FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING
Town Hall, 1st Floor Meeting Room
173 Main Street Groton, MA 01450
Monday, August 31, 2026 – 7:00 PM

Meeting Jointly with the Select Board: Approved

Finance Committee Members Present: Chair – David Manugian, Vice Chair –Bud Robertson, Gary Green, Nancy Muller, Scott Whitefield

Select Board Members Present: Vice Chair – Rebecca Pine, Nicholas Degaitas, John Reilly, Matthew Pisani

Also Present: Town Manager – Mark Haddad, Town Accountant – Patricia A. DuFresne, and other Town officials and consultants as noted in the minutes.

The meeting was opened at 7:00 PM.

Overview of the Warrant

- Mark Haddad stated that there were 19 articles on the warrant and that he would review them in order. Haddad stated that the Stabilization Fund held approximately $2.8 million, and that the Town will receive approximately 75% of the FY26 Snow & Ice deficit reimbursed through the Winter Recovery Assistance Program (WRAP). Haddad stated that $180,000 of the WRAP funds would be returned to the Capital Stabilization Fund with the remaining approximately $95,893 put into a special revenue fund to help fund the Groton Dunstable Regional School District Capital Stabilization Fund.

Fall Town Meeting Articles

- **Article 1 – Unpaid Bills**
    - Haddad stated that the Town had one unpaid bill from Service Tire Truck Centers for $430 which came in after the fiscal year closed. He stated that he recommended the bill be paid from Free Cash as a one-time expense.
- **Article 2 – Amend Fiscal Year 2027 Budget**
    - <u>Line-Item 1022 – $25,000 Select Board Expenses (Economic Development Director/Media Consultant):</u> Haddad stated that the goal of the position is to work

with Town leaders to promote economic development in Groton. This initiative is structured as a pilot. The position will be tried for a year and then, if successful, built into the budget going forward. Haddad compared the position to the Town's Energy Manager who had brought in a large amount of grant funding.

- Nancy Muller asked why a media consultant role was included in the position as it seemed like a different skill set. Haddad stated that both roles are about marketing Groton. One is focused on promoting available business and zoning opportunities, while the other is focused on social media outreach, and that this is the overall purpose of the position. Muller stated that the explanation helped to clarify the thinking behind the position.
- <u>Line-Item 1031 – $20,500 Town Manager Expenses:</u> Haddad stated that the Cow Pond Brook Fields project is out to bid and that the funding is needed to cover the consultant's work on the revised project. Gary Green asked what would happen if the project failed to pass at Town Meeting, and Haddad stated that the cost would then have to come from the project contingency or a Reserve Fund Transfer.
- <u>Line-Item 1062 – $10,000 Board of Assessors Expenses:</u> This funding would cover a one-time expense for a personal property valuation consultant and would be paid for from Free Cash.
- <u>Line-Item 1080 – $20,000 Town Counsel Expenses:</u> It was reported that additional legal funding is needed for FY2027 because there are two issues before Town Departments that will be requiring significant legal representation. He continued that the ZBA matter involves denial of a variance for the cell tower at GDRHS. The other matter relates to an easement dispute, and he is working with the Trails Committee to find the best path forward. Rebecca Pine stated that it would help residents understand the ZBA's decision so they could see why the Town is spending money on it. Haddad stated that after 6-8 hours of hearings on the matter, he wants to be careful and get Town Counsel's advice before responding.
- <u>Line-Item 1541 – $25,000 Municipal Building Expenses:</u> Haddad stated that the HVAC system at the Fire Station which was around 14 years old, broke down over the summer and needs to be repaired. He stated that this would use up the building maintenance budget for the year. Pine asked if the Green Communities program covered anything in that building, and was informed that it covered lighting but not the HVAC system.
- <u>Line-Item 1620 – $33,571 Veteran's Service Officer Salary:</u> Haddad stated that he had originally recommended increasing the number of hours allocated to the position but that the Select Board did not support that option. Instead, the Town is pursuing a regional arrangement with Pepperell and Littleton. He continued that

state law requires a full-time Veterans' Service Officer once a population exceeds 12,000, and that Groton is quickly approaching this number. Haddad stated that the regional model requires hiring a director and an administrative assistant.

  - Matthew Pisani asked where the position would be housed and Haddad stated that Groton would still use Legion Hall for this service. Green clarified that it seems that the towns are essentially covering their own existing costs, rather than doubling the services that veterans receive. Haddad stated that Groton, Pepperell, and Littleton have similar populations.

- **Article 3 – $691,000 Capital Stabilization Fund**
  - Haddad stated that, as previously discussed, $180,000 of the requested amount would come from the Town's WRAP proceeds to cover the Fiscal Year 2026 snow and ice deficit. He continued that the rest would be funded from Free Cash.
- **Article 4 – Stabilization Fund**
  - Haddad stated that the fund currently has approximately $2.8 million which meets the Town's policy target of 5% of the operating budget, so no additional appropriation is needed at this time. He stated that this article is being left on the warrant in case there is a need in the future.
- **Article 5 – $377,514 GDRSD Capital Stabilization Fund**
  - It was reported that $95,893 from the WRAP proceeds would be deposited into the fund. Haddad stated that he and Robertson had previously discussed leaving the remaining balance in Free Cash instead of committing it since the final number has not yet been determined, and that he would follow up with the Finance Committee on how to proceed.
- **Article 6 – Water Enterprise Fund, Article 7 – Four Corner Sewer Enterprise Fund, Article 8 – Stormwater Enterprise**
  - Haddad stated that these articles are placeholders and that the Water, Sewer, and Stormwater enterprise funds are not currently expecting any unanticipated expenses. He continued that the articles remain on the warrant in case there is a need.
- **Article 9 – $30,000 Town Forest Expenses**
  - The Chair of the Town Forest Committee explained that the Committee completed a stewardship plan the previous year and was reimbursed approximately $3,000 by the Division of Conservation and Recreation. She continued that the Committee also has upcoming work to remove dead pines that are a hazard, as well as clean up the roads within the Town Forest. She noted that grant reimbursements are expected for some of this work, but are credited to their Receipts Reserved for Appropriation Fund.

