



# TOWN OF GROTON

173 Main Street  
Groton, Massachusetts 01450-1237  
Tel: (978) 448-1111  
Fax: (978) 448-1115

## Select Board

Alison S. Manugian, *Chair*  
Rebecca H. Pine, *Vice Chair*  
Peter S. Cunningham, *Clerk*  
John F. Reilly, *Member*  
Matthew F. Pisani, *Member*

**Town Manager**  
Mark W. Haddad

**SELECT BOARD MEETING**  
**MONDAY, NOVEMBER 25, 2024**  
**AGENDA**  
**SELECT BOARD MEETING ROOM**  
**2nd FLOOR**  
**GROTON TOWN HALL**

- 6:00 P.M.            Announcements and Review Agenda for the Public
- 6:01 P.M.            Public Comment Period #1
- I.            6:05 P.M.            Town Manager's Report
1. Ratify the Town Manager's Appointment of Cathleen Berry as Assistant Town Accountant
  2. Ratify the Town Manager's Appointment of David MacInnis to the Historic Districts Commission
  3. Accept Donation and Create the Peter Twomey Youth Center Trust Fund
  4. Update on Fiscal Year 2026 Budget
  5. Update on Meeting Schedule Through the End of the Year
- II.            6:10 P.M.            Items for Select Board Consideration and Action
1. TREAD Committee Update
  2. Consider Approving a One-Day Wine and Malt Beverages License for the Friends of Prescott for Open Mic Night to be held on Friday, December 13, 2024 from 6:30 p.m.- 9:30 p.m.
- III.            6:15 P.M.            Annual Tax Classification Hearing

### OTHER BUSINESS

ON-GOING ISSUES –            Review and Informational Purposes – Brief Comments - Items May or May Not Be Discussed

- A. PFAS Issue
- B. Nashoba Valley Medical Center Working Group
- C. Charter Review Committee
- D. Florence Roche Elementary School Construction Project
- E. PILOTs

### SELECT BOARD LIAISON REPORTS

- IV.            Public Comment Period #2
- V.            Minutes:            Regularly Scheduled Meeting of November 4, 2024
- VI.            Executive Session:            Executive Session – Pursuant to M.G.L., c. 30A, §21(a), Clause 3 – “To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body and the chair so declares” – Purposes – Collective Bargaining

### ADJOURNMENT

*Votes may be taken at any time during the meeting.* The listing of topics that the Chair reasonably anticipates will be discussed at the meeting is not intended as a guarantee of the topics that will be discussed. Not all topics listed may in fact be discussed, and other topics not listed may also be brought up for discussion to the extent permitted by law.



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**Town Manager**  
Mark W. Haddad

**To:** *Select Board*

**From:** *Mark W. Haddad – Town Manager*

**Subject:** *Weekly Agenda Update/Report*

**Date:** *November 25, 2024*

### **TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT**

In addition to the Town Manager's Report, Items for Select Board Consideration and Action and a review of the On-going Issues List, there are two items scheduled on Monday's Agenda. First, the Select Board will hold the Annual Tax Classification Hearing. Principal Assessor Megan Foster will be in attendance to provide information to assist the Select Board in making a classification determination. Enclosed with this Report is Megan's presentation for your review. Second, I have scheduled an Executive Session at the end of the meeting (not to return to Open Session) for me to provide the Select Board and Finance Committee with a Collective Bargaining update. I will be sending you information relative to this Executive Session under separate cover.

1. As you may or may not be aware, after 14 years of dedicated service to the Town of Groton, Assistant Town Accountant Sarah Mahoney has decided to retire at the end of January, 2025. Fortunately for the Town, we had one internal candidate express an interest for the position. Cathleen "Katie" Berry is currently the Interdepartmental Assistant in the Land Use Departments. She has been an outstanding employee for the Town since June, 2023. She has an associate's degree in business, with a certificate in Accounting. Assistant Director of Finance/Town Accountant Patricia DuFresne has enthusiastically recommended that I appoint Katie as the Assistant Town Accountant. Please consider this as formal notification to the Board of this appointment. I would respectfully request that the Board consider ratifying this appointment at Monday's meeting.
2. The Historic Districts Commission has requested that I appoint Daniel MacInnis to the Commission. Please consider this as formal notification of this appointment with an ending date of June 30, 2027. I would respectfully request that the Board consider ratifying this appointment at Monday's meeting.
3. Enclosed with this Report is a copy the Declaration of Trust for the Peter Twomey Youth Center Trust Fund. The Commissioners of Trust Funds have requested that the Select Board vote to accept/create this fund. They will be in attendance at Monday's meeting. I would respectfully request that the Board consider approving this Declaration at Monday's meeting.

