications thus far. They are in the process of public outreach, and the Committee is operating well. She thanked Lowell Five for their recent \$5,000 donation to the Committee.

OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Cunningham moved to authorize the Town Manager and One Member of the Select Board to sign warrants for the next thirty days. Ms. Pine seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Haddad updated the Board on the status of the amended Groton Charter now before the Legislature for approval. The Charter has received a favorable recommendation from the Joint Committee on Municipalities and Regional Government. The next step is for the both Houses and the Governor to approve. Mr. Haddad thanked Representative Margaret Scarsdale for her outstanding efforts shepherding the Charter through the legislative process.

On-Going Issues

- A. PFAS Issue – The Chlorine Booster Station has been approved by DEP, signifying a major milestone in the project. Potable drinking water should be delivered to the High School on December 29th and ready for the students when they return from the Holiday break.
- B. UMass Satellite Emergency Facility – The facility continues to progress well.
- C. Fire Department Staffing –None
- D. West Groton Dam—Mr. Haddad stated that the IT Department has provided a link to all exhibits and the final report by the Horsley Witten Group's report on the dam removal process. He is still planning on bring this issue back before the Board in early February, 2026.

SELECT BOARD LIASON REPORTS

None

Approval of the Regularly Scheduled Meeting of December 15, 2025

Ms. Pine made a motion to approve the regular meeting minutes of December 15, 2025. Ms. Manugian seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

At 6:50 p.m., the Board took a brief recess with the intention to reconvene at 7:00 p.m. with the Finance Committee.

7:00 p.m. - Joint Session with the Finance Committee

Chair Pisani reconvened the meeting and called the meeting back to order at 7:00 p.m. Finance Chair Bud Robertson called the Finance Committee to order. Mr. Haddad updated the Finance Committee and Select Board on the current status of the development of the Budget. The initial budget guidance assumed that up to forty (40%) percent of new revenues would be used to balance the municipal operating budget. Currently, the draft budget has set aside \$585,000 in new revenues to balance the Municipal Budget, with \$1 million set aside for the School District and is in conformance with the Guidance. Setting this amount aside for the School District would leave them with a \$1.7 million deficit in FY 2027. The Town of Dunstable has set aside a 6% increase for the district, which would require Groton to appropriate \$1.539 million for the District in FY 2027. To meet this amount, the Town would need to essentially level fund the Budget in FY 2027 requiring a reduction of \$539,000 from the current balanced budget. Mr. Haddad stated that the Select Board and Finance Committee could leave the Guidance as is and keep the budget as currently constituted or direct the Town

Manager to meet the Dunstable set aside by increasing Groton's set aside to \$1.539 million. If this were the case, Mr. Haddad stated that he would not fill any current vacancies and would need to eliminate three currently filled positions. Mr. Green stated that the Town Manager is required to submit a balanced budget and that he does not want to see the Town lock the School District into an amount this early in the process. Mr. Robertson liked what the Town Manager outlined and would like to see the district funded with an increase of \$1.5 million. Ms. Pine stated that the public needs to understand that there will be no override in FY 2027 and that both the Municipal side and the School side would see significant reductions with layoffs. After a spirited debate, Mr. Haddad stated that upon further thinking, no change in the guidance is necessary. The original Guidance of setting aside not more than 40% of new revenues for the municipal budget and the rest going to the School District is still proper. Mr. Haddad will need to continue to work with the Town of Dunstable and the School District to balance the budget. At this time, Mr. Haddad stated that he would like to rework the proposed budget by not filling any current vacant positions and increase the initial set aside for the School District to \$1.2 million. Over the months of January, February and March, more information will become available including initial state aid and actual health insurance rates. This will allow for a better budget. The consensus of the meeting was to follow this course of action. In addition, Mr. Haddad stated that one of the Select Board's Goals was to determine adequate staffing of the various Departments. Mr. Haddad provided the Board with the Study (copy attached to these minutes for reference) that compared Groton to the Towns of Lunenburg, Littleton, Tyngsborough, Maynard and Bedford. Mr. Haddad stated that the study showed that the various Town Hall Departments were at or below the average of the other communities and that the Police Department and Fire Department were understaffed according to the Study. Ms. Manugian asked that Bedford be removed from the Study and recalculated. With regard to the finalization of the proposed FY 2027 Proposed Operating Budget, Mr. Haddad stated that he would like to have one more meeting with the Select Board and Finance Committee prior to submitting the proposed budget on January 31, 2026.

Chair Pisani adjourned the meeting at 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark W. Haddad
Town Manager

The Finance Committee members briefly discussed the change in the rate of growth in the GDRSD budgets, as well as the assumptions used for State Aid revenue. Mr. Robertson noted that the budget growth rate is currently about 6%, with wage increases growing at 5.5% and benefits at about 9%. He emphasized that these particular cost drivers are very difficult to control in terms of correcting the growth rate.

Minutes:

On a motion by Mr. Manugian, seconded by Ms. Linskey, the Finance Committee voted in the majority to approve the minutes of 9/29/25. The Vote: 5-0-1 (Ms. Lengyel abstained)

On a motion by Mr. Robertson, seconded by Ms. Linskey, the Finance Committee voted in the majority to approve the minutes of 10/21/25. The Vote: 5-0-1 (Ms. Lengyel abstained)

On a motion by Mr. Manugian, seconded by Ms. Lengyel, the Finance Committee voted in the majority to approve the minutes of 10/28/25. The Vote: 4-0-2 (Mr. Green and Ms. Linskey abstained)

The Finance Committee adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Dufresne
Assistant Finance Director/Town Accountant