- Pine stated that the plan in the warrant should be updated since it is the same one presented in the spring. Robertson asked if the article had any impact on the budget, and Haddad stated that it did not, since any funds received are returned to the same account.

- **Article 10 – $4,200,000 Cow Pond Brook Field Improvements**
  - Megan Brzezinski, the Town's project consultant, stated that after the failed vote at the Spring Town Meeting the project team went back to the plans to cut costs while keeping the $1 million federal grant intact. She stated that changes included swapping concrete for asphalt in some areas, converting a parking lot from asphalt to gravel, and shifting the stormwater approach to rely more on basins. She stated that they kept the accessibility upgrades, walking path, and athletic field in the project.
  - Haddad stated that the changes keep the project eligible for the grant and that Brzezinski confirmed with the state that the funds could not be taken away from the Town, which was a concern at the previous Town Meeting. He continued that the grant must be used by December 2027 therefore this was the Town's last opportunity.
  - Pine stated that the message around the project needs to be simplified ahead of Town Meeting, as some residents see it as a large expenditure for a parking lot. Members agreed, asking for confirmation that the funding would come from taxes already being collected and not from new spending. Haddad confirmed this and compared it to the Middle School track project which was funded with short term notes rather than permanently financed and it was paid off in two to three years by putting extra money toward the debt service. He explained that the Treasurer would borrow the $4.2 million, with interest only payments for the first one to two years before a minimum principal payment begins. He stated that nothing prevents the Town from paying it down faster as was done with the track.
  - Muller asked the Parks Commission Chair if her team had looked at enterprise funds. The Chair stated that the Commission asked for a revolving fund at the Spring Town Meeting to look into charging user fees, since Groton is one of the few communities that doesn't already charge non-residents. She continued that the project is about safety and conservation, not just recreation, and that the Commission met with parents that day and agreed to keep the messaging simple.
- **Article 11 – Termination of Automated License Plate Reader Camera Program – Citizen's Petition**
  - Haddad stated that he canceled the Town's contract with Flock Safety that day. He continued that any future use of similar camera technology would require Town Meeting approval, consistent with what the petitioners requested.

- A petition representative thanked the Town Manager and stated that the group looked forward to the outcome. Haddad stated that if the petitioners wanted the article removed before the warrant was posted, ten of the 25 signers who certified the petition could request its removal. He continued that petitioners could also withdraw the article at Town Meeting and that nothing more would happen without returning to Town Meeting for approval.
- Muller asked if the Town had experienced any cost in ending the contract early, and Haddad stated that the Town had already paid for the second year of the contract and that he was uncertain if it would be reimbursed. He added that there was no penalty for early termination.

- **Article 12 – $1,700,000 Irrigation/Course Improvements – Country Club**
  - Shawn Campbell from the Country Club presented. He stated that the Club's current irrigation system is entirely manual and that automating it would improve the Town's drought mitigation capabilities as well as the overall quality of the course.
  - Robertson asked where the Club's water supply comes from, and Campbell stated that it comes from a pond on the property and that it is drawn through a pump station rather than a well.
  - Reilly asked if the upgrade would result in water savings, and Campbell stated that a fully automated system would allow watering at early morning hours, therefore reducing turf damage and helping to conserve water.
  - Haddad stated that the project has no impact on the operating budget since the Country Club generates over $1 million a year and its costs are factored into its own budget. He continued that, the same as the Cow Pond Brook Fields project, the intent is to pay off any borrowing faster than required.
  - Reilly stated that the golf course is truly more of a community asset rather than just a golf facility. Campbell agreed, stating that about 62 students from GDRHS play on the school's golf team.
  - Green asked if the Country Club would continue to be treated like an enterprise fund going forward and Haddad stated that it would, since the costs are factored into the Club's own budget.
  - Manugian asked about the term of the financing. Haddad stated that it would likely be financed over 15 years.
  - Pine stated that the project would go out to bid before Town Meeting, and Haddad agreed, stating that the bid results would be available by then and that the final cost would be based on those bids.
- **Article 13 – Transfer of Land from the DPW to the Electric Light Department**
  - Haddad stated that this article was placed on the warrant as a placeholder at Town Counsel's request and that it could ultimately be removed. Pine stated that she

wanted to confirm that a separate facilities-related article elsewhere on the warrant would not be disqualified, and Town Planner, Tada Takashi, stated that he believed a look back provision would apply.

