



FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING
The Center West Groton Community Room
163 West Main Street Groton, MA 01450
Tuesday, March 24, 2026 – 7:00 PM

Finance Committee Members Present: Chair – Bud Robertson, Kristina Lengyel, Gary Green, Scott Whitefield, Jamie McDonald

Also Present: Town Manager – Mark Haddad, Town Accountant – Patricia A. DuFresne

The meeting was opened at 7:00 PM.

Meeting Minutes

- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to approve the meeting minutes from March 9, 2026.
 - **Vote:** One member abstained, noting they were not present at that meeting. All others in favor. Motion carried.
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Discussion of FY27 Operating & Capital Budget Proposals

Town Manager Haddad presented the Spring Town Meeting warrant articles. The Committee agreed to take a consent vote on all articles except those pulled for individual discussion. Articles pulled for separate discussion: Article 5 (Operating Budget), Article 7b (Cow Pond Brook), Article 11 (Squannacook River Dam), and Article 13 (Destination Groton).

- **Article 1 – Receive Reports**
 - Finance Committee position: No position.
- **Article 2 – Elected Officials Compensation**
 - The Town Moderator is proposed to receive a salary of \$1,000 in FY2027.
 - Finance Committee position: Support.
- **Article 3 – Wage and Classification Schedule**
 - Applies to three non-union employees covered by the Personnel Bylaw: the Executive Assistant to the Town Manager, the Human Resources Director, and the IT Director. These employees will receive a 3% cost-of-living adjustment in FY2027, consistent with the Town Supervisors' Union Contract.

- Finance Committee position: Support.
- **Article 4 – Appropriate FY2027 Contribution to the OPEB Trust Fund**
 - The article seeks an appropriation of \$200,000 from Free Cash to add to the OPEB Liability Trust Fund. Town Manager Haddad noted that if the Finance Committee supports the additional firefighter position in the operating budget, the OPEB contribution may increase to \$205,000 to account for the new employee. The current OPEB liability is approximately \$11 million.
 - Finance Committee position: Support.
- **Article 5 – FY2027 Annual Operating Budget**
 - Two updates since the February 28th presentation. The School Committee voted the Superintendent's proposed budget, which would require a \$2.2 million increase in the Town's assessment. Town Manager Haddad is recommending \$1.2 million. The School Committee always votes the highest number they can and adjusts down from there because they can never go higher once the budget is certified. The Finance Committee cannot take a position until the School Committee sets its final number, which depends on the Chapter 70 figure expected in April. The warrant must be posted by April 17th for the May 2nd Town Meeting. Additionally, a new firefighter position costing \$80,000 is included in the operating budget. Several members expressed support; this discussion will continue at a future meeting.
 - Finance Committee position: No position at this time, to be revisited once the school budget number is finalized.
- **Article 6 – FY2027 Capital Budget**
 - Town Manager Haddad noted that the Country Club irrigation system was not bid out in time and will come back in the fall. The only other change to the capital budget is the Communication Improvements item, where the Groton Electric Light Department agreed to contribute \$9,313 toward the total project cost of \$108,771, reducing the Town's ask to \$99,500. Members agreed the renewal of the traffic camera system should be discussed next year before the contract is funded for FY2029.
 - Finance Committee position: Support.
- **Article 7 – Community Preservation Funding Accounts**
 - An accounting procedure to allocate Community Preservation funds to sub-accounts for FY2027.
 - Finance Committee position: Support.
- **Article 8 – Community Preservation Funding Recommendations**
 - The following CPC proposals were discussed:
 - Proposal A: Lighting Improvements at Prescott: Support.

- Proposal B: Cow Pond Brook Fields Improvements: Pulled for separate vote – see below.
 - Proposal C: Housing Coordinator FY2027: Support.
 - Proposal D: Pollinator Pathway Garden: Support.
 - Proposal E: FY2027 Housing Request, Affordable Housing Trust: The Affordable Housing Trust currently holds approximately \$1.1 million total, comprised of approximately \$800,000 in CPA transfers and approximately \$300,000 in unrestricted funds received from developers as a condition of planning board approvals. Support.
 - Proposal F: Cutler Softball Field Establishment: Support.
 - Proposal G: Boutwell Playground Renovation: Town Manager Haddad confirmed the district’s future plan is to keep Boutwell as a preschool facility.
 - Finance Committee position: Support.
- **Article 8, Proposal B – Cow Pond Brook Fields Improvements – Separate Vote**
 - Town Manager Haddad presented the project. The Town has been awarded a \$1,000,000 federal grant, reducing the net borrowing to \$3,284,000. The CPC plans to fund the debt service through bond anticipation notes with mandatory principal paydowns, the same approach used for the Middle School Track, which was paid off in five years. Annual debt service is expected to be between \$275,000 and \$320,000. The Park Commission and CPC are both unanimously in support. Project improvements include reconfigured and expanded parking, ADA-compliant accessible paths to all fields, environmental restoration, an additional field, relocation of a Little League field, a new playground, a walking track, and lights for a Little League field. The Park Commission is holding a public hearing on approximately April 15th. Gary Green stated he could not support the article, describing it as a large and complex topic that could not be adequately addressed in one meeting.
 - **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to support Article 8, Proposal B.
 - **Vote:** 3 in favor, 2 opposed (Gary Green and Jamie McDonald opposed). Motion carried.
- **Article 9 – Special Act to Exempt Certain Uncontrollable Costs from the Tax Levy**
 - Town Manager Haddad explained that this is a home rule petition asking the legislature to start debating if certain uncontrollable costs can be exempted from the Town's levy limit calculation, specifically health insurance and pension requirements. These costs are considered uncontrollable because public employees by law pay into a pension system rather than Social Security, and the Town is also required by law to provide health insurance to any employee working more than 20 hours per week. The Town has taken steps to manage costs, including reducing the employer share from 80/20 to 70/30, and the schools moved from 85/15 to 80/20. It was noted that the article has a positive side in that the schools and Town would get more money, but a negative side in that taxes go up. It was also noted that additional public

discussion is warranted. The Select Board is scheduled to take a position at their March 30th meeting.

- Finance Committee position: No position.