**Select Board**  
**Weekly Agenda Update/Report**  
**November 25, 2024**  
**page two**


4. I have no specific FY 2026 Budget update for the Board at Monday's meeting. I will provide any necessary update at the meeting.
  
5. Please see an update to the Select Board's Meeting Schedule through the end of the Year:  

Monday, December 2, 2024	-No Meeting
Monday, December 9, 2024	-Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, December 16, 2024	-Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, December 23, 2024	-No Meeting
Monday, December 30, 2024	-No Meeting
Monday, January 6, 2025	-Regularly Scheduled Meeting

**ITEMS FOR SELECT BOARD CONSIDERATION AND ACTION**

1. The TREAD Committee has requested time on Monday's Agenda to provide the Board with an update on their activities/efforts.
  
2. I would respectfully request that the Board consider approving a One-Day Wine and Malt Beverages License for the Friends of Prescott for Open Mic Night to be held on Friday, December 13, 2024 from 6:30 p.m.- 9:30 p.m.

MWH/rjb  
enclosure



**Town of Groton**  
**Tax Classification Hearing**

Fiscal Year 2025

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**Purpose of the Hearing**

To adopt the Town's Tax Policy by allocating or classifying the tax levy among the property types.

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**Action Required by the Select Board**

- ▶ Vote for a single tax rate or consider a shift of the tax levy from the Residential class to the Commercial, Industrial and Personal Property classes.
- ▶ Vote whether to adopt a Residential exemption.
- ▶ Vote whether to adopt a small commercial exemption.

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### Property Assessment Review

- ▶ Fiscal Year 2025 was an Interim Revaluation Year for the Assessing Department with the Department of Revenue certifying assessed values on October 29, 2024.
- ▶ Groton's Next Certification year is FY 2027.
- ▶ Arms length sales that occurred during the Calendar Year 2023 were used to establish the Fiscal Year 2025 Assessment.
- ▶ MGL requires that Assessors value properties at a median assessment to sales ratio (ASR) of 90% to 110%.
- ▶ For FY25, the Assessors used a median ASR of 95% for our largest class.

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### Property Assessment Review (continued)

Property Class	111	112	113	114	115	111-112	113-112	20%
FY 2024 # of Parcels	1,228	290	25	113	11	12	102	18
ASR Ratios vs. Sale Prices/FY 2025 Reassessed Values								
Total # of Sales > \$1,000	113	37	2	11	8	3	21	11
# Arms Length Sales	96	24	1	11	8	1	8	3
% of Sales > \$1,000	13%	13%	8%	10%	7%	2%	8%	13%
Median ASR	0.95	0.95	0.99	0.97	0.98	0.96	0.96	0.94

Source: DLS LA15 Statistics

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### Property Assessment Review (continued)

% Change in Average Assessments by Property Type

Property Type	2023	2024	% Change
Single Family	\$694,934	\$707,877	1.86%
Condominium	\$396,564	\$442,237	11.52%
Two Family	\$661,260	\$668,927	1.16%
Commercial	\$868,316	\$832,734	-4.10%
Industrial	\$774,000	\$527,383	-31.86%
Personal Property	\$326,364	\$332,718	1.958%

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### New Growth

- ▶ New Growth is defined by the DOR as a dollar increase in the annual levy limit that reflects additions to the community's tax base since the last fiscal year.
- ▶ New Growth was certified on October 29, 2024 at \$25,307,020 in Assessed value or \$381,883 in Tax Levy Growth (based on the FY24 tax rate of \$15.09).

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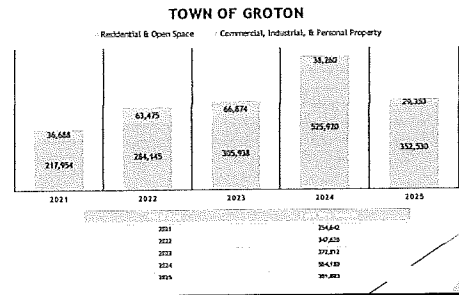
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### New Growth Value




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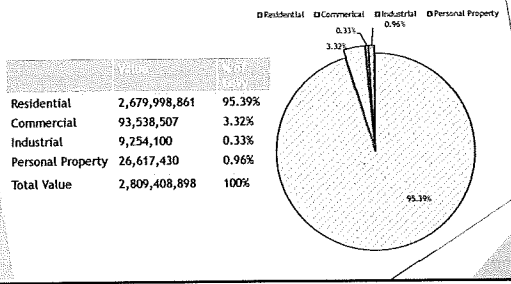
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### Fiscal 2024 Value by Class




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### Historical Percent of the Levy by Class

