





## TOWN OF GROTON

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## Select Board

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

**Town Manager**  
Mark W. Haddad

**To:** *Select Board*

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

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

**Date:** *March 23, 2026*

### TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

In addition to the Town Manager's Report, Items for Select Board Consideration and Action and a review of the Ongoing Issues List, there is one item scheduled on Monday's Agenda. The Destination Groton Committee will be in to present their Groton 2036 Ten Year Vision Plan to the Board. I had previously sent you the Plan under separate cover.

1. Enclosed with this Report is my proposed Town Meeting PowerPoint Presentation for the Squannacook River Dam Repair. I would like to review this with the Board at Monday's meeting. If acceptable to the Board, I will then post it on the Website for public consumption prior to Town Meeting. In addition, please note that I will be attending the Community Preservation Committee Meeting on Monday night to request an out-of-cycle application for the repair of the Dam. Depending on the outcome of that meeting, I will adjust the final three slides if necessary. We can discuss this in more detail at Monday's meeting.
2. With regard to the FY 2027 Budget Update, I will be meeting with the Finance Committee on Tuesday, March 24<sup>th</sup> to hopefully finalize the Budget (with the exception of the Groton Dunstable Regional School District Operating Assessment). In addition, as you are aware, the FY 2027 Capital Plan requests an appropriation of \$1.4 million to install an irrigation system at the Groton Country Club, along with improvements on holes 1, 2 and 7. A hallmark of our success in delivering these projects on time and on budget is going out to bid prior to Town Meeting and coming to Town Meeting with "Bids in Hand". This has been an extremely successful strategy over my 17½ years as your Town Manager. Unfortunately, the Consultant/Contractor on this project failed to prepare the bid specifications in time to have this bid and brought before the 2026 Spring Town Meeting. Therefore, I will be removing this request from the Capital Budget that will come before the Spring Town Meeting and bring it back in the Fall, 2026. Our plan will be to bid it over the summer contingent on the Fall Town Meeting approval, with work beginning in November, 2026. This is the same start time we planned for if we were to get approval at the Spring Town Meeting. Delaying it until the Fall is in the best interest of the residents and taxpayers of Groton. By alerting you now of our plan, there should be no issue with asking the Fall Town Meeting for approval.

**Select Board**  
**Weekly Agenda Update/Report**  
**March 23, 2026**  
**page two**

3. Please see an update to the meeting schedule that will get you through the Spring Town Meeting:

Monday, March 30, 2026	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, April 6, 2026 -	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, April 13, 2026 -	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, April 20, 2026 -	No Meeting – (Patriot’s Day Holiday)
Monday, April 27, 2026 -	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Saturday, May 2, 2026 -	2026 Spring Town Meeting

**ITEMS FOR SELECT BOARD CONSIDERATION AND ACTION**

1. Please be advised that the Board of Registrars, at their posted meeting on March 11, 2026, voted unanimously to recommend that the Select Board vote to opt into In Person Early Voting for the May 19, 2026 Town Election. Should the Select Board agree, you will need to vote to opt into In Person Early Voting for this Election and vote to include the following hours during the early voting Period:

Mon, May 11:	8am-7pm
Tues, May 12:	8am-4pm
Wed, May 13:	8am-4pm
Thurs, May 14:	8am-4pm
Fri, May 15:	8am-1pm

Town Clerk Grace Bannasch will attend Monday’s meeting to answer any questions the Board may have with regard to this issue.

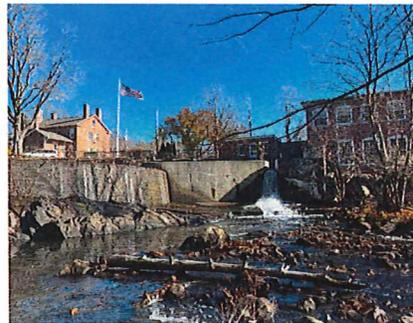
2. I would respectfully request that the Select Board vote to approve a One Day Wine and Malt Beverage License for the Friends of Prescott for Open Mic Night to be held on Friday, April 10, 2026 from 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.