- **Article 14 – Establish Means-Tested Senior Citizen Property Tax Exemption**
  - Degaitas stated that the exemption would go to qualifying seniors who have lived in their home for at least 10 years and received the Massachusetts Senior Circuit Breaker income tax credit which was about $2,800 in state income tax relief. He continued that the Town could match up to 200% of that credit through an additional exemption from the Board of Assessors, and that seniors would be required to apply annually and meet other requirements.
  - Robertson asked if the proposal would be easier for residents to understand at Town Meeting, and Haddad stated that it would and that there was a presentation planned to make it easier to follow.
  - Pine asked if similar language had already been approved elsewhere, and Haddad stated that it had in Marblehead, Grafton, and possibly Hopkinton. He added that the proposed language from today follows Marblehead's model. Pine continued that she had the same concern as Robertson, and that the proposal needs to be simplified for residents. She also asked if it would raise other residents' taxes. Haddad stated that funding the exemption would require increasing the overlay account, which would mean either an override or cuts elsewhere in the budget.
  - Degaitas stated that if a qualifying resident sells the home or transfers it into a trust, the new owner would not automatically keep the exemption.
  - It was asked if the matching percentage could be adjusted year to year. Haddad stated that they would need to confirm if the percentage could be changed later.
- **Article 15 – Small Scale Clean Energy Infrastructure Facility Siting and Permitting, Article 16 – Small Clean Energy Facilities Consolidated Permitting, Article 17 – Small Scale Ground Mounted Solar Photovoltaic Facilities**
  - Tada stated that Articles 15 through 17 relate to a General Bylaw update required to bring the Town into compliance with state regulations on small-scale clean energy facility siting and permitting, consistent with other communities.
  - Muller asked if the Town should have concerns about battery disposal, and Tada stated that the decommissioning responsibilities are addressed within the bylaw requirements.
- **Article 18 – Senior Property Tax Freeze Program – Citizen's Petition**
  - Samuel Palmer spoke to this article and stated that as a senior transportation van driver he hears from seniors being forced to move out of town due to rising costs and that this proposal is meant to address this.

- It was reported that a study using current census data, based on residents born in 1957 or earlier, found about 413 residents who could qualify with a 35-year residency requirement.
- Pine asked if a program like this had ever been approved in other communities. Haddad stated that Groton would be the first community attempting this proposal and that there is no guarantee it would be approved by the state legislature if it was passed at Town Meeting. Degaitas asked about the financial impact on the approximately 400 potentially eligible residents, and Haddad stated that the impact would be difficult to determine at this time.
- Members also discussed the overlap between Article 18 and Article 14. Pine stated that having both similar senior tax relief articles on the same warrant could create confusion for voters, but stated that she appreciated the petitioners bringing this forward. Mr. Palmer stated that he was open to leaving Article 18 on the warrant and better understanding Article 14 in the meantime.

- **Article 19 – Study Housing Opportunities and Municipal Finance – Citizen's Petition**
  - Russell Harris spoke to this article and stated that Groton has two main ways to raise money, overrides and budget cuts. He continued that the Town has already eliminated 40 school positions and two police positions, and that increasing the tax base through more housing is another way to improve the Town's finances. He stated that potential revenue from the MBTA-owned property, if developed, was estimated at about $1.5 million and that similar opportunities may exist. He stated that the petition asks Town boards to study housing opportunities in Groton from a fiscal perspective, citing research from institutions like Harvard and MIT on the relationship between housing policy and municipal tax revenue.

Closing

- Haddad then closed the review of the warrant and stated that the final draft would be discussed at a meeting on September 14th. He stated that he would provide an update on the status of the citizens' petition articles.
- Manugian stated that the Town Manager had worked citizen input into the warrant, but also that it would be a tough message to sell to voters. He referenced cutting revenue from seniors while also adding services like the new veterans' position and the Country Club improvements. Haddad stated that other than the Veterans' Service Officer article, nothing else on the warrant would raise the tax levy.

8:30 pm: The Finance Committee relocated to the 1st Fl Meeting Room for other business.

Re-organize Finance Committee for FY27

- Chair Robertson began by stating that reorganizing the Committee had been discussed previously but had not taken place for some time.
- Green nominated Manugian for Chair. Manugian stated that he would be happy to serve as either Chair or Vice Chair, and Roberston stated the same.
- **Motion:** Green nominated Manugian for Chair. Robertson was nominated for Vice Chair, seconded by Whitefield.
  - **Vote:** All in favor. Manugian was elected Chair and Robertson was elected Vice Chair.
- The Committee then discussed the role of the Clerk.
- **Motion:** Manugian nominated Muller for Clerk, seconded by Whitefield.
  - **Vote:** All in favor. Muller was elected Clerk.
- Chair Manugian took over the meeting at this point.

Review and Vote Meeting Minutes

- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes of the May 2, 2026 meeting.
  - **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried.
- **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes of the July 13, 2026 meeting.
  - **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried.

Choose Best Day of the Week for Recurring Meetings

- Chair Manugian began a discussion on the best recurring meeting day, stating that the Committee has typically met on both Tuesdays and Mondays.
- Robertson stated that the Committee has been meeting on Mondays mostly because it already meets with the Select Board that night, and that meetings have generally been scheduled as needed instead of regularly.
- Green stated that he had a preference for some separation between the Select Board discussion and the Finance Committee votes, and members agreed that there was some difficulty in being asked to vote on an article the same night that it was discussed.
- Members spoke about days that they were unavailable due to other commitments.

- Robertson stated that the Committee could meet as needed rather than following a fixed schedule.
- Chair Manugian suggested continuing to meet on Mondays and having Thursday as a backup. Members agreed.