2021	94.33 %	5.67 %
2022	94.26 %	5.74 %
2023	94.35%	5.65%
2024	95.07%	4.93%
2025	95.39%	4.61%

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### Establishing the Tax Rate

- ▶ FY24 Levy Limit: \$36,832,663
  - ▶ 2.5% allowed growth: \$920,817
  - ▶ New Growth: \$381,883
  - ▶ FY25 Levy Limit: \$38,135,363 (Baseline for FY25 calculations)
  - ▶ Exclusions: \$4,732,787
    - ▶ High School (5/99) \$384,622 Library Roof (2/20) \$76,948
    - ▶ Central Fire (4/14) \$488,313 Flo Ro Constr (5/21) \$470,900
    - ▶ Senior Center (5/18) \$505,188 Flo Ro Constr #2 (5/21) \$1,503,450
    - ▶ DPW Facility (5/19) \$319,345 Flo Ro Constr #3 (5/21) \$1,024,709
- Maximum amount to be raised:  
 \$38,135,363 + \$4,773,475 = \$42,908,838

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### How the Tax Rate is Calculated

$$\frac{\text{FY 2024 Property Tax Levy } \$42,843,485}{\text{FY 2024 Town's Taxable Valuation } \$2,809,408,898} = 0.01525$$

or  
 \$15.25 per thousand dollars of assessed value if a uniform rate is selected tonight.  
 The Full shift of 1.5% = a \$14.70 residential tax rate and a \$22.63 Commercial/Industrial/ Personal Property Tax Rate.

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### Historical Tax Rate Year to Year

Year	Rate
2016	\$18.78
2017	\$18.26
2018	\$18.67
2019	\$18.11
2020	\$17.38
2021	\$17.60
2022	\$17.19
2023	\$15.64
2024	\$15.09
2025	\$15.25

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### Selection of Minimum Residential Factor

- ▶ A residential factor of 1 will result in the taxation of all property at the same rate (single tax rate).
- ▶ A residential factor of less than 1 increases the share of the levy raised by Commercial, Industrial and Personal Property (CIP) owners and reduces the share paid by the residential property owners (split tax rate).
- ▶ The minimum residential factor for the Town of Groton for Fiscal Year 2025 is 00.9759, as determined by the Massachusetts Department of Revenue.

Source: DLS - LA-9 Options

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### Residential Factor/ Split Tax Rate

- ▶ MGL Ch.40 § 56 allows a shift of up to 1.5 of the tax burden between the classes of property.
- ▶ The impact on the Property Class rate is as follows:

Residential Factor	Property Class Rate	Residential Rate	Commercial/Industrial/Personal Property (CIP)	Residential Property	Commercial/Industrial/Personal Property (CIP)	Total
1.00	\$15.25	\$15.25	\$40,869,986	\$1,973,499	\$42,843,485	
1.25	\$15.07	\$19.06	\$40,376,610	\$2,466,875	\$42,843,485	
1.50	\$14.88	\$22.88	\$39,883,234	\$2,960,251	\$42,843,485	

Source: DLS Options Table

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### Average Property Examples

Single Tax Rate:  
 Avg. Single Family House Value = \$707,877 x \$15.25/1000 = \$10,795.12  
 Avg. Commercial Value = \$832,734 x \$15.25/1000 = \$12,699.19

Split Rate with CIP 125%:  
 Avg. Single Family House Value = \$707,877 x \$15.07/1000 = \$10,667.70  
 Avg. Commercial Value = \$832,734 x \$19.06/1000 = \$15,871.91

Split Rate with CIP 150%:  
 Avg. Single Family House Value = \$707,877 x \$14.88/1000 = \$10,533.24  
 Avg. Commercial Value = \$832,734 x \$22.88/1000 = \$19,052.95

To save the Residential taxpayer \$262 we would have to shift the burden to the Commercial taxpayer and increase their tax bill by \$6,354.

\*Average values are rounded

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### Historical Recap of Average Single Family Tax Bill

2016	\$401,426	0.76%	\$7,539	\$260	3.57%
2017	\$428,395	6.72%	\$7,822	\$283	3.75%
2018	\$428,624	0.05%	\$8,002	\$180	2.30%
2019	\$458,228	6.91%	\$8,299	\$297	3.71%
2020	\$498,184	8.72%	\$8,658	\$359	4.33%
2021	\$506,071	1.58%	\$8,907	\$249	2.88%
2022	\$535,100	5.74%	\$9,198	\$291	3.27%
2023	\$633,985	18.48%	\$9,916	\$718	7.81%
2024	\$694,934	9.61%	\$10,487	\$571	5.76%
2025	\$707,877	1.86%	\$10,795	\$308	2.94%

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### Selection of Open Space Discount

- ▶ There are no parcels in Groton currently classified as open space.
- ▶ Open Space is defined in Massachusetts General Law as:  
 MGL Chapter 59 Sec 2A(b) "Class two, open-space", Land which is not otherwise classified and which is not taxable under the provisions of chapters sixty-one, sixty-one A or sixty-one B, or taxable under a permanent conservation restriction, and land not held for the production of income but is maintained in an open or natural condition, which contributes significantly to the benefit and enjoyment of the public".
- ▶ The open space discount has a maximum discount of 25%.