MWH/rjb  
enclosure



# Squannacook River Dam

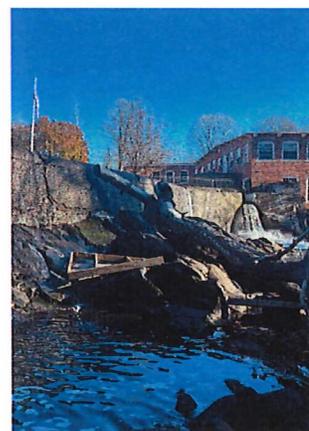
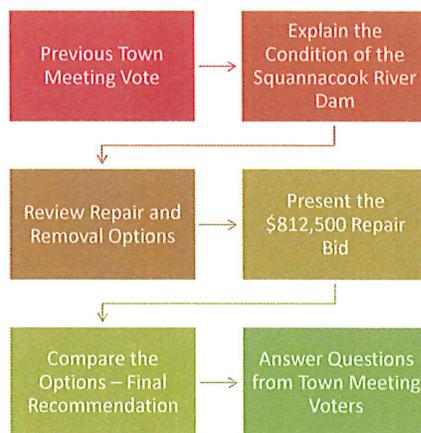
Proposed Dam Repair Project  
2026 Spring Town Meeting  
Town of Groton, Massachusetts



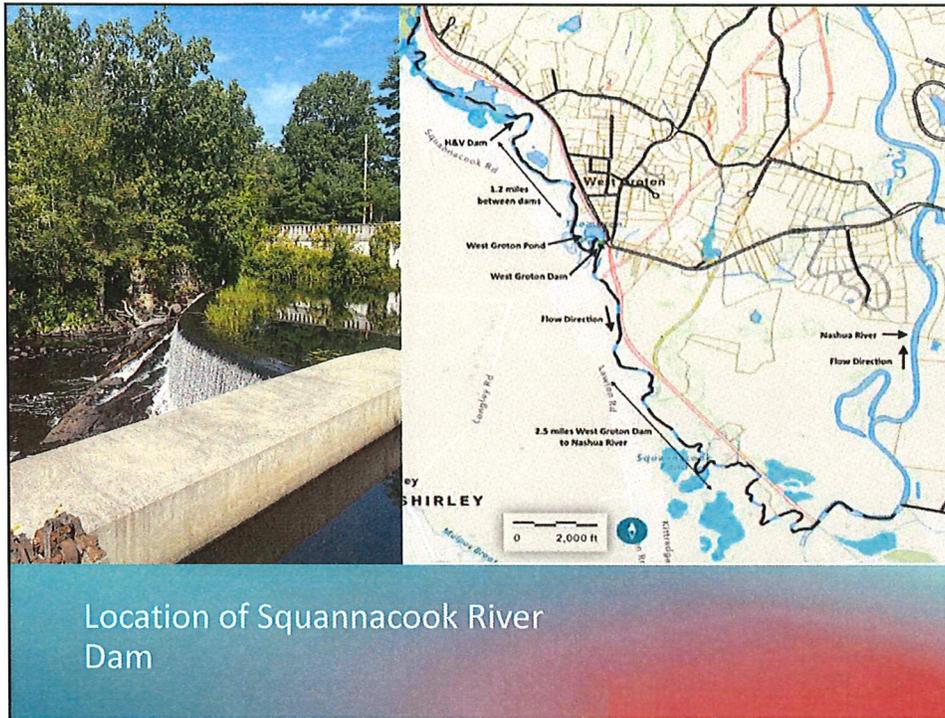
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## Summary of Presentation



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## Previous Town Meeting Vote