- **Article 10 – Amend Chapter 168 of the General Bylaws – Stretch Energy Code**
 - Finance Committee position: No position.

- **Article 11 – Squannacook River Dam Repair**
 - Town Manager Haddad presented the background and current status of the dam repair project. At the Fall Town Meeting of 2023/2024, \$160,000 was appropriated for engineering studies. Horsley Witten was hired to study removal and Haley Aldrich was hired to develop repair specifications and bid documents.
 - Repair bids: Eight bids were received. The low bid was \$502,500 and the high bid was \$1.4 million. Three bids were around \$500,000 and five were between \$1.1 and \$1.4 million. The Town's engineer raised concern that the low bidder carried only \$150,000 for water control, which is the process of managing water flow during the repair, while the average across the other seven bids was \$310,000. The engineer recommended carrying \$150,000 in contingency for this. Town Manager Haddad added an additional \$100,000 for a total of \$250,000 in contingency. The total authorization request is \$812,500, made up of the low bid of \$502,500, \$60,000 for engineering oversight, and \$250,000 in contingency. There is no fiscal impact in FY2027. The Town would pay interest only in the first year on the full bonded amount and then renew the bond at the actual project cost upon completion.
 - Removal option: The removal study is complete. The anticipated removal cost is \$1.7 to \$3.1 million, with an estimated 90 to 95% grant reimbursement. Town Manager Haddad recommended presenting both options to Town Meeting so voters can make the decision. If removal is chosen and grant funding does not cover the full cost, the Town would be responsible for the balance. Removal would lower the Squannacook River level by approximately 8 to 10 feet, which could impact nearby residential wells. Grant funding would include a contingency to address impacted wells. The pond would also be affected, as there would be no water flowing in or out.
 - Ownership: The dam is on the Groton and Shirley town line. The Shirley-side property is owned by a private estate, which owes the Town of Shirley approximately \$63,000 in back taxes and is in tax title. The Town of Shirley does not intend to foreclose. Town Counsel and Bond Counsel confirmed that the Town of Groton may expend funds on the Shirley side because the structure must be repaired as a whole. There was discussion about the Town pursuing the estate to obtain ownership of the Shirley-side before continuing. Town Manager Haddad acknowledged the concern but noted the legal complication of taking property in another town.

- CPC funding: Town Manager Haddad met with the Community Preservation Committee where he submitted an out-of-cycle application requesting CPC funding under either the historic preservation or open space and recreation categories. The CPC stated that it likely would not have funded the project even if applied for in October, as it does not want to take on more than one debt project at a time and is committed to Cow Pond Brook. If the Historic Commission deems the dam a historic structure, those funds could be applied. Mr. Haddad is meeting with the CPC again the following Monday and will have more information at the next Finance Committee meeting.
 - Finance Committee position: Deferred pending resolution of CPC funding and ownership questions.
- **Article 12 – Amend Zoning Bylaw – Clarify Appeal Process in Site Plan Review**
 - Finance Committee position: No position.
- **Article 13 – Funding for Destination Groton Committee – Deferred**
 - Members stated they were not aware of a tangible return on the Town’s investment in the Destination Groton Committee and do not view activity alone as value. Town Manager Haddad offered to share the study presented to the Select Board the prior evening and noted the committee has secured grants and is working on Main Street safety improvements. The Finance Committee agreed to invite Destination Groton to a future meeting before taking a position. Article 13 was pulled from the consent vote.
 - Finance Committee position: Deferred – Destination Groton to be invited to a future meeting.
- **Articles 14, 15, 16 – Enterprise Fund Transfers (Water, Center Sewer, Four Corners Sewer)**
 - Finance Committee position: Support.
- **Article 17 – Prior Year Bills**
 - No prior year bills at this time.
 - Finance Committee position: Support.
- **Article 18 – Appropriate Funding to Offset Snow and Ice Deficit**
 - As of the meeting date, the deficit is \$276,000, with on-call pay still accruing through approximately April 15th. The final figure is expected to be around \$290,000. The deficit will be funded with \$180,000 from the Capital Asset Stabilization Fund and \$120,000 from Free Cash. Finance Committee position: Support.
- **Article 19 – Debt Service for the Middle School Track**
 - This is the final debt service payment on the Middle School Track Project, made up of \$627,000 in principal and \$21,945 in interest, funded from the CPC Unallocated

Reserve. The CPC is paying off this debt before taking on new debt for Cow Pond Brook.

- Finance Committee position: Support.
 - **Article 20 – Funding for Main Street Traffic Study**
 - Town Manager Haddad stated that this article will likely be withdrawn. Representative Margaret Scarsdale secured a \$25,000 state earmark for the study, eliminating the need for a Town Meeting appropriation. The article is being kept on the warrant as a placeholder in case the earmark does not come through.
 - Finance Committee position: Support.
 - **Article 21 – Appropriation to Fund Town Forest Expenses (\$12,000)**
 - The Town Forest Committee is seeking funds to remove a dead stand of Red Pines creating a hazard in the Town Forest, funded from the Town Forest Receipts Reserved for Appropriation Fund.
 - Finance Committee position: Support.
 - **Article 22 – Establishing Limits for Various Revolving Funds**
 - Existing revolving fund spending limits were reviewed and adjusted as needed. A new Park Commission revolving fund was added with a spending limit of \$100,000. The Park Commission is developing a fee schedule for the first time.
 - Finance Committee position: Support.
 - **Consent Vote – All Articles Except Articles 5, 7b, 11, and 13**
 - **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to support all warrant articles except Articles 5, 7b, 11, and 13.
 - **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
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Other Business

- **Fire Department Staffing Study**
 - Several Finance Committee members requested the opportunity to speak with the consultant engaged in completing the Fire Department staffing study. Town Manager Haddad agreed to arrange a Zoom meeting and will send possible dates. He will also send members the staffing study conducted for the Town of Norwood and the consultant's proposal.
- **Upcoming Meetings**
 - An April 7th meeting is being scheduled. The Sustainability Committee and Destination Groton will be invited. The Finance Committee also needs to meet to

discuss the school budget once the School Committee sets its final number and to take a position on the firefighter position and the Squannacook Dam article.