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### Residential Exemption

\* This option must be established early in the year so that residents can apply for the Exemption prior to the setting of the tax rate.

- ▶ Must be owner-occupied, primary residence to qualify and must apply annually prior to the Classification Hearing.
- ▶ A residential exemption is a redistribution of the tax levy among Residential property owners.
- ▶ Typically, the intent of the Residential Exemption is to shift the tax burden to rental and vacation properties.
- ▶ Only 16 of 351 communities adopt a residential exemption:  
Barnstable, Boston, Brookline, Cambridge, Chelsea, Everett, Malden, Nantucket, Provincetown, Somerset, Somerville, Tisbury, Truro, Waltham, Watertown, Wellfleet

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### Granting a Small Commercial Exemption

- ▶ The Selectboard may adopt a small commercial exemption.
- ▶ This exemption is for commercial parcels (property class three) occupied by businesses with an average annual employment of not more than ten people during the previous calendar year and with assessed values of less than one million dollars.
- ▶ The intent of the exemption is to give a tax reduction to small commercial property owners at the expense of the larger commercial and industrial parcels.
- ▶ The Board can choose an exemption that reduces the taxable valuation of each eligible parcel by a percentage of up to 10%.

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### Classification Vote Summary

- ▶ 1. Vote a Selection of a Minimum Residential Factor  
A Factor of 1 yields a single rate and would result in a \$15.25 rate.
- ▶ 2. Vote on whether to adopt a Residential Exemption  
With a low number of non-owner-occupied properties, this shifts a portion of the residential levy from lower-valued residential properties to higher-valued properties. Only 16 communities in the Commonwealth have a Residential Exemption.
- ▶ 3. Vote on whether to adopt a Small Commercial Exemption  
This exemption is for commercial properties valued under \$1 million and occupied by businesses with less than ten employees. This exemption benefits property owners, typically not small business tenants. This shifts up to 10% of the value of those properties to other commercial and industrial properties.

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The Peter Twomey Youth Center  
Declaration of Trust

This Declaration of Trust is made this th day of , 2024 by and between The Groton-Dunstable Regional School Committee and the Town of Groton's Selectboard and Commissioners of Trust Funds.

ARTICLE 1

Name

This Trust shall be known as the Peter Twomey Youth Center Trust Fund.

ARTICLE 11

History

Joseph (Joe) DiPietro was born in Boston's North End of Italian immigrants. He later moved with his parents and sister to Brookline, Massachusetts where he lived in the same three-story brownstone until his death in March, 2021. He graduated from Brookline High School in 1957. He received his Bachelor's Degree from Northeastern University in 1961 and later in 1968 he received his Masters from the State College of Boston.

Mr. DiPietro, as he was known to all, was a 4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher that spent his entire career teaching young boys and girls in Groton. He began his career in 1965 at Groton Elementary, later to become Florence Roche Elementary, and retiring from the Prescott Elementary School in 1999.

Joe taught many subjects but his passion was for history He was always the person to go to when a question of history came up and his encyclopedic memory of events made him greatly admired among his peers. He loved bringing history a little closer to his students so he began the Fifth Grade Boston Field Trip so that students and teachers would have a better perspective on the history of the country and the state. The day included stops at the State House, the USS Constitution, the Tea Party Ship, Faneuil Hall and the Old South Meeting House. Joe would relish the looks on his students faces as history came alive.

Another passion that Joe had was for sports. Although he had a disability affecting one of his arms, he never allowed this to slow him down or affect his game. He was known as an excellent athlete in high school, playing baseball, tennis and basketball. At Groton, recess would always find Joe organizing a football or kickball game with his class taking on any other class that would dare to accept the challenge. One former student remembers that during recess, Mr. DiPietro would hit the ball extra-long so that the kids would have to run faster and farther to be the first to get it.

Mr. DiPietro took a keen interest when the Groton-Dunstable Regional School District began offering Extended Day Care along with After School classes and programs. He took particular notice when the facility that housed these programs was dedicated to Peter Twomey. Peter was a former student who had his promising young life cut short in an accident the summer of 1997. Even after his retirement, Joe would contact the Director to see what types of programs were being offered and how many were enrolled.