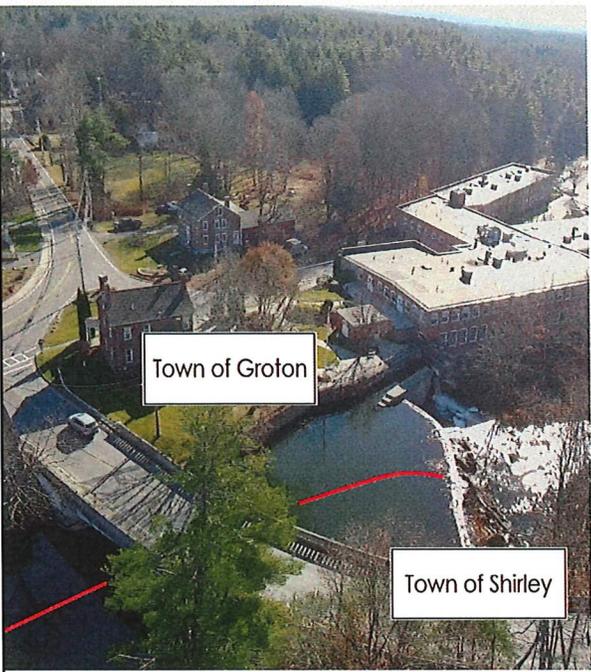
2024 Fall Town Meeting  
Appropriated \$160,250 to hire  
necessary professionals to  
determine the costs and impacts  
for both the removal and repair of  
the Squannacook River Dam

Haley & Aldrich, Inc. was hired to  
develop plans and specifications  
for the Repair of the Dam

Horsley Witten Group was hired  
to determine the  
feasibility/process to remove the  
Dam



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**Ownership and Jurisdiction**

- Dam Structure Sits Directly on Groton–Shirley Town Line
- Groton Owns One Portion of the Structure
- Opposite Side Privately Owned and Currently in Tax Title
- Shared Structure Complicates Long-term Management

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## Engineering Condition Assessment

- Professional Inspection Completed by Haley & Aldrich
- Dam Condition Rated as FAIR Overall
- Localized Deterioration Identified
- Repairs Required to Ensure Long-term Stability

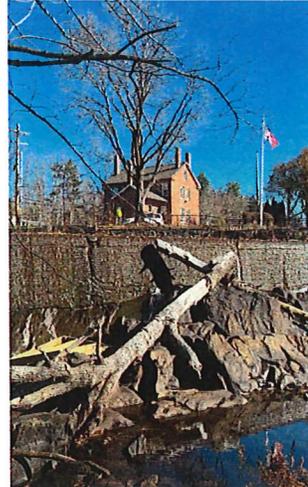


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## Current Condition of the Dam

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- Groton Side of Dam Repaired in 2013 at a Cost of \$500,000. Work Included Concrete Rehabilitation and Structural Repairs to Keep the Dam Compliant with State Dam-Safety Requirements.
- Splash Pad Needs Replacement.
- Cracking and Spauling (flaking) on Shirley Side of Dam.
- Shirley Side of Dam Requires Repair.
- Repair Retaining Wall on Shirley Side of River.