Adjournment

- A motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting at 8:15pm.
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Respectfully submitted by Andrea Rollo, Per Diem Minute Taker

Warrant, Summary, and Recommendations

TOWN OF GROTON



2026 SPRING TOWN MEETING

Marion Stoddart Building Auditorium
344 Main Street, Groton, Massachusetts 01450

Beginning Saturday, May 2, 2026 @ 9:00 AM

Attention – Voters and Taxpayers

**THE BUDGET HANDOUT FOR ARTICLE 5 IS AVAILABLE
IN THE BACK OF THE WARRANT**

**SPRING TOWN MEETING WARRANT
MAY 2, 2026**

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

Greetings:

In the name of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, you are hereby required to notify and warn said inhabitants of the Town of Groton qualified to vote on Town affairs to assemble in the Marion Stoddart Building Auditorium, 344 Main Street, Groton, Massachusetts in said Town on Saturday, the second day of May, 2026 at Nine O'clock in the morning, to consider all business other than the election of Town Officers and on the nineteenth day of May, 2026, between the hours of 7:00 A.M. and 8:00 P.M., at an adjourned session thereof at the following locations:

Precinct 1	The Groton Center 163 West Main Street	Precincts 2 & 3 Marion Stoddart Bldg. Gymnasium 344 Main Street
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to give their ballots for:

Vote for One	Board of Assessors	3 Years
Vote for One	Board of Health	3 Years
Vote for Two	Select Board	3 Years
Vote for One	Commissioner of Trust Funds	3 Years
Vote for One	Groton-Dunstable Regional School Committee	3 Years
Vote for One	Groton Electric Light Commission	3 Years
Vote for Two	Park Commission	3 Years
Vote for One	Park Commission	2 Years
Vote for Two	Planning Board	3 Years
Vote for One	Sewer Commission	3 Years
Vote for Two	Trustee of the Groton Public Library	3 Years
Vote for One	Water Commission	3 Years
Vote for One	Groton Housing Authority	5 Years

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*Will be presented as one Consent Motion

**FY 2027 Budget will be presented as One Consent Motion

***CPA Funding Recommendations will be presented as One Consent Motion

***Annual Consent Agenda. To be presented as one Motion

Article 1: Receive Reports

To see if the Town will vote to receive the report of the Select Board and other Town Officers and Committees, or to take any other action relative thereto.

Select Board

Select Board: Recommended Unanimously

Finance Committee:

Summary: *To hear reports of Town Boards, Committees and Commissions and to accept the annual report and other reports that may be presented to Town Meeting.*

Article 2: Elected Officials Compensation

To see if the Town will vote to set the compensation for the elected officials of the Town for the ensuing year, or to take any other action relative thereto.

Town Manager

Select Board: Recommended Unanimously

Finance Committee:

Summary: *To provide compensation for elected officials as proposed by the Town Manager. The Town Moderator is proposed to receive a salary of \$1,000 in FY 2027.*

Article 3: Wage and Classification Schedule

To see if the Town will vote to amend and adopt for Fiscal Year 2027 the Town of Groton Wage and Classification schedule as shown in Appendix B of this Warrant, or to take any other action relative thereto.

Select Board

Town Manager

Select Board: Recommended Unanimously

Finance Committee:

Summary: *The purpose of this Article is to set the wage and classification schedule for the three (3) employees (Executive Assistant to the Town Manager, Human Resources Director and IT Director) covered by the Personnel Bylaw. Under the policy of the Select Board, these employees receive the same benefits as contained in the Town Supervisors' Union Contract. These employees will receive a three (3%) percent cost-of-living adjustment in Fiscal Year 2027.*

Article 4: Appropriate FY 2027 Contribution to the OPEB Trust Fund

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, transfer from available funds, and/or borrow pursuant to any applicable statute, a sum or sums of money, to be expended by the Town Manager, to be added to the Other Post-Employment Benefits Liability Trust Fund as authorized by Chapter 32B, Section 20, of the Massachusetts General Laws, or to take any other action relative thereto.

**Select Board
Town Manager**

**Select Board: Recommended Unanimously
Finance Committee:**

Summary: *The purpose of this article is to fund the Town's OPEB Liability. The Select Board and Finance Committee have adopted a funding policy for this purpose. One of the funding goals is to commit to an annual appropriation to the Trust that would keep the Net Present Value Liability from growing until such time as the Town can begin to pay down the liability. In Fiscal Year 2027, the anticipated amount necessary for this purpose is estimated to be \$200,000. This Article will seek an appropriation of \$200,000 from Free Cash to add to the OPEB Liability Trust Fund.*

MOTIONS UNDER ARTICLE 5 WILL BE PRESENTED AS A CONSENT AGENDA. PLEASE SEE EXPLANATION PROVIDED ON PAGE 2 OF THIS WARRANT.

Article 5: Fiscal Year 2027 Annual Operating Budget

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, transfer from available funds, and/or borrow pursuant to any applicable statute, a sum or sums of money as may be necessary to defray the expenses of the Town for the next Fiscal Year (2027), and act upon the budget of the Finance Committee, or to take any other action relative thereto.

**Finance Committee
Select Board
Town Manager**

**Select Board:
Finance Committee:**

Summary: *In accordance with Section 6 of the Town Charter, the Finance Committee conducts its annual budget process by receiving the Town Manager's proposed balanced budget on or before January 31st; meeting with department heads and boards; holding public budget hearings in preparation for issuing its recommendations to Town Meeting; and presenting its budget recommendations at the Spring Town Meeting. The budget handout for this Article is contained in Appendix A of this Warrant. Please also see the Finance Committee's and Town Manager's Report which includes the Finance Committee's and Select Board's recommendations.*

Article 6: Fiscal Year 2027 Capital Budget

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, transfer from available funds, and/or borrow pursuant to any applicable statute, a sum or sums of money, to be expended by the Town Manager in Fiscal Year 2026 and thereafter, for the purpose of funding the Fiscal Year 2027 Capital Budget, or to take any other action relative thereto.