Mr. DiPietro, through his generous donation and subsequent creation of the Peter Twomey Youth Center Fund has insured that after school programs and activities will be available to all students.

#### ARTICLE 111 Irrevocable Trust

This Trust is made with general charitable intent, is irrevocable, and may not be amended. The Donor intends that this Trust shall continue indefinitely to accomplish the purposes of the Trust

#### ARTICLE IV Management of Trust

The Donor has provided the sum of two hundred thousand dollars (\$200,000) to the Commissioners of Trust Funds at the time of acceptance of this Declaration of Trust, such funds and any later additions thereto to be managed and disbursed in accordance with the provisions of this Declaration of Trust. The principal thereof shall be invested; the income therefrom shall be employed for the purposes and objectives described herein. Any net income which is not disbursed may be held as retained earnings, provided that the amount of retained earnings at the end of any

fiscal year shall not exceed ten percent (10%) of the value of the total Trust assets. If it ever appears that the amount of the retained earnings may exceed the limit of ten percent (10%) of the total Trust assets, the Commissioners shall promptly add a portion of the retained earnings to principal or make additional disbursements. Any earnings or retained earnings that are added to the principal shall be deemed to be subject to the provisions, limitations and conditions of this Trust with regard to the corpus of the Trust.

The Commissioners of the Trust Funds of the Town of Groton shall keep a separate account of the total funds received, invested, earned, retained and disbursed as part of the Peter Twomey Youth Center Fund. On an annual basis the Commissioners of Trust Funds shall prepare a written statement of the income, expenses, disbursements and other financial transactions in the Peter Twomey Youth Center Fund. Which written statement shall be available for public examination.

In the event that any additional amounts are offered to the Town of Groton or the Commissioners of Trust Fund as additions to the Peter Twomey Youth Center Fund, the Town of Groton and the Commissioners of Trust Funds agree to accept such gifts and to add them to the amount received at the original acceptance of this Trust. All such amounts shall be treated as additions to the principal balance of the Peter Twomey Youth Center Fund unless otherwise directed by donor and shall be administered in accordance with the stated purposes of the Trust, without any further formal act of acceptance by the Town of Groton or the Commissioners of Trust Funds other than the acknowledgement by the Commissioners to the donor of the gift.

## ARTICLE V

### Selection Criteria

As per the directive of the original Last Will and Testament of Joseph P. DiPietro, it states:

I devise the sum of Two Hundred (\$200,000) thousand Dollars to the Groton-Dunstable Regional High School District, Peter Twomey Youth Center for Extended Day and Community Education of 345 Main Street, Groton, Massachusetts, 01450 to be applied toward the maintenance

and operation of the Peter Twomey Youth Center and for all other general purposes as determined by the Board of Directors of the Peter Twomey Youth Center.

In addition, by creating this Fund, it shall be noted that if, in the future, the Peter Twomey Youth Center ceases to exist Funds may be used for the support of after school activities associated with the Groton-Dunstable Regional School District. In addition, if, in the future, the Board of Directors are no longer able or willing to participate, all determinations of expenditures will be made by the Commissioners of Trust Funds.

ARTICLE VI  
Selection Process

Applications for assistance to attend an after school program will be submitted through the Commissioners of Trust Funds, all other applications will be submitted by the Director of the Peter Twomey Youth Center.

ARTICLE VII  
Management & Disbursement of Funds

The Commissioners of Trust Funds shall accumulate ten percent (10%) of the net income from the Peter Twomey Youth Center Fund and shall add such amount to the corpus annually. The Commissioners of Trust Funds may, at their discretion, dispose of not more than ninety percent (90%) of the net income of the Trust annually, subject to the terms and conditions of this Declaration of Trust.

## ARTICLE VIII

### Powers of Trustees

The Trustees, in addition to and not in limitation of all common law and statutory authority, shall have the following powers:

- (a) To sell, pledge, mortgage or lease without application to any court, any real or personal property or securities held by them as Trustees and to invest and reinvest or otherwise use the proceeds according to the provisions of this Trust and to execute and deliver such deeds of conveyance or other instruments of transfer as may be necessary to pass proper title to the same;
- (b) To invest and reinvest the trust estate from time to time in any property, real or personal, including (without limiting the generality of the foregoing language) securities of domestic and foreign corporations, investment trusts, bonds, preferred stock, common stocks and mortgages, even though such investments by reason of character, amount or lack of diversification would not be in the absence of this authority be considered appropriate for a trust investment;
- (c) To keep trust securities and other property, both real and personal, in bearer or unregistered names, or in the name of the Trustees, or in the name of a nominee, without indication of any fiduciary capacity or in the name of any corporate fiduciary appointed hereunder without disclosing its fiduciary capacity;
- (d) To employ such agents, brokers, investment counsel and legal counsel as they deem advisable and to pay reasonable fees for such services;
- (e) To determine in accordance with general accounting practice what shall be charged or credited to income and what to principal;
- (f) To accept any property and receive additions to the corpus of this Trust from any person, estate or entity during the term of this Trust.