Take Positions on Fall Town Meeting Articles

- **Article 1 – Unpaid Bills**
  - **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to recommend Article 1 at Town Meeting.
  - **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried.
- **Article 2 – Amend Fiscal Year 2027 Budget**
  - **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to recommend Article 2 at Town Meeting.
  - **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried.
- **Article 3 – Capital Stabilization Fund**
  - **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to recommend Article 3 at Town Meeting.
  - **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Article 4 – Stabilization Fund**
  - **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to recommend Article 4 at Town Meeting.
  - **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Article 5 – GDRSD Capital Stabilization Fund**
  - **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to support Article 5 with the amount capped at $500,000.
  - **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Article 6 – Water Enterprise Fund, Article 7 – Four Corner Sewer Enterprise Fund, Article 8 – Stormwater Enterprise**
  - **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to recommend Articles 6, 7, and 8 at Town Meeting.
  - **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Article 9 – Town Forest Expenses**
  - Members stated that the request in the warrant was difficult to follow. Members agreed the article needs clearer wording.
  - **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to support Article 9.
  - **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Article 10 – Cow Pond Brook Field Improvements**

- Members would like to understand the parameters of the $1 million federal grant. Specifically, how deeply can the project be trimmed without jeopardizing grant eligibility. Green stated that he would like to discuss the matter directly with the project team before taking a position.
- Robertson also suggested asking for discussion with the project team ahead of Town Meeting to gather more information.
- Green stated that project supporters have met with soccer and baseball groups but questioned if there is more community support outside of these groups.
- Whitefield asked if the Committee could submit written questions and get a written response ahead of meeting with the project team. Patricia DuFresne stated that a written response could be provided, but that members could not discuss it amongst themselves until meeting together.
- Outcome: The Committee reported that two members were in favor and that three were deferred and needed more information. Questions about the article will be sent to DuFresne prior to a meeting taking place with the project team and the Parks Department. The meeting was planned for Thursday, September 10th, in person or by Zoom. Muller asked if the project consultant should also be included, and DuFresne agreed to ask Haddad.

- **Article 11 – Termination of Automated License Plate Reader Camera Program – Citizen's Petition**
  - It was stated that Article 11 is expected to be withdrawn.
- **Article 12 – Irrigation/Course Improvements – Country Club**
  - **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to recommend Article 12 at Town Meeting.
  - **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Article 13 – Transfer of Land from the DPW to the Electric Light Department**
  - It was stated that Article 13 may be withdrawn.
- **Article 14 – Establish Means-Tested Senior Citizen Property Tax Exemption**
  - Whitefield asked what the article would require the Town to do, and Green explained that the approval would let the Town submit the proposed language to the state legislature. If then approved, the Town would then be allowed, but not required, to put the exemption in place without going back to Town Meeting.
  - Green stated that the warrant language, including a reference to water and sewer expenses and a threshold tied to 200% of the state circuit breaker credit, didn't match what had been presented to the Committee. He stated that he would like to talk to Haddad about this.
  - Whitefield stated he was open to the idea, but that he wanted more information on the potential cost or how many residents might qualify.

- Muller stated that she was against the idea, worried it would set a precedent for more abatement requests. She continued that it's hard to say who ends up paying for it, and that the cost would likely become the responsibility of other taxpayers.
- It was agreed that questions about this article will be discussed further at the planned September 10th meeting.
- **Outcome:** The Committee didn't take a position on Article 14 and will ask for supporting financial data ahead of the September 10th meeting.

- **Article 15 – Small Scale Clean Energy Infrastructure Facility Siting and Permitting, Article 16 – Small Clean Energy Facilities Consolidated Permitting, Article 17 – Small Scale Ground Mounted Solar Photovoltaic Facilities**
  - The Committee took no position on Articles 15, 16, or 17.
- **Article 18 – Senior Property Tax Freeze Program – Citizen's Petition**
  - Muller stated that she was against the article, referencing demographic data that shows a drop in the number of children in Groton's population from 29% to 23%, and a rise in residents 65 and older from 10% to 15%, between 2010 and 2020. She stated that the proposal would shift the burden onto younger families and that the Town should instead focus on attracting young families by investing in housing, schools, and recreation.
  - Whitefield pointed out overlap with Article 19 and said any proposal like this should first have a full study before going to Town Meeting.
  - Green stated that even with more analysis, he wouldn't support the article.
  - Robertson pointed out that the article lets the Select Board set income limits, but that as written the article doesn't set any income limits for itself. He continued that this means any resident meeting the age and residency requirement could qualify no matter their income.
  - **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to recommend Article 18 at Town Meeting.
  - **Vote:** 0 in favor, 5 opposed. Motion failed.
  - **Outcome:** Finance Committee position is not to support.
- **Article 19 – Study Housing Opportunities and Municipal Finance – Citizen's Petition**
  - Robertson stated that he would support the article if it leads to different zoning approaches.
  - Green stated that recent development in nearby communities has had pushback from residents worried about school impact, even though this kind of development usually brings in more revenue than it adds in school-aged children. He suggested that the Town study which types of development bring in the most revenue.
  - **Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to recommend Article 19 at Town Meeting.

- **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.

Closing

- The next meeting was scheduled for September 10, 2026 at 7:00 PM, to be held virtually.
- Chair Manugian adjourned the meeting at 9:20 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Andrea Rollo, Per Diem Minute Taker

Revised: 08/26/2026

Warrant, Summary, and Recommendations

TOWN OF GROTON

2026 FALL TOWN MEETING

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

Beginning Saturday, October 3, 2026 @ 9:00 AM

Attention Voters

Please bring this Document to Town Meeting

FALL TOWN MEETING WARRANT
OCTOBER 3, 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 third day of October, 2026 at Nine O'clock in the morning, to consider the following:

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*Will be presented as one motion as a Consent Agenda

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Reprint Page 1 of 1

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VEHICLE /FLEET NO	LICENSE	MILEAGE	SHIP VIA	TERMS
			CPU	Net 10th

Item Number / Description	QTY	Unit Price	EXCISE TAX	Extension
T24350623105014 OS231050-14 OTR 350 MAG C	2	$200.00	$0.00	$400.00 N
LPDM DISMOUNT/MOUNT NO VEHICLE	2	$15.00	$0.00	$30.00 N

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THE FINANCE CHARGE ADDED TO ALL BALANCES 30 DAYS PAST DUE IS COMPUTED BY A PERIODIC RATE NOT TO EXCEED THE HIGHEST RATE ALLOWED BY LAW. PLEASE SEE YOUR MONTHLY STATEMENT FOR THE CURRENT RATE.