Town Manager

Summary: *The following is the proposed Town Manager's Capital Budget for Fiscal Year 2027:*

Item #1 – Ambulance 2 Replacement **\$500,000** **Fire and EMS**

Summary: *This is a scheduled replacement of Ambulance 2. The Fire Department maintains two ambulances and schedules replacement of each ambulance every five (5) years. The intention of the Town is to borrow the cost of the ambulance (estimated to be \$500,000) and pay it back over five years from ambulance receipts.*

Select Board:
Finance Committee:

Item #2 – PFAS Free Structural FF Gear **\$50,000** **Fire and EMS**

Summary: *PFAS has been used in firefighting gear for a long time due to its ability to withstand high temperatures and repel water and oils. Firefighters have long been known to suffer from a highly increased rate of cancers that are caused by the use of PFAS. These chemicals are shown to contribute to or are responsible for cases of breast, kidney, and testicular cancers within the fire service. Effective January 1, 2027, manufacturers and sellers of personal protective equipment for firefighters will be prohibited from knowingly selling gear containing “intentionally added PFAS” chemicals, meaning PFAS chemicals or products that break down into PFAS chemicals that are intentionally added to the product during manufacturing. Last year, the Town appropriated \$80,000 and in FY 2027, the Town is requesting \$50,000 to complete the purchase.*

Select Board:
Finance Committee:

Item #3 – Pick-Up Truck **\$75,000** **Highway**

Summary: *This is a scheduled replacement. The average life of a pick-up truck is approximately 7 years. By replacing one vehicle every couple of years, this will allow the fleet to stay in good shape. They are front line pick-ups used for day-to-day operations as well as snow plowing.*

Select Board:
Finance Committee:

Item #4 – Brush Mower/Field Mower **\$30,000** **Highway**

Summary: *In FY 2027, the Town will be rehabbing one of the Brush Mowers to extend its life. This is a cost effective request to save purchasing a brand new Mower. In FY 2031, the Town will replace the second mower (purchased in 2019) as part of normal replacement of equipment.*

Select Board:
Finance Committee:

Item #5– Truck Painting **\$25,000** **Highway**

Summary: *The plan is to paint truck beds every four years. Salt is the largest issue the DPW deals with in maintaining its fleet. While the DPW washes the trucks after every storm, salt still has a negative impact on the truck beds. Spending the funds to paint the beds will extend the life of the fleet.*

Select Board:
Finance Committee:

Item #6 – IT Infrastructure **\$40,000** **Town Facilities**

Summary: *This item in the Capital Budget was established over eleven years ago and has been very successful. In Fiscal Year 2027, the following items will be purchased/upgraded with this allocation: 10 replacement computers; Replace aging servers and storage arrays; Investment to expand the network and keep equipment and maintenance costs current; Network switch upgrades and increased wireless coverage; and Improve door lock and security system maintenance.*

Select Board:
Finance Committee:

Item #7 – Municipal Building Minor Capital **\$120,000** **Town Facilities**

Summary: *This appropriation will be used to continue to maintain all municipal buildings by performing various maintenance activities to prevent major breakdowns in our municipal building infrastructure. Priorities continue to change when it comes to the minor repairs and upgrades in our municipal buildings. In Fiscal Year 2027, Minor Capital Items have been added to this request as well. This was done due to the fact that all Minor Capital Items were removed from the FY 2026 Operating Budget to balance the budget. In FY 2027 an additional \$30,000 is being added to this appropriation to pay for the repair of the Fire Alarm System at Legion Hall.*

Select Board:
Finance Committee:

Item #8 – Property Improvements **\$25,000** **Park Department**

Summary: *The Park Commission has been working over the past several years developing a strategy to address deficiencies in the various Park Department Properties located throughout Groton. Since FY 2015, the Town has appropriated \$25,000 each year so that the Park Commission can develop a capital improvement program that will allow them to keep our various park locations in good shape.*

Select Board:
Finance Committee:

Item #9 – Police Cruisers **\$147,010** **Police Department**

Summary: *Purchase of two police cruisers and related equipment for replacement of cruisers that are no longer cost effective to maintain. This allows for less mileage per year, better maintenance scheduling, assignment of cars to officers and for a programmed replacement schedule that ensures line cars are rotated out at reasonable mileage and wear. Un-marked cars are rotated in the same fashion.*

Select Board:
Finance Committee:

Item #10 – Police Minor Capital **\$34,750** **Police Department**

Summary: *This is a new Capital Item each year to provide funds for various minor capital needs of the Police Department. In FY 2027, this funding will be used to purchase soft armor, heavy vests, pay for the traffic camera system, repair the Gibbet Hill Radio Room Interior Ceiling and purchase new helmets for the ATV and Bicycle teams.*

Select Board:
Finance Committee:

Item #11 – Electronic Control Devices - Tasers **\$10,500** **Police Department**

Summary: *Current Electronic Control Device (ECD, Taser) is at end-of-life and not serviceable. Axon products provide integrated data storage for both the ECD and future acquired Body-Worn-Cameras (BWC) . The total cost of the ECD replacement is \$97,796. We applied for and anticipate receiving a JAG grant in the amount of \$50,000. The Town is responsible for 1 payment of \$12,500 and 3 annual installments of \$10,500 for a total cost to the town of \$49,000. This is the second of the final four installments.*

Select Board:
Finance Committee:

Item #12 – Golf Carts **\$27,000** **Country Club**

Summary: *In FY 2027, the Town will replace all Golf Carts with 27 new Carts on a five year lease/purchase. This is the first of five payments.*

Select Board:
Finance Committee:

Item #13 – Ventrac Attachments **\$10,918** **Country Club**

Summary: *In FY 2023, the Town purchased a Ventrac unit using a five year lease-to-purchase agreement at an annual cost of \$10,918. This is the final payment. The Ventrac unit is a most versatile piece of equipment. The attachments already in use include units for plowing, aeration, seeding, landscaping and mowing difficult terrain. This vehicle is used on a daily basis.*

Select Board:
Finance Committee:

Item #14 – Greens Equipment – Truckster XD **\$14,736** **Country Club**

Summary: *This is a heavy payload 4x4 utility truck that will allow the transfer of up to 3,500 lbs. of debris, sand and loam to and from areas of the Course. This utility truck will replace the other utility truck in the Club's fleet that is over a decade old and is becoming unreliable. This vehicle will be used on a daily basis in the Spring and Fall when course cleanup is a daily occurrence. During the Summer months, it will be used for various Course projects. This vehicle will be paid for over five years. This is the third of five payments.*