It is the intention of the Donor to give the Trustees broad discretion in matters of management and administration of the Trust property and the foregoing enumeration of powers is not intended to exclude other powers reasonably incidental to such management.





**ACCEPTANCE BY TOWN OF GROTON AND COMMISSIONERS OF TRUST FUNDS**

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**Peter Cunningham, Selectperson**

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**Alison Manugian, Selectperson**

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**Becky Pine, Selectperson**

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**Mathew Pisani, Selectperson**

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**John Reilly, Selectperson**

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**Rachael Bielecki, Commissioner**

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**Martha McLure, Commissioner**

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**Joseph Twomey, Commissioner**

**COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS**

**Middlesex, ss**

**Then personally appeared the above named Select Board Members Peter Cunningham, Alison Manugian, Becky Pine, Mathew Pisani and John Reilly and Commissioners of Trust Funds Rachael Bielecki, Martha McLure and Joseph E. Twomey and acknowledged the foregoing instrument to be their free act and deed this      day of                      , 2024.**

**The above people personally appeared before me on this    , 2024.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Notary Public**

**My Commission Expires:**

**SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES  
VIRTUAL MEETING  
MONDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 2024  
UN-APPROVED**

**SB Members Virtually Present:** Alison Manugian, Chair; Becky Pine, Vice Chair; Matt Pisani; John Reilly; Peter Cunningham, Clerk;

**Also Virtually Present:** Mark Haddad, Town Manager; Kara Cruikshank, Executive Assistant to the Town Manager; Patricia DuFresne, Assistant Director of Finance/Town Accountant; Takashi Tada, Land Use Director/Town Planner; Melisa Doig, Human Resource Director; Jason Kauppi, Moderator; Megan Foster, Principal Assessor; Bud Robertson, Finance Committee Chair.

Ms. Manugian called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Ms. Pine reminded everyone about the Presidential Election tomorrow, November 5, 2024. She urged everyone to go out and vote.

Mr. Cunningham announced that Groton's Annual Veterans Day Ceremony will take place at the Fire Station on Monday, November 11, 2024, at 11:00 a.m. He encouraged everyone to attend.

Town Planner Takashi Tada provided an update on the Master Plan. He said the Planning Board is expected to release a Final Draft Report as early as tomorrow, Tuesday, November 5th. This will be the first complete draft, and the Planning Board will present it on Tuesday, November 19, 2024, at 7:00 PM.

Ms. Manugian explained that during the Tuesday, October 29th Select Board meeting, the Pay Your Fair Share Initiative group made many comments. She chose not to engage in the discussion because she was waiting for a follow-up conversation with the Attorney of the Day from the Ethics Commission to confirm that she did not have a conflict of interest regarding the PILOT discussion. The attorney has since affirmed that she does not have a conflict. She said that there were issues raised by that group that were concerning. She encouraged everyone to stay tuned as the Working Group gathers more information and the budget develops. She explained that the town is fortunate to have a Town Manager who has increased PILOT revenues over the past decade.

**PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD #1**

None

**TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT**

**1. Fiscal Year 2025 First Quarter Financial Report.**

Mr. Haddad said the First Quarter Financial Report was ready to review. Ms. Patricia DuFresne, Assistant Finance Director/Town Accountant, and Mr. Bud Robertson, Finance Committee Chair, were virtually present at the meeting to help answer any questions. He thanked Ms. DuFresne for putting the Report together.

Mr. Haddad explained that revenues are slightly behind last year's pace. He said they exceeded the previous year's figures for the Local Option Meals Tax and the Local Option Room Occupancy Tax. He said Marijuana Revenue has been received for the first time. Payments in Lieu of Taxes have also been received. The Groton Hill Music Ticket Fee continues to do well, and the Country Club revenue has increased by \$40,000 compared to last year and continues to do well. Building permits are similar to the previous year. He said that investment income has decreased to half of last year's amount but will make budget. The real estate collection is about the same as well. Mr. Haddad said he is very pleased with the results from the first quarter. He said they have been doing their best since FY22. Mr. Haddad said the economy is doing great in Groton. Regarding expenditures, he is comfortable with the level of expenditures and the Department Heads continue to do a great job managing their budgets.