ALL RETURNED GOOD MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BYINVOICES AND ARE SUBJECT TO A 10% HANDLING CHARGE. WE ASSUME NO RESPONSIBILITY FOR LOSS OF MERCHANDISE AFTER 30 DAYS

Article 1: *Prior Year Bills*

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

Select Board

Select Board:
Finance Committee:

Summary: *Town Meeting approval is required to pay bills from a prior fiscal year. A list of unpaid bills will be provided at Town Meeting. Please see the Town Manager's Report starting on page 34 for additional information related to this Article.*

Article 2: *Amend the Fiscal Year 2027 Town Operating Budget*

To see if the Town will vote to amend the Fiscal Year 2027 Operating Budget as adopted under Article 5 of the May 2, 2026 Spring Town Meeting and vote to raise and appropriate and/or transfer from available funds a sum or sums of money as may be necessary to defray the expenses of the Town for Fiscal Year 2027, or to take any other action relative thereto.

Finance Committee
Select Board
Town Manager

Select Board: ***See Select Board's Recommendations Beginning on Page 34***
Finance Committee: ***See Finance Committee's Recommendations Beginning on Page 34***

Summary: *The Fiscal Year 2027 Town Operating Budget was approved at the May 2, 2026 Town Meeting. Any changes to this Budget would have to be made prior to setting the tax rate. The purpose of this article is to make any necessary changes to balance the Fiscal Year 2027 Operating Budget. Please see the Town Manager's Report starting on page 34 for additional information related to this Article.*

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

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

Select Board

Select Board:
Finance Committee:

Summary: *As of the printing of this Warrant, the Fund has a balance of $144,028. The financial management goal is to achieve and maintain a balance in the Capital Stabilization Fund equal to 1.5% of the total annual budget. The target amount for the Capital Stabilization Fund will be provided at Town Meeting. Please see the Town Manager's Report starting on page 34 for additional information related to this Article.*

Article 4: Transfer Money into the Stabilization Fund

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

Select Board

Select Board:
Finance Committee:

Summary: *As of the printing of this Warrant, the balance in this fund is $2,873,587. The financial management goal is to achieve and maintain a balance in the Fund equal to 5% of the total annual budget. The target amount for the Fund will be provided at Town Meeting. Please see the Town Manager's Report starting on page 34 for additional information related to this Article.*

Article 5: Transfer Money into the GDRSD Capital Stabilization Fund

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

Town Manager

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

Summary: *As of the printing of the Warrant, the balance in this fund is $26,593. This fund covers the Town of Groton's share of the Groton Dunstable Regional School District Committee's long-range Capital Plan to address its capital needs. The target amount will be provided at Town Meeting. Please see the Town Manager's Report starting on page 34 for additional information related to this Article.*

Article 6: 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 2027 Water Enterprise Budget, or to take any other action relative thereto.

Board of Water Commissioners

Select Board:
Finance Committee:

Summary: *This Article will seek a transfer from the Water Enterprise Fund Surplus to the Fiscal Year 2027 Water Department's General Expense Budget to cover unanticipated expenses. Please see the Town Manager's Report starting on page 34 for additional information related to this Article.*

Article 7: 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 2027 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 2027 Four Corners Sewer Budget. Please see the Town Manager's Report starting on page 34 for additional information related to this Article.*

Article 8: Transfer Within the Stormwater Enterprise Fund

To see if the Town will vote to transfer a sum or sums of money from the Stormwater Enterprise Fund Surplus to the Fiscal Year 2027 Stormwater Enterprise Budget, or to take any other action relative thereto.

Town Manager

Select Board:
Finance Committee:

Summary: *This article allows the Stormwater Department to transfer money from its surplus account to cover any deficit in the Fiscal Year 2027 Stormwater Budget. Please see the Town Manager's Report starting on page 34 for additional information related to this Article.*

Article 9: *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 from their Receipts Reserved for the Town Forest 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 $30,000, with $12,238 coming from a reimbursement from the Division of Conservation and Recreation, based on an estimate from the Committee's consulting Forester.*

Article 10: *Cow Pond Brook Fields Improvements*

To see if the Town will vote to adopt and approve the recommendation of the Community Preservation Committee for improvements to the Cow Pond Brook Fields as described in CPA Application 2027-11, on file in the Town Clerk's Office, 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/or borrow pursuant to any applicable statute a sum or sums of money, to be expensed by the Town Manager, for said purposes, and all costs associated and related thereto, or to take any other action relative thereto.