Select Board:
Finance Committee:

Item #15 – Greens Equipment – Greens Mower **\$12,067** **Country Club**

Summary: *This item replaced a greens mower. The old mower will be converted to a tee & collar unit, and the old tee & collar unit will be converted to a greens roller unit. Ideally, the Club will purchase a new mower every five years. This is the third of four payments for this equipment.*

Select Board:
Finance Committee:

Item #16 – Greens Equipment – Fairway Mower \$20,000 Country Club

Summary: *This is a request to replace the Club's current Fairway Mower. This mower will be purchased on a five year lease purchase arrangement. This will be the first of five payments.*

Select Board:
Finance Committee:

Item #17 – Greens Equipment – Rough Mower \$20,000 Country Club

Summary: *Similar to the Fairway Mower, this is a request to replace the Club's current Rough Mower. This mower will be purchased on a five year lease purchase arrangement. This is the first of five payments.*

Select Board:
Finance Committee:

Item #18 – Roof for the Pavilion \$14,200 Country Club

Summary: *The pavilion at the Groton Country Club is used by the Club for its summer camp operations, as well as, storing equipment in the winter months. The roof is in need of replacement.*

Select Board:
Finance Committee:

Item #19 – Communication Improvements \$99,500 Police/Fire/DPW

Summary: *This item seeks authorization to fund improvements to the Town's communications infrastructure to ensure reliable operation of public safety and municipal communication systems. The proposed work includes a structural analysis of the Gibbet Hill communications tower, replacement and upgrading of antennas, installation or enhancement of microwave communication links, and improvements to the HVAC system serving the equipment shelter to improve and maintain the integrity of the Town's communication systems. The total cost of the improvements is \$108,771. The Groton Electric Light Department is contributing \$9,313 towards these improvements, reducing the request to \$99,500.*

Select Board:
Finance Committee:

Town Manager

Article 7: Community Preservation Funding Accounts

To see if the Town will vote to make the following appropriations from the Community Preservation Fund:
Allocation of Community Preservation Funds to the following sub accounts:

CPC Operating Expenses:	\$ 34,000
Open Space and Recreation Reserve:	\$ 113,500
Historic Resource Reserve:	\$ 113,500
Community Housing Reserve:	\$ 113,500
Unallocated Reserve:	\$ 760,500
Total	\$1,135,000

or to take any other action relative thereto.

Community Preservation Committee

Select Board:

Finance Committee:

Community Preservation Committee: *Recommended Unanimously*

Summary: *This is an accounting procedure that is necessary so that the Community Preservation Committee will have access to the funds raised during Fiscal Year 2027. Except for the CPC Operating Expenses, none of these funds will be spent without additional approval at Town Meeting.*

MOTIONS UNDER ARTICLE 8 WILL BE PRESENTED AS A CONSENT AGENDA. PLEASE SEE EXPLANATION PROVIDED ON PAGE 2 OF THIS WARRANT.

Article 8: Community Preservation Funding Recommendations

To see if the Town will vote to adopt and approve the recommendations of the Community Preservation Committee for Fiscal Year 2027, and vote to implement such recommendations by appropriating a sum or sums of money from the Community Preservation Fund established pursuant to Chapter 44B of the Massachusetts General Laws, and by authorizing the Select Board, with the approval of the Community Preservation Committee, to acquire, by gift, purchase, or eminent domain, such real property interests in the name of the Town, or enforceable by the Town, including real property interests in the form of permanent affordable housing restrictions and historical preservation restrictions that will meet the requirements of Chapter 184 of the Massachusetts General Laws, as may be necessary or proper to carry out the foregoing, or to take any other action relative thereto.

CPC Proposal A: Lighting Improvements – Prescott \$9,850

Summary: *The Town Manager’s Office and the Prescott Community Center request \$9,850 to replace existing halogen fixtures in the gymnasium with high-bay LED fixtures equipped with motion sensors, and to improve lighting at the rear and side accessible entrances by installing new LED wall-mounted lights. Funding for this project will come from the Historic Preservation Reserve in the amount of \$9,850.*

Select Board:

Finance Committee:

Community Preservation Committee: *Recommended Unanimously*

CPC Proposal B: Cow Pond Brook Fields Improvements \$4,284,000

Summary: *The Town Manager's Office and Park Commission are requesting \$4,284,000 to improve site accessibility and safety. The project includes reconfiguring parking areas and constructing paved walking paths that comply with ADA and MAAB standards to provide accessible routes to all fields where such access is currently lacking. Parking capacity will also be expanded to better accommodate field users. In addition, the project includes environmental restoration through the removal of an existing road that separates two wetland areas with vernal pools, improving ecological connectivity and wetland function. The Town has been awarded a \$1,000,000 federal grant to help offset the project cost. Town Meeting will be asked to authorize borrowing \$4,284,000 for the project, with the net borrowing expected to be reduced to \$3,284,000 upon receipt of the grant funds.*

Select Board:
Finance Committee:
Community Preservation Committee: Recommended Unanimously

CPC Proposal C: Housing Coordinator – FY 2027 \$72,829

Summary: *This item requests \$72,829 in Community Preservation Act (CPA) funding from the Community Housing category to support the wages and benefits of the Town of Groton's Housing Coordinator position (25 hours per week). The full amount will be funded from the Community Housing Reserve.*

Select Board:
Finance Committee:
Community Preservation Committee: Recommended Unanimously

CPC Proposal D: Pollinator Pathway Garden \$2,500

Summary: *The Sustainability Commission is requesting \$2,500 to enhance the landscaped area by installing additional irrigation connected to the existing system to improve water coverage and plant health. The project also includes upgrading the current dirt pathway by constructing a stone dust walking path to provide a more durable and accessible surface for pedestrian use. The full amount will be funded from the Open Space and Recreation Reserve.*

Select Board:
Finance Committee:
Community Preservation Committee:

CPC Proposal E: FY 2027 Housing Request \$100,000

Summary: *The Affordable Housing Trust (AHT) is requesting \$100,000 to continue its work to create, preserve, and support Affordable Housing in Groton. Funding is necessary for the AHT to act when an opportunity arises. Community Preservation Funds can be used for the acquisition, creation, preservation, and support of community housing and for the rehabilitation or restoration of community housing that is acquired or created with CPA funds. To Fund this Project, \$92,985 will come from the Community Housing Reserve and \$7,015 will come from the Unallocated Reserve.*