**2. Update on FY 2025 Select Board Goals.**

Mr. Haddad reviewed the Board's goals and objectives and provided updates (reference the attached Goals of the Groton Select Board). He said that he would provide another update in February.

**3. Update from the Town Manager on the Town Manager's PILOT Working Group- Discuss/Consider Final Non-Profit Partners for PILOT Consideration.**

The Town Managers Working Group on Studying PILOTs continues to work diligently to determine the best way to address PILOTs from Groton's Nonprofit Partners. Mr. Haddad said they believe the Working Group's respectful and deliberate approach is in the best interest of the Town of Groton, its residents, and Non-Profit Partners. He stressed the methodical nature of their work and looked at every issue. He said the Working Group has done a great job and is working collaboratively with our non-profit partners. The Board received a memorandum from the Town Manager's Working Group, which provided an update on their activities and requested input on which additional organizations they should contact to seek a Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT). He explained they completed their review of the 590 exempt properties/parcels in Groton and have established nine rules of exemption that eliminated a substantial amount of the 590 parcels from consideration.

Mr. Haddad reviewed a spreadsheet that listed the rules and the parcels under consideration. The nine rules of exemption are as follows: properties owned by the state; federal property; properties purchased with Community Preservation Act funds; properties under Conservation Restrictions; properties subject to Article 97; properties controlled by the Select Board; properties funded within the Tax Levy; entities with a total value under \$750,000 that fall below the average tax bill; properties owned by Enterprise Funds; and properties owned by separate political entities. Mr. Haddad hoped the Board would agree with the listed exemptions. As a result of these exclusions, the Group is considering approaching 21 organizations for PILOTs. He said that 9 out of the 21 organizations currently pay PILOTs. He said the Group would establish formal criteria for outreach to organizations. He said the Working Group would like additional input and advice from the Select Board before it can continue formulating a final proposal.

He explained that several organizations did not fall under the rules of exemption and wanted to discuss whether they would be comfortable requesting a PILOT. For example, this includes churches, the Community School, the Forestry Foundation, the Mass Audubon Society, and the Conservation Trust. Ms. Pine suggested that she would support an exemption for any house of worship. She said that most

of these institutions have no income source other than their members, who are already residents paying property taxes. She said they should understand when looking at the other organizations what sources of income they have to come up with to pay a PILOT and what they are providing to the town in a nonmonetary way. Mr. Cunningham said it was important to look at what municipal services these organizations provide to the town and that these should be factored in. Mr. Haddad asked how they felt about the Groton Conservation Trust and New England Forestry Foundation being on the list. Ms. Pine disclosed that her husband is a Trustee of the Conservation Trust. She mentioned that the Conservation Trust contributes significantly to the town and is exclusively a Groton organization. All of the land they own is open to the public, and they do not have any sources of income. Ms. Pine said the New England Forestry can sell their land, and they get income from logging it. She suggested looking into more information about the Mass Audubon Society. Mr. Haddad said that at their next Working Group meeting, they will look into community benefits and the impact on municipal services. Mr. Cunningham believes the impact on services is huge. Mr. Reilly pointed out that the Conservation Trust properties return to the tax rolls if no restrictions are in place.

The Board discussed whether places of worship should be exempt. Ms. DuFresne emphasized the importance of being cautious about whom they exempt and stressed the need to justify their exemption. Mr. Pisani agreed with Ms. DuFresne. Mr. Haddad said he wants to be careful when compiling the final report. He said they need to be cautious when going through the process. He feels comfortable leaving the 21 organizations on the list and figuring out the next steps. Then, reach out to the organizations to ask for a PILOT request. He recommended leaving the organizations on the list. Mr. Robertson suggested going through the process. Ms. Pine said they must be careful about sending letters, and they must be well thought out. Mr. Cunningham said there is value in contacting and conversing with the churches. Mr. Haddad believes that the property tax system in Massachusetts is unfair; individuals are paying for services they do not receive. He explained that it is based on your property value and the budget passed at the Town Meeting. He said they need to come up with a uniform approach so that everyone gets addressed fairly. Mr. Haddad said the feedback from the Board was very helpful and thanked them.

#### **4. Update on Fiscal Year 2026 Budget.**

Mr. Haddad explained that, following the Fiscal Year 2026 Budget Guidance provided by the Finance Committee and the Select Board, he would like to present his proposed timeline for completing the Proposed Budget. A Kick-off Budget meeting with the Department Heads is scheduled for November 14, 2024. He explained that Budgets will be due by Monday, December 2, 2024, and he plans to hold meetings with various Department Heads and Boards during the week of December 9th. After that, he will work with the Finance Team, the Towns of Dunstable, and the Groton Dunstable Regional School District to develop a Proposed Budget by January 31, 2025. The Proposed Capital Budget is due on December 31, 2024, and will be submitted then. He expressed excitement about the extra thirty days, which will make a big difference.