Community Preservation Committee
Parks Commission

Select Board:
Finance Committee:
Summary: *This article requests Community Preservation Act (CPA) funding for a revised improvement project at the Cow Pond Brook Fields recreational complex. A similar proposal considered at the 2026 Spring Town Meeting was not approved by the voters. Following Town Meeting, the Parks Commission and Town Manager worked with user groups, Town departments, project consultants, and other stakeholders to substantially revise the project in response to public feedback. The revised proposal reduces the overall project cost by an estimated $800,000 to $1 million from the original estimated budget of approximately $4.8 million, while retaining the project's primary objectives. The revised project includes rehabilitation and modernization of one of the Town's most heavily used recreational facilities; improvements to comply with Natural Heritage requirements by addressing the existing access road; construction of ADA-compliant pathways and amenities to improve accessibility; upgrades to drainage, parking, traffic circulation, and supporting infrastructure; and improvements designed to provide a safe, functional, and sustainable recreational complex for residents, schools, youth organizations, and community groups. Approval of this article will also preserve the Town's eligibility to receive a $1 million federal grant that has been awarded for the project. If the project does not proceed the Town will lose access to these federal funds. The grant would significantly reduce the amount of local funding*

required to complete the project. The Parks Commission believes the revised proposal reflects the concerns raised during the Spring Town Meeting by reducing costs, refining the project scope, and maintaining the long-term goal of preserving and improving an important community recreational asset. If approved, this article would authorize the use of CPA funds to support the project and leverage substantial outside funding for improvements intended to serve Groton residents for many decades.

Article 11: Termination of Automated License Plate Reader Camera Program

To see if the Town will vote to direct the Select Board, Town Manager, Police Department, and all other appropriate Town officials to take all necessary and legally permissible steps to discontinue the Town's use of the automated license plate reader cameras and associated services provided by Flock Safety; to terminate or decline to renew the Town's contract with Flock Safety at the earliest date permitted under the contract; to remove all Flock Safety cameras and related equipment from Town property and public rights-of-way; and to prohibit the expenditure of Town funds for the renewal, replacement, or continuation of the Flock Safety camera system, or any substantially similar automated license plate reader surveillance system, without prior authorization by Town Meeting, or to take any other action relative thereto.

Citizens' Petition

NAME	ADDRESS	NAME	ADDRESS
Lorraine Ostanik-Bellessa	68 Champney Street	Matthew Costa	108 West Main Street
John Bellessa	68 Champney Street	Al Solomon	31 Skyfields Drive
James McNamara	310 Riverbend Drive	Molly Solomon	31 Skyfields Drive
Tara McNamara	310 Riverbend Drive	Jonathan Kerr	98 Skyfields Drive
Christine Costa	108 West Main Street	Cassie Kerr	98 Skyfields Drive

Select Board:
Finance Committee:

Summary: **The following summary was prepared by the petitioners and represents their view on the Article:** *This Article asks the Town to end its use of Flock Safety automated license plate reader cameras and to terminate or decline to renew the existing agreement at the earliest legally permissible date. It would also require Town Meeting approval before the Town could spend money on a replacement or substantially similar automated license plate reader system. The purpose of the Article is to ensure that the will of Groton voters is clear and that any decision to operate a system that continuously records vehicle movement is made openly and with explicit public authorization. It provides residents an opportunity to consider the system's privacy, civil-liberties, financial, public-safety, and data-security implications before determining whether its use should be permitted.*

Article 12: Install Irrigation System/Course Improvements – Groton Country Club

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 install an irrigation system and make various improvements to the Groton Country Club Golf Course, and all costs associated and related thereto, or to take any other action relative thereto.

Town Manager
Head Professional/General Manager

Select Board:
Finance Committee:

Summary: *This article requests funding to construct a new irrigation system and complete targeted course improvements at the Groton Country Club. The Club's existing irrigation system provides only limited coverage and requires manual operation, making it difficult to maintain consistent playing conditions, particularly during dry weather. The proposed irrigation system would be fully automated, allowing watering during non-playing hours, and would provide comprehensive coverage of all greens, tee boxes, fairways, and selected in-play rough areas. The project is intended to improve turf health, course conditions, water management, and the overall quality of the golf course. In addition to the irrigation system, the project includes targeted improvements to enhance playability and course infrastructure. These include redesigning portions of Holes 1 through 3 to improve playability and installing a drainage system on Hole 7 to address persistent drainage issues. The preliminary planning estimate for the project is approximately $1.7 million. Prior to Town Meeting, the Town intends to solicit competitive bids so that a firm project cost can be presented to voters for consideration. If approved, the project would be financed through borrowing. Annual debt service would be appropriated through the Town's Capital Budget and funded from Free Cash, with the expectation that revenues generated by the Groton Country Club will support the debt service over the life of the borrowing. The project is intended to protect the Town's investment in the municipal golf course, enhance the experience for residents and visitors, and support the Club's long-term operational and financial sustainability.*

Article 13: Transfer of Land from the DPW to the Electric Light Department

To see if the Town will vote to authorize the transfer of a portion of the Department of Public Works property located at 600 Cow Pond Brook Road, shown as Lot 41-0 on the Town of Groton Assessor's Map 248, substantially as shown on the sketch plan entitled "600 Cow Pond Brook Road BESS Site" on file in the Town Clerk's Office, to the Groton Electric Light Department for the construction, installation, and use of a battery energy storage system on such terms and conditions as the Town Manager deems to be in the best interest of the Town, or to take any other action relative thereto.