Select Board:
Finance Committee:
Community Preservation Committee: Recommended Unanimously

CPC Proposal F: Cutler Softball Field Establishment \$99,000

Summary: *The Groton-Dunstable Youth Softball League is requesting \$99,000 to improve player safety and field quality. The project includes installing protective sideline fencing, constructing dugouts with benches and roofs, and purchasing an infield groomer to support consistent field maintenance and safe playing conditions. The full amount will be funded from the Open Space and Recreation Reserve.*

Select Board:
Finance Committee:
Community Preservation Committee: *Recommended Unanimously*

CPC Proposal G: Boutwell Playground Renovation \$233,923

Summary: *The Groton-Dunstable Regional School District is requesting \$233,923 to install new playground equipment, replace existing playground surfacing, and improve the adjacent parking area. These upgrades will provide a safe, accessible play space with inclusive features and improved access for users of all abilities. To fund this project, \$42,329 will come from the Open Space and Recreation Reserve and \$191,594 will come from the Unallocated Reserve.*

Select Board:
Finance Committee:
Community Preservation Committee: *Recommended Unanimously*

Community Preservation Committee

Article 9: *Special Act to Exempt Certain Uncontrollable Costs from the Tax Levy*

To see if the Town will vote to authorize the Select Board to petition the General Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for a special act entitled “An Act Relative to Adjusting the Municipal Tax Levy Limit for the Town of Groton to Exempt Certain Uncontrollable Costs” as follows:

An Act Relative to Adjusting the Municipal Tax Levy Limit for the Town of Groton to Exempt Certain Uncontrollable Costs

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

SECTION 1.

Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, for the Town of Groton, the calculation of the municipal levy limit and levy ceiling pursuant to section 21C of chapter 59 of the General Laws shall exclude certain uncontrollable costs as set forth in this act.

SECTION 2.

For the purposes of this act, the following costs incurred by the Town of Groton shall be excluded from the annual calculation of the levy limit and levy ceiling under section 21C of chapter 59 of the General Laws:

- (a) Group health insurance costs incurred pursuant to chapter 32B of the General Laws, including but not limited to subscriber premiums, employer contributions, retiree health insurance obligations, and reimbursements for Medicare Part B or related plans.

(b) Pension appropriations required pursuant to chapter 32 of the General Laws, including but not limited to annual required contributions to the local or regional retirement system, pension funding schedules approved by the Public Employee Retirement Administration Commission, and payments toward unfunded actuarial accrued liabilities.

SECTION 3.

Amounts excluded under this act:

- (a) shall not be considered an increase in the levy limit under subsection (f) of said section 21C;
- (b) shall not require voter approval pursuant to subsections (g) or (h) of said section 21C; and
- (c) shall not be considered a permanent increase to the base levy limit of the Town of Groton.

SECTION 4.

The commissioner of revenue shall promulgate regulations or issue guidance establishing the method by which the Town of Groton shall certify eligible costs and report such exclusions in the annual Tax Rate Recapitulation.

SECTION 5.

Not later than 180 days after the passage of this act, the Department of Revenue shall issue any guidelines, regulations, or forms necessary to implement the provisions of this act as they apply to the Town of Groton.

SECTION 6.

This act shall take effect on July 1 following its passage and shall apply to all fiscal years beginning on or after that date.

provided, however, that the General Court may make clerical or editorial changes of form only to the bill, unless the Select Board approves amendments thereto before enactment by the General Court, which amendments shall be within the public purposes of said petition, or to take any other action relative thereto.

Town Manager

Select Board:

Finance Committee:

Summary: *The proposed act would allow the Town of Groton to exclude certain uncontrollable costs from its annual municipal levy limit and levy ceiling calculation. If approved by the General Court and Governor, the Town could raise taxes above the standard 2.5% limit to cover these mandated expenses without requiring a separate voter override each time. The following mandatory expenses would be exempt from the levy limit: a) Health Insurance: Subscriber premiums, employer contributions, and retiree health obligations, including Medicare Part B reimbursements; b) Pension Obligations: Required annual contributions to retirement systems and payments toward unfunded actuarial liabilities. Any amount excluded under this act would apply only to the fiscal year in which it occurs and would not permanently increase the Town's base levy limit. The legislation also specifies that these adjustments would not require the voter approval typically required under Proposition 2½ for levy increases. The Massachusetts Department of Revenue (DOR) would oversee implementation and issue regulations to ensure the Town properly certifies and reports the excluded costs.*

Article 10: Amend Chapter 168 of the General Bylaws – Stretch Energy Code

To see if the Town will vote to adopt the Municipal Opt-in Specialized Stretch Energy Code, specifically 225 CMR 22 and 225 CMR 23, including Appendices RC and CC, and including future editions, amendments, or modifications thereto, to regulate the design and construction of buildings for the effective use of energy and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, and to amend the Code of the Town of Groton by deleting Chapter 168, Stretch Energy Code, in its entirety, and inserting in its place the text set forth below, provided that said adoption of the Specialized Stretch Energy Code and this amendment of the Code of the Town of Groton shall be effective as of January 1, 2027, and further, to authorize the Town Clerk to make any numbering or formatting edits necessary to conform to the publication conventions of the Code of the Town of Groton, or to take any other action relative thereto.

Select Board

Chapter 168 Specialized Stretch Energy Code

§ 168-1 Definitions.

As used in this Chapter 168, the following terms shall have the meanings indicated:

International Energy Conservation Code (IECC)

The International Energy Conservation Code (IECC) is a building energy code created by the International Code Council. It is a model code adopted by many state and municipal governments in the United States for the establishment of minimum design and construction requirements for energy efficiency. and is updated on a three-year cycle. The baseline energy conservation requirements of the MA State Building Code are the IECC with Massachusetts amendments, as approved by the Board of Building Regulations and Standards and published in state regulations as part of 780 CMR.