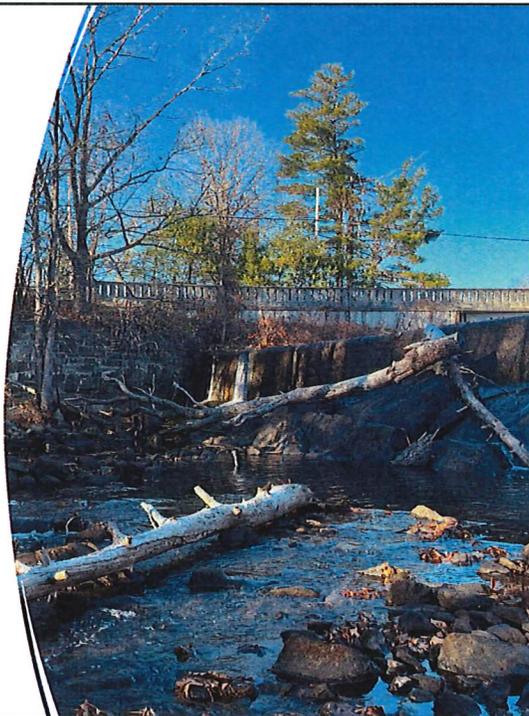


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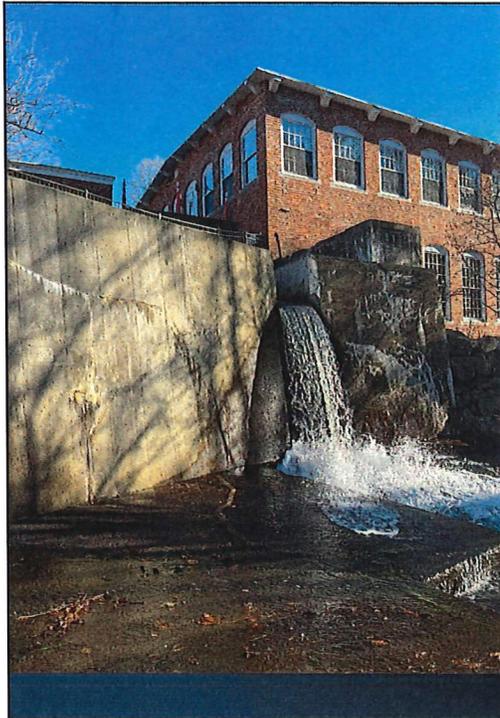
## Scope of Proposed Dam Repairs

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- Concrete structural stabilization
- Repair deteriorated spillway components
- Training wall repairs
- Vegetation removal and debris control
- Engineering oversight and inspection



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## Benefits of Repair

- Preserves West Groton Pond
- Maintains Historic Character of West Groton Village
- Protects Recreation and Community Value
- Addresses Structural Safety Concerns

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## Dam Removal Option

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Remove Existing Structure

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Restores One-Mile of Natural River Channel

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Stabilize Riverbanks and Sediment

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Extensive Environmental Permitting Required

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## Potential Benefits of Removal

- Eliminates Long-term Dam Liability and Risk
- Restores One-Mile of Free-flowing River
- Improves Aquatic Habitat
- Eliminates Future Maintenance

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## Potential Concerns with Removal

- Loss of West Groton Pond
- Significant change to Historic Village Landscape
- Temporary Construction Disruption
- Changes to Local Recreation Opportunities
- Uncertainty with What Replaces Pond

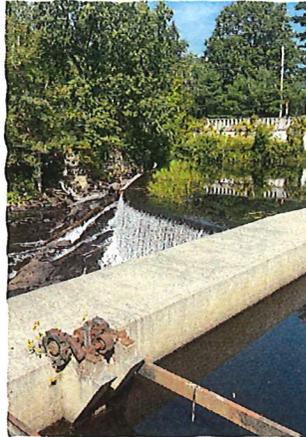


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## Why the Town Must Act

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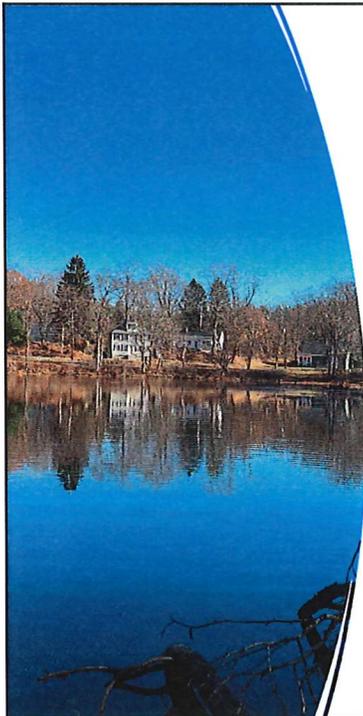
- Public Safety and Structural Risk Reduction
- Structural Deterioration has been Identified
- Massachusetts Dam Safety Regulations Require Action
- Preservation of Water Storage and Flood Control
- Protection of Existing Ecosystems