Town Manager

Select Board:
Finance Committee:

Summary: *This article seeks Town Meeting authorization to transfer a portion of the Department of Public Works property at 600 Cow Pond Brook Road to the Groton Electric Light Department for the construction and operation of a battery energy storage system (BESS). The proposed BESS would allow the Electric Light Department to store electricity for later use, helping to manage periods of high electricity demand, improve system reliability, and support the efficient operation of Groton's municipal electric system. The specific portion of the property to be transferred is generally shown on the sketch plan on file with the Town Clerk. Approval of this article would authorize the Town Manager to complete the property transfer on terms and conditions determined to be in the best interest of the Town.*

Article 14: Establish Means-Tested Senior Citizen Property Tax Exemption

To see if the Town will vote to authorize the Select Board to petition the General Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for the following Special Act, 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:

AN ACT AUTHORIZING THE TOWN OF GROTON TO ESTABLISH A MEANS-TESTED SENIOR CITIZEN PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTION

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. (a) With respect to each qualifying parcel of real property classified as residential in the town of Groton, and as established more specifically by the select board annually pursuant to section 2, there shall be an exemption from the property tax equal to the total amount of tax that would otherwise be assessed without this exemption plus 50 per cent of the annual water and sewer expense less the sum of: (i) 10 per cent of income or other such percentage of income as determined pursuant to section 3; (ii) the circuit breaker income tax credit pursuant to subsection (k) of section 6 of chapter 62 of the General Laws the applicant received for the year prior to the year for which the application is being filed; and (iii) any other statutory exemptions or other forms of property tax relief including the senior tax work off program.

(b) In no event shall this exemption be greater than the cap established on an annual basis by the select board pursuant to section 5. The exemption shall be applied to the domicile of the taxpayer only. For the purposes of this act, "parcel" shall mean a unit of real property as defined by the board of assessors under the deed for the property and shall include a condominium unit. The exemption provided for in this section shall be in addition to any other exemptions allowed pursuant to the General Laws, unless otherwise removed from the calculation in subsection (a).

SECTION 2. The board of assessors of the town of Groton may deny an application for exemption if the board finds that the applicant has excessive assets that place the applicant outside of the intended recipients of the senior exemption established pursuant to this act. For the purposes of this act, what constitutes excessive assets shall be determined by regulations set by the select board. Real property shall qualify for the exemption pursuant to section 1 if all of the following criteria are met:

(i) the qualifying real property is owned and occupied by a person whose annual household income does not exceed limitations established by the select board pursuant to section 5;

(ii) the qualifying real property is owned by a single applicant who was 65 years of age or older at the close of the previous year or jointly by persons who are 60 years of age or older; provided, that not less than 1 joint owner was 65 years of age or older at the close of the previous year;

(iii) the qualifying real property is owned and occupied by the applicant or joint applicants as their domicile;

(iv) the applicant, or at least 1 of the joint applicants, has been domiciled and owned a home in the town of Groton for not less than 10 consecutive years before filing an application for the exemption;

(v) the maximum assessed value of the domicile is not greater than the prior year's average assessed value of a town of Groton single family residence;

(vi) the applicant files for circuit breaker income tax credit pursuant to subsection (k) of chapter 62 of the General Laws, if eligible; and

(vii) the board of assessors approves the application for the exemption.

SECTION 3. The exemption pursuant to section 1 shall be in addition to any other exemption allowable pursuant to the General Laws, except that there shall be a dollar cap for all real estate exemptions available pursuant to this act as set annually by the select board of the town of Groton pursuant to section 5. If benefits to the applicants are limited because the cap established annually by the select board would otherwise be exceeded, the benefits shall be decreased pro rata.

SECTION 4. A person who seeks to qualify for the exemption pursuant to section 1 shall, before the deadline established by the board of assessors of the town of Groton, file an application, on a form adopted by the board of assessors, with the supporting documentation as described in the application. The application shall be filed each year for which the applicant seeks the exemption.

SECTION 5. The select board may, after consultation with the board of assessors and after holding a public hearing for which notice of not less than 7 days provided, promulgate rules and regulations to implement this act.

SECTION 6. This act shall take effect upon its passage.

or to take any other action relative thereto.

Select Board

Select Board:
Finance Committee:

Summary: *This article requests Town Meeting approval to petition the Massachusetts General Court for special legislation authorizing the Town of Groton to establish a local, means-tested property tax exemption for qualifying senior homeowners. If enacted by the Legislature, the program would provide an annual property tax exemption to eligible seniors who meet income, age, residency, ownership, occupancy, and property value requirements. To qualify, applicants generally must meet the income eligibility requirements for the Massachusetts Senior Circuit Breaker Tax Credit; own and occupy the property as their primary residence; be at least 65 years of age (or, in the case of jointly owned property, at least one owner must be 65 and all owners at least 60 years of age); have owned and resided in a home in Groton for at least ten consecutive years; own a home with an assessed value within the annual limits established for the state Circuit Breaker Tax Credit; and, submit an annual application and supporting documentation to the Board of Assessors. The Board of Assessors would administer the program and may deny an application if it determines the applicant possesses excessive assets inconsistent with the program's intended purpose. The Select Board would annually establish the amount of the exemption. The exemption must be between 50% and 200% of the applicant's prior year's Massachusetts Senior Circuit Breaker Tax Credit. The cost of the exemption would be funded through a proportional shift within the residential property tax levy, resulting in a minimal increase in the residential tax burden shared among all other residential taxpayers. The exemption would supplement, rather than replace, any other property tax exemptions for which an applicant may qualify. The special act would become effective only upon approval by the Massachusetts Legislature and the Governor. The authorization would remain in effect for three years, after which Town Meeting would need to vote to reauthorize the program for additional three-year periods.*

Article 15: Small Scale Clean Energy Infrastructure Facility Siting and Permitting

To see if the Town will vote to amend the General Bylaws of the Town of Groton by inserting a new **Section 185 Small Scale Clean Energy Infrastructure Facility Consolidated Siting and Permitting** to read as follows:

185-1 Purpose

The purpose of this bylaw, also referred to as Small Clean Energy Infrastructure Facility ("SCEIF") Siting and Permitting Bylaw, is to incorporate the standard conditions, criteria, requirements, and procedures for the efficient and appropriate siting and permitting of SCIEFs by the Town of Groton under 225 CMR 29.00.