Stretch Energy Code

Codified by the combination of 225 CMR 22 and 23, not including Appendices RC and CC, the Stretch Energy Code is a comprehensive set of amendments to the International Energy Conservation Code (IECC) seeking to achieve all lifecycle cost-effective energy efficiency in accordance with the Green Communities Act of 2008, as well as to reduce the climate impacts of buildings built to this code. Specialized Energy Code Codified by the entirety of 225 CMR 22 and 23 including Appendices RC and CC, the Specialized Energy Code adds residential and commercial appendices to the Massachusetts Stretch Energy Code, based on amendments to the respective net-zero appendices of the International Energy Conservation Code (IECC) to incorporate the energy efficiency of the Stretch energy code and further reduce the climate impacts of buildings built to this code, with the goal of achieving netzero greenhouse gas emissions from the buildings sector no later than 2050.

§ 168-2 Purpose.

The purpose of 225 CMR 22 and 23 including Appendices RC and CC, also referred to as the Specialized Energy Code, is to provide a more energy efficient and low greenhouse gas emissions alternative to the Stretch Energy Code or the baseline Massachusetts Energy Code, applicable to the relevant sections of the State Building Code for both new construction and existing buildings.

§ 168-3 Applicability.

This Specialized Energy Code shall apply to residential and commercial buildings.

§ 168-4 Adoption.

The Specialized Code, including any future editions, amendments, or modifications is herein incorporated by reference into this Chapter 168.

§ 168-5 Enforcement.

The Specialized Energy Code shall be enforceable by the Building Commissioner.

§ 168-6 Effective Date.

The effective date of this Chapter 168 shall be January 1, 2027.

Select Board:

Finance Committee:

Summary: *This article proposes to update the Town of Groton’s local energy regulations by repealing the current Stretch Energy Code and adopting the Commonwealth’s most recent Stretch Energy Code, known as the Specialized Energy Code (225 CMR 22 and 225 CMR 23, including applicable appendices). The Specialized Energy Code establishes enhanced energy-efficiency and emissions standards for certain new construction and major renovations, with the goal of reducing energy use and greenhouse gas emissions. If approved, the new code would take effect on January 1, 2027.*

Article 11: Squannacook River Dam Repair

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, transfer from available funds, and/or borrow pursuant to any applicable statute, a sum or sums of money, to be expended by the Town Manager, for the repair of the Squannacook River Dam, including all incidental and related costs, and further, to authorize the Select Board to acquire, by gift, purchase, or eminent domain such land and easements that may be necessary to complete said project on such terms and conditions as the Select Board deems to be in the best interest of the Town, provided, however, that no funds may be expended hereunder for this purpose unless and until the Town approves a Proposition 2½ Debt or Capital Exclusion pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 59, Section 21C, or to take any other action relative thereto.

Select Board

Select Board:

Finance Committee:

Summary: *This article seeks authorization for the Town to fund repairs to the Squannacook River Dam at an estimated cost of \$812,500, including all related and incidental expenses. Funding may be appropriated from the tax rate, subject to a Proposition 2½ Capital Exclusion, or borrowed, subject to a Proposition 2½ Debt Exclusion in accordance with applicable law. The article also authorizes the Select Board to acquire any necessary land or easements, by gift, purchase, or eminent domain, to complete the project. Additional information relative to funding will be provided at Town Meeting.*

Article 12: Amend Zoning Bylaw – Clarify Appeal Process in Site Plan Review

To see if the Town will vote to amend the Code of the Town of Groton, Chapter 218 Zoning, by adding the following in Section 218-2.5.D(2):

(d) Within 90 days of the close of the public hearing, the Planning Board shall vote on a decision and authorize the filing of a written decision with the Town Clerk within 14 days.

(e) Any person aggrieved by a decision of the Planning Board as site plan approval authority may appeal such decision as provided in MGL c. 40A, Section 17, within 20 days after such decision has been filed with the Town Clerk.

or to take any other action relative thereto.

Planning Board

Select Board:

Finance Committee:

Planning Board:

Summary: *This technical amendment to the Zoning Bylaw clarifies the process for appeal of site plan decisions. The Planning Board's standard practice for site plan decisions has been to follow the same appeal procedures utilized for special permits, pursuant to M.G.L. c. 40A, Section 17. However, this process is not specifically laid out in the site plan review section of the Zoning Bylaw. Town Counsel recommends that the Zoning Bylaw be amended to specify that site plan decisions must be appealed pursuant to M.G.L. c. 40A, Section 17.*

ARTICLES 13 THROUGH 22 WILL BE PART OF THE CONSENT AGENDA. PLEASE SEE EXPLANATION PROVIDED ON PAGE 2 OF THIS WARRANT.

Article 13: Funding for the Destination Groton Committee

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, transfer from available funds, and/or borrow pursuant to any applicable statute, a sum or sums of money, to be expended by the Town Manager in Fiscal Year 2027, for the purpose of providing funding for the Destination Groton Committee to carry out the Charge of the Committee, and all costs associated and related thereto, or to take any other action relative thereto.

Destination Groton Committee

Select Board:

Finance Committee:

Summary: *The purpose of this Article is to provide \$15,000 in funding for the Destination Groton Committee to carry out its charge, which is to pursue a course of action intended to engage all Town stakeholders, including the business and non-profit communities, Town leaders, Federal and State elected officials and Town residents in a series of public information forums, economic research and data analysis, in order to, through a ten-year Town Center Strategic Vision Plan, prepare for an increase in visitors to town while at the same time work to preserve its rural small-town charm. The purpose of this request is to meet a state required minimum local Town expenditure of \$15,000 in a prior fiscal year in order to qualify for major matching grants in Destination Development, Historic Preservation, Infrastructure, and Cultural programs that promote Groton to meet the needs of increased visitors. A portion of this funding will be used to set aside local match opportunities and to produce a Groton Public Engagement Vision Forum and the second Regional Tourism Conference to promote Groton as a gateway for the region.*

Article 14: Transfer within the Water Enterprise Fund

To see if the Town will vote to transfer a sum or sums of money from the Water Enterprise Fund Surplus to the Fiscal Year 2026 Water Department Operating Budget, or to take any other action relative thereto.