Based on the guidance from the Finance Committee and Select Board, limiting any municipal spending growth to \$475,000, would leave \$1,487,042 in remaining new revenues. This amount would offset the current anticipated GDRSD Assessment increase of \$2,466,882. He then shared a high-level Preliminary Summary for Fiscal Year 2026. Mr. Haddad explained that the Town of Dunstable would need to come

up with approximately \$466,000 to match the \$1.4 million in remaining new revenues, putting them into an override situation under the current Regional Agreement. He said there is a lot of work to be done in the next 60-sixty days.

**5. Proposed Select Board Meeting Schedule through the End of the Year.**

Monday, November 11, 2024	No Meeting (Veteran’s Day)
Monday, November 18, 2024	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, November 25, 2024	Tax Classification hearing
Monday, December 2, 2024	No Meeting
Monday, December 9, 2024	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, December 16, 2024	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, December 23, 2024	No Meeting
Monday, December 30, 2024	No Meeting
Monday, January 6, 2024	Regularly Scheduled Meeting

**ITEMS FOR SELECT BOARD CONSIDERATION AND APPROVAL**

**1. Discussion- Improve Community Engagement at Town Meetings.**

Moderator Jason Kauppi was virtually present for the discussion. Ms. Manugian said this topic was raised at the 2024 Fall Town Meeting, and the speaker suggested that this be placed on a future agenda. Mr. Kauppi stressed that they would like every registered voter to attend Town Meetings and Elections. He questioned what they were striving for, whether there was a specific target, and which barriers they could address to encourage new participants to join. The turnout would have been much better if he had known all the answers. He said everyone has choices and priorities but is open to suggestions on actions they can take.

Ms. Manugian emphasized the importance of voting. Mr. Cunningham mentioned that turnout for Town Meetings is driven by what is included on the warrant. He expressed uncertainty about whether anyone can change the dynamic and suggested writing editorials explaining how Town Meeting functions. Mr. Kauppi suggested they may need to find new ways to reach people, possibly through a podcast or The Groton Channel. Ms. Pine stated that she did not have a perfect solution but that it was essential to boost attendance and explained that every vote matters. Ms. Manugian and Mr. Haddad proposed adding an email address on the website for the Town Meeting and also liked the idea of a podcast. Mr. Robertson said some people think the Town is being run efficiently unless there is a hot topic. Mr. Haddad and Mr. Kauppi will meet before the next Town Meeting.

**OTHER BUSINESS**

**SELECT BOARD LIASON REPORTS**

None

**Public Comment Period #2**

None

B. Nashoba Valley Medical Working Group-Mr. Haddad mentioned that there will be a meeting next week to explore various options. There are many subgroups involved, and the group is very active.

Safe Street Working Group- Mr. Haddad said the Groton Police Department is gathering information about what it does and how it enforces speed limits. The Highway Department is looking into an engineering study to determine whether improvements can be made at the intersection of Route 40 and 119. Mr. Haddad will report back to the Board after their next meeting.

**Approval of the Regularly Scheduled Meeting Minutes of October 21, 2024**

*Mr. Cunningham made a motion to approve the minutes of the regularly scheduled meeting of October 21, 2024. Ms. Pine seconded the motion. Roll Call: Roll Call: Pine-aye; Reilly-aye; Pisani-aye; Manugian-aye; Cunningham-aye.*

**Approval of the Regularly Scheduled Meeting Minutes of October 29, 2024**

*Ms. Pine made a motion to approve the minutes of the regularly scheduled meeting of October 29, 2024. Mr. Pisani seconded the motion. Roll Call: Roll Call: Pine-aye; Reilly-aye; Pisani-aye; Manugian-aye; Cunningham-aye.*

**Executive Session**

Mr. Haddad asked the Board to make a motion to enter Executive Session Pursuant to M.G.L., c.30A, §21(a), Clause 3 – “To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation If an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigation position of the public body and the chair so declares”- Purposes- Collective Bargaining.

And not to return to open session.

*Ms. Pine made a motion to enter into Executive Session. Mr. Cunningham seconded the motion. Roll Call: Pine-aye; Manugian-aye; Reilly-aye; Cunningham-aye; Pisani-aye.*

The meeting was adjourned at 7:23 p.m. Respectively submitted by Kara Cruikshank, Executive Assistant to the Town Manager.