185-2 Definitions.

For the purposes of this bylaw, the terms defined in 225 CMR 29.02 shall have the same meaning in this bylaw.

185-3 Applicability

This bylaw applies to the local siting and permitting of a SCEIF when an Applicant requests a Consolidated Local Permit pursuant to 225 CMR 29.00.

Article 18: ***Citizens' Petition – Senior Property Tax Freeze Program***

To see if the Town will vote to authorize the Select Board to petition the General Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for the following Special Act, 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:

AN ACT ESTABLISHING A SENIOR PROPERTY TAX FREEZE PROGRAM IN THE TOWN OF GROTON

Section 1. Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, the town of Groton is authorized to establish a senior property tax freeze program for qualifying residential property owners.

Section 2. A qualifying property owner shall be seventy (70) years of age or older, have owned and occupied the property as his or her principal residence, have resided in the town of Groton for at least thirty-five (35) consecutive years immediately preceding the application, and shall meet any additional eligibility requirements that the town may establish by bylaw, including income or asset limits if deemed appropriate.

Section 3. The real property taxes assessed on the parcel or parcels containing the qualifying property owner's principal residence shall be frozen at the amount due for the fiscal year in which the property owner first becomes eligible for the program. The property owner shall remain responsible for paying the frozen amount each year, but no future increases in the tax assessment shall apply while the property owner remains eligible for the program.

Section 4. Eligibility shall continue only while the parcel remains the property owner's principal residence and all eligibility requirements continue to be met.

Section 5. The town's Select Board may adopt rules and regulations necessary to administer the program.

Section 6. This act shall take effect upon its passage.

Citizens' Petition

NAME	ADDRESS	NAME	ADDRESS
Samuel A. Palmer	12 Skinners Lane	Shelley Ann Bickford	127 Lost Lake Drive
Marilyn Palmer	12 Skinners Lane	Lois H. Young	28 Champney Street
W. David Nelson	282 Farmers Row	Brett E. Stevens	186 Lost Lake Drive
Violetta O'Donnell	555 Boston Road	Steven Sinatra	32 Indian Road
Cynthia Thompson	7 Castle Drive	Ryan Stevens	21 A Hazel Road

Select Board:
Finance Committee:

Summary: **<u>The following summary was prepared by the petitioners and represents their view on the Article:</u>** *This article requests that Town Meeting authorize the Select Board to petition the Massachusetts General Court for special legislation to establish a Senior Property Tax Freeze Program for the Town of Groton. If enacted, the proposed legislation would permit Groton to freeze the annual real estate tax on the principal residence of eligible senior homeowners. To qualify, a homeowner would be required to be at least 70 years of age, have owned and occupied the property as a principal residence, have resided in the Town of Groton for at least 35 consecutive years immediately preceding application, and satisfy any additional eligibility requirements established by the Town, including any income or asset limitations that may be adopted. Under the proposed program, eligible homeowners would continue to pay their annual property taxes, but the amount would remain at the level in effect when they first qualified for the program. The tax would not be eliminated, and the freeze would remain in effect only while the homeowner continues to meet all eligibility requirements and occupies the property as a principal residence.*

Article 19: Citizens' Petition – Study Housing Opportunities and Municipal Finance

WHEREAS, the Town faces a serious and continuing fiscal imbalance that threatens its ability to meet its financial obligations to the Groton-Dunstable Regional School District and to provide adequate staffing and resources for police, fire, and other essential public services; THEREFORE, to see if the Town will vote to request that the Select Board, Planning Board, Finance Committee, Town Manager, Board of Assessors, Affordable Housing Trust, School Committee, and other appropriate town boards, committees, departments, and officials undertake a coordinated study of a range of realistic opportunities to increase and diversify Groton's housing stock for the purpose of expanding the property-tax base, strengthening and stabilizing the Town's finances, and helping provide the revenue necessary to meet Groton's financial obligations to the Groton-Dunstable Regional School District and its essential public services. The study shall evaluate potential housing approaches in terms of their likely property-tax revenue, their expected effects on school and municipal services, their likely net fiscal benefit to the Town, and their consistency with the goals and policies expressed in Groton's adopted plans and other official town documents. The study shall consider a range of options rather than a single predetermined proposal. The participating boards, committees, departments, and officials shall present a written report of their findings, options, and recommendations to the 2027 Spring Annual Town Meeting, including any recommendation for additional study or professional assistance; or to take any other action relative thereto.

Citizens' Petition

NAME	ADDRESS	NAME	ADDRESS
Russell Harris	25 Longley Road	Effie Stewart	20 Old Orchard Street
Deborah Johnson	25 Longley Road	M. Constance Sartini	38 Mill Street
Virginia Wood	293 Old Dunstable Road	Eric Fisher	7B Lilac Circle
Jamie Christerson	189 Forge Village Road	Marc Broussard	19 Lowell Road
Robert Stewart	20 Old Orchard Street	Nancy Fleischer	119 Nashua Road

Select Board:
Finance Committee:

Summary: <u>**The following summary was prepared by the petitioners and represents their view on the Article:**</u> *This citizens' petition asks Groton officials to study whether adding and diversifying housing could strengthen the town's property-tax base and help address ongoing financial pressures, including school funding and essential municipal services. The study would compare a range of housing approaches, weighing tax revenue, service costs, net fiscal impact and consistency with town plans, and report its findings and recommendations to the 2027 Spring Annual Town Meeting.*