Board of Water Commissioners

Select Board:

Finance Committee:

Summary: *This article allows the Water Department to transfer money from its surplus account to cover any deficit in the Fiscal Year 2026 Water Department Budget. This Article should be considered a placeholder at this time as the Water Commission does not anticipate needing a transfer at this time. Any adjustment/request will be provided to the Town Meeting.*

Article 15: *Transfer Within the Center Sewer Enterprise Fund*

To see if the Town will vote to transfer a sum or sums of money from the Center Sewer Enterprise Fund Surplus to the Fiscal Year 2026 Center Sewer Enterprise Department Budget, or to take any other action relative thereto.

Board of Sewer Commissioners

Select Board:
Finance Committee:

Summary: *This article allows the Sewer Department to transfer money from its surplus account to cover any deficit in the Fiscal Year 2026 Center Sewer Budget. This Article should be considered a placeholder at this time as the Sewer Commission does not anticipate needing a transfer at this time. Any adjustment/request will be provided to the Town Meeting.*

Article 16: *Transfer Within the Four Corners Sewer Enterprise Fund*

To see if the Town will vote to transfer a sum or sums of money from the Four Corners Sewer Enterprise Fund Surplus to the Fiscal Year 2026 Four Corners Sewer Enterprise Department Budget, or to take any other action relative thereto.

Board of Sewer Commissioners

Select Board:
Finance Committee:

Summary: *This article allows the Sewer Department to transfer money from its surplus account to cover any deficit in the Fiscal Year 2026 Four Corners Sewer Budget. This Article should be considered a placeholder at this time as the Sewer Commission does not anticipate needing a transfer at this time. Any adjustment/request will be provided to the Town Meeting.*

Article 17: *Prior Year Bills*

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

Select Board

Select Board:
Finance Committee:

Summary: *Town Meeting approval is required to pay bills from a prior fiscal year. A list of unpaid bills will be provided at Town Meeting.*

Article 18: *Appropriate Money to Offset the Snow and Ice Deficit*

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, transfer from available funds, and/or borrow a sum or sums of money, to be expended by the Town Manager, to reduce the deficit in the Fiscal Year 2026 Snow and Ice Budget, as approved under Article 5 of the April 26, 2025 Spring Town Meeting, or to take any other action relative thereto.

Town Manager

Select Board:
Finance Committee:

Summary: *This article will allow the Town to fund any deficit in the Snow and Ice Account in FY 26. The current deficit is projected to be approximately \$300,000.*

Article 19: *Debt Service for Middle School Track*

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate and/or transfer from available funds, a sum or sums of money, pursuant to Chapter 44B, Section 5, of the Massachusetts General Laws, for debt service for Fiscal Year 2027 for the Middle School Track Project, as authorized under Article 7 of the May 1, 2021 Spring Town Meeting, or to take any other action relative thereto.

Community Preservation Committee

Select Board:
Finance Committee:

Summary: *This Article appropriates the debt service payment for the Middle School Track Project. Article 7 of the May 21, 2021 Spring Town Meeting appropriated \$1,405,374 for the project. In FY 2027, the Community Preservation Committee will pay \$648,945 in debt service (\$627,000 in principal payment and \$21,945 in interest payment) for this appropriation that will pay off the Debt. To fund this appropriation the entire amount will come from the Unallocated Reserve. This payment is the final payment on the project.*

Article 20: *Funding for Main Street Traffic Study*

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate and/or transfer from available funds, a sum or sums of money, to be expended by the Town Manager in Fiscal Year 2026 and thereafter, to hire an engineering consultant to conduct a traffic study of the portion of Main Street under the control of the Town, and all costs associated and related thereto, or to take any other action relative thereto.

Town Manager

Select Board:
Finance Committee:

Summary: *This Article seeks funding to supplement funding received from the State to hire MDM Transportation Consultants to conduct an in depth traffic study, including parking spaces, pedestrian safety and intersection improvements of the portion of Main Street under the control of the Town. The purpose of this duty is to improve the overall safety (vehicular and pedestrian) of this roadway.*

Article 21: *Appropriation to Fund Town Forest Expenses*

To see if the Town will vote to appropriate a sum or sums of money from Receipts Reserved for the Town Forest to Town Forest Expenses, or to take any other action relative thereto.

Town Manager

Select Board:

Finance Committee:

Summary: *The Town Forest Committee is seeking funds to cover the cost of removing a dead stand of Red Pines that are creating a hazard in the Town Forest. The amount needed is estimated to be \$12,000 based on an estimate from the Committee's consulting Forester.*

Article 22: *Establishing Limits for the Various Revolving Funds*

To see if the Town will vote, pursuant to the provisions of G.L. c. 44 sec 53E½ and the Revolving Fund Bylaw, to amend the Revolving Fund Bylaw to add or delete any revolving account and/or to set the FY 2027 spending limits for the various revolving funds as follows:

Program or Purpose	FY 2027 Spending Limit
Stormwater Management	\$20,000
Conservation Commission	\$50,000
Park Commission	\$100,000
Building Rental Fund	\$50,000
Affordable Housing Marketing	\$20,000
Home Recycling Equipment	\$20,000
Access for Persons with Disabilities	\$10,000
Council on Aging Program Fund	\$40,000
Boat Excise Tax Fund	\$ 5,000
Transfer Station Glass	\$20,000
Senior Center Fitness Equipment	\$20,000

or to take any other action relative thereto.

Town Manager

Select Board:

Finance Committee:

Summary: *This Article sets the limit of annual spending for the various revolving funds authorized by previous Town Meeting votes and is currently set forth in the Town's Bylaw for said purpose.*

Hereof fail not and make return of your doings to the Town Clerk on or before time of said meeting.

Given under our hands this 17th Day of April in the year of our Lord Two Thousand Twenty-Six.

Matthew F. Pisani

Matthew F. Pisani, Chair

Rebecca H. Pine

Rebecca H. Pine, Vice-Chair

Alison S. Manugian

Alison S. Manugian, Clerk

John F. Reilly

John F. Reilly, Member

Peter S. Cunningham

Peter S. Cunningham, Member

OFFICERS RETURN

Groton, Middlesex

Pursuant to the within Warrant, I have this day notified the Inhabitants to assemble at the time, place, and for the purpose mentioned as within directed. Personally posted by Constable.

Constable

Date Duly Posted