

SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, MARCH 2, 2026
APPROVED 3/9/26

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

Park Commissioners Present: Mark Presti; Mary Jennings; Anna Eliot;

Park Commissioners Virtually Present: Jeff Ohringer;

Also Virtually Present: Mark Haddad, Town Manager; Kara Cruikshank, Executive Assistant to the Town Manager; Bud Robertson, Finance Committee Chair; Jim Gareffi, Executive Director of the Nashoba Boards of Health (NAGH); Jack Petropoulos, Park Commission Candidate; Brian Callahan, DPW Director.

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mr. Cunningham reminded everyone about the informational public hearing regarding the Squannacook River Dam, scheduled for Tuesday, March 3, 2026, at 7:00 p.m. The meeting will be held at the Groton Center.

Mr. Pisani emphasized the importance of clearing snow from fire hydrants in neighborhoods. He urged everyone, if they find a fire hydrant that hasn't been dug out, to take a moment to clear it. Fires can grow rapidly, doubling in size within just 30 seconds, so it's crucial to act quickly.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

None

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

1. Jim Gareffi- Nashoba Associated Boards of Health Proposed FY 2027 Assessment

Mr. Jim Gareffi, Executive Director of the Nashoba Boards of Health (NABH), attended to discuss the proposed increase in the FY 2027 NABH Assessment. A summary of the Town- by-Town Assessment and an FAQ explaining the reasons for the increase were provided to the Select Board for review.

Mr. Haddad explained that the Town of Groton has been a member of NABH for many years and thanked Mr. Gareffi for his time. This year, the Town of Groton received a 30% increase in the Nashoba Assessment. Ms. Manugian asked that Mr. Gareffi be invited to attend a Select Board Meeting to discuss this increase. Mr. Gareffi offered an overview of the NABH to the Select Board and reviewed the reasons for the large increase in the Nashoba Assessment. In 2023, the nursing program component of the entity had to be closed due to staffing issues. Mr. Gareffi stated that a large portion of the nursing program has been funded by excess revenues from Environmental Division fees and from Nashoba Nursing Service and Hospice (NNSH). The NABH's budget was managed through these funds, and that part of the NABH's budget was also subsidized. Mr. Gareffi explained that the 30% increase is necessary because they have lost the revenue that previously

supported the nursing staff. This increase is essential to maintain their current staffing levels and ensure the continued delivery of public nursing services. He said the funds would also help cover IT services and employment costs, such as health insurance, which are difficult to absorb.

Mr. Gareffi explained that they need to find services from other visiting nurse associations that can provide visiting nurses. Ms. Manugian thanked Mr. Gareffi for attending and asked for clarification on a few issues. Mr. Gareffi stated that the Executive Board will present fee increases at its March meeting and that they are working to address the impact of the nurse grant loss and the nursing agency's closure. Ms. Manugian said that this seems to be level funding from the state, with increased mandates. Mr. Haddad added that this assessment is included in the town's balanced budget. He emphasized that one benefit of having the NABH is that there is always backup coverage.

2. FY 2027 Budget Update.

As discussed at the February 23rd Select Board meeting, Mr. Haddad drafted a letter to the State Legislature urging them to increase Chapter 70 Aid in FY 2027. Mr. Haddad provided the Board with the draft for review. He thanked Groton Dunstable Regional School District's School Committee Chair, Lacey McCabe, for reviewing and editing the proposed letter.

Ms. Pine moved to approve and sign the letter. Mr. Reilly seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Haddad stated that all Department Heads did a great job during Saturday's joint meeting with the Select Board and the Finance Committee. He said DPW Director Brian Callahan did an excellent job with his first budget presentation.

Regarding the Capital Budget, Mr. Haddad noted a couple of important updates: the \$195,000 allocated for Portable Radio Replacement will be removed from the capital budget and funded through a grant. Additionally, the \$100,000 earmarked for the first-year irrigation payment at the Country Club will be removed, as this payment is not due until FY 2028. With those adjustments, Mr. Haddad stated that \$295,000 will now remain in the capital budget. He further explained that at Saturday's budget hearing, Chief Luth stated that some of the Town's communications equipment located at the radio Tower at Gibbet Hill needs some work. He is proposing to use some of those funds to address this issue as well as to offset the snow and ice deficit. The Board was supportive of Mr. Haddad's proposal.

3. Update on Select Board Schedule Through the 2026 Spring Town Meeting.

Tuesday, March 3, 2026-	Squannacook River Dam Public Hearing
Monday, March 9, 2026 -	2026 Town Meeting Warrant Public Hearing
Monday, March 16, 2026 -	No Meeting
Monday, March 23, 2026 -	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, March 30, 2026	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, April 6, 2026 -	Regularly Scheduled Meeting

Monday, April 13, 2026 -
Monday, April 20, 2026 -
Saturday, May 2, 2026 -

Regularly Scheduled Meeting
No Meeting – (Patriots’ Day Holiday)
2026 Spring Town Meeting

ITEMS FOR SELECT BOARD CONSIDERATION AND APPROVAL

None

6:15 P.M.-In Joint Session with the Park Commission- Consider Appointing an Individual to Fill a Vacancy on the Park Commission until the 2026 Annual Town Election.

Park Commissioners Ms. Anna Eliot, Mr. Mark Presti, and Ms. Mary Jennings were present, while Mr. Jeff Ohringer attended virtually.

Mr. Haddad said that this was on the February 23rd Select Board agenda and that there were some technical problems, so the discussion was continued to this evening. The two candidates were asked to write a letter of interest, but one withdrew, leaving only Mr. Jack Petropoulos. Mr. Petropoulos was present to interview for the current Commissioner vacancy until the 2026 Annual Town Election.

Ms. Mary Jennings called the Park Commission to order.

Ms. Jennings stated that they have one candidate, Mr. Jack Petropolous, and she suggested that they interview him. Ms. Manugian asked for clarification on the process. Mr. Haddad explained that the Town Clerk will ask the Board at its next meeting to add an additional two-year term for the Park Commission to the ballot, ending in 2028. He said there will be two three-year terms and one two-year term on the ballot, ending in 2028. Mr. Reilly asked about the urgency of adding a member to the commission. Ms. Jennings replied that four or five meetings remain before the end of the fiscal year, along with regular business and the upcoming Cow Pond Project public forum. Mr. Haddad explained that regarding the Cow Pond Brook Project, the Park Commission had already voted unanimously in support of it; it is before the CPA and in the permitting phase. He said the project is well underway and designed, and there will be additional public outreach. Ms. Jennings said they will be establishing a permitting policy, and working with user groups. Ms. Pine stated that it is a lot of work, and the candidate has stepped forward.

Mr. Cunningham asked Mr. Petropoulos for his perspective on the items of business Ms. Jennings raised. Mr. Petropoulos explained that adding user fees for the fields will be a major change and will require the full board to implement. He also indicated that he does not plan to run in the next election and prefers others to run for the position. Mr. Reilly mentioned there was talk of eliminating the Park Commission and asked Mr. Petropoulos for his opinion. Ms. Manugian said she would prefer not to fill the vacancy at this time, going into the election. Ms. Eliot expressed that they have never had a problem handling general business and always have a quorum. Mr. Presti supported adding an additional member, and Mr. Ohringer supported adding Mr. Petropoulos.

Mr. Cunningham made a motion to appoint Jack Petropolous to the Park Commission. Ms. Pine seconded the motion. Roll Call: Manugian-nay; Pisani-nay; Reilly-nay; Cunningham-aye; Pine-aye; Jennings-aye; Presti-aye; Eliot-nay; Ohringer-aye.

OTHER BUSINESS

None

On-Going Issues

- A. PFAS Issue – Mr. Haddad explained that the total appropriation for the Chicopee Row Water line was \$16.7 million. Of this \$16.7 million, \$12.2 million was borrowed from the State Revolving Fund (SRF). The remaining \$4.5 million was originally intended to be used for Phase II of the project, but the Towns of Groton, Pepperell and Dunstable received a \$5 million state grant for this work, freeing up the remaining funds to address the spread of the plume, which is estimated to cost around \$6 million. The original water main installation came in just over \$10 million, freeing up \$2.2 million in SRF funding that can be used to address the additional work. The problem is that the approved \$12.2 million in SRF funding cannot be reduced for 2 years according to SRF funding rules. Earlier today, a meeting took place with the Department of Environmental Protection, during which Mr. Haddad requested approval for a change order that would allow the current contractor to use the remaining \$2 million for some of the additional work. The Town had borrowed the remaining \$4.5 million at the end of January and he does not want to go back out to the Bond market for the \$2.2 million. The town is currently waiting for the state to approve the use of the \$2.2 million. Regardless, the additional work is scheduled to begin in April on Raddin Rd., Hawtree Way, Kemp St., North St., Ready Meadow Rd., and Groton St.

Mr. Haddad emphasized that Mr. Rob Maloney has done an excellent job serving as the Acting Water Superintendent. Mr. Maloney has chosen to remain as a water operator, a decision that Mr. Haddad respects. He explained that they would be advertising the Water Superintendent position soon.

- A. UMass Satellite Emergency Facility – the Sign Committee held a hearing for their signage earlier today. The Sign Committee voted unanimously to approve their signage.
- B. Fire Department Staffing – Postcards with QR codes were mailed out and tracking shows how many residents are accessing the information. So far, there have been over 250 views. The Town Manager's Working Group is scheduled to meet on Wednesday morning. Mr. Haddad mentioned that the group will meet with two consultants hired to help communicate the information to the public. The working group will keep the Board updated on its progress.
- C. West Groton Dam- The public hearing on the Dam will be held on Tuesday, March 3, 2026, at the Groton Center, starting at 7:00 p.m.
- D. Main Street Study – None

SELECT BOARD LIASON REPORTS

None

Approval of the Regularly Scheduled Meeting of February 23, 2026

Ms. Pine made a motion to approve the regular meeting minutes of February 23, 2026. Ms. Manugian seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

The Select Board adjourned at 7:05 p.m.

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