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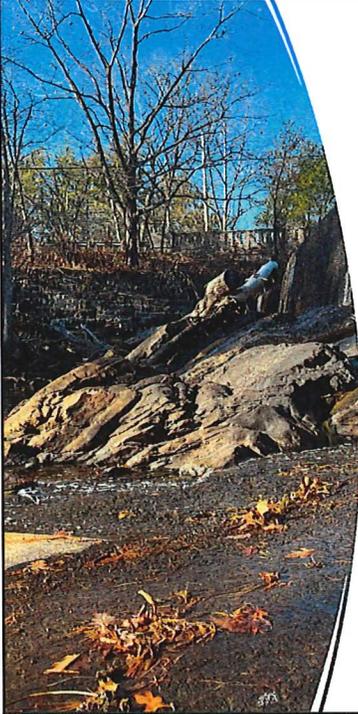
## What Happens if We Do Nothing

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- Structural Deterioration Continues
- Future Repair Costs Increase
- State Regulators Will Require Action
- The Town Faces Increased Liability Should the Dam Fail

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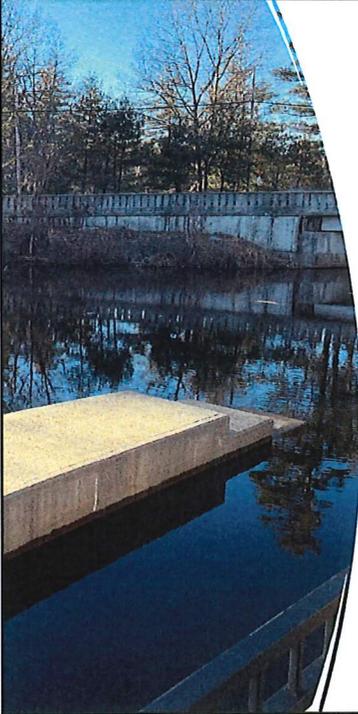


## Construction Bid Results

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COMPANY	BID
R. BATES & SONS, INC. STERLING, MA	\$ 502,500
LUCIANOS EXCAVATION TAUNTON, MA	\$ 513,938
T. FORD COMPANY, INC. GEORGETOWN, MA	\$ 546,445
NEW ENGLAND INFRASTRUCTURE, INC HUDSON, MA	\$1,145,000
DEFELICE CORPORATION DRACUT, MA	\$1,164,000
MASS BUILDING & BRIDGE, INC. NORFOLK, MA	\$1,177,500
UEL CONTRACTORS CLINTON, MA	\$1,365,000
SUMCO ECO CONTRACTING WAKEFIELD, MA	\$1,421,496

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## TOTAL COST OF REPAIR

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• <b>Base Bid</b>	<b>\$502,500</b>
• <b>Engineering Oversight</b>	<b>\$ 60,000</b>
• <b>Contingency</b>	<b>\$250,000</b>
- Includes \$150,000 for Water Control	
- Includes \$100,000 for Unforeseen	
• <b>Total Request</b>	<b>\$812,500</b>

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## Repair vs Removal Comparison

Category	Repair Dam	Remove Dam
Upfront Cost	\$812,500 Expense – Total Cost Covered by Town	Higher Construction Cost Expected (\$1.7 million to \$2 million) – Could Be Offset By Grant Funding
Pond	Preserved	Eliminated
Village Character	Maintained	Significant Change
Future Liability	Continues with Maintenance	Eliminated
Environmental Impact	Minimal Change	River Restoration

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## Tax Impact

Fiscal Year	Tax Rate Impact	Impact Average Tax Bill
2028	\$ 0.01	\$ 8
2029	\$ 0.03	\$ 23
2030	\$ 0.03	\$ 23
2031	\$ 0.03	\$ 23
2032	\$ 0.03	\$ 23
2033	\$ 0.03	\$ 23
2034	\$ 0.03	\$ 23
2035	\$ 0.03	\$ 23
2036	\$ 0.03	\$ 23
2037	\$ 0.03	\$ 23
2038	\$ 0.03	\$ 23
<b>Total Cost</b>		<b>\$ 238</b>

- Debt Exclusion – Bond
- Pay Back Over 11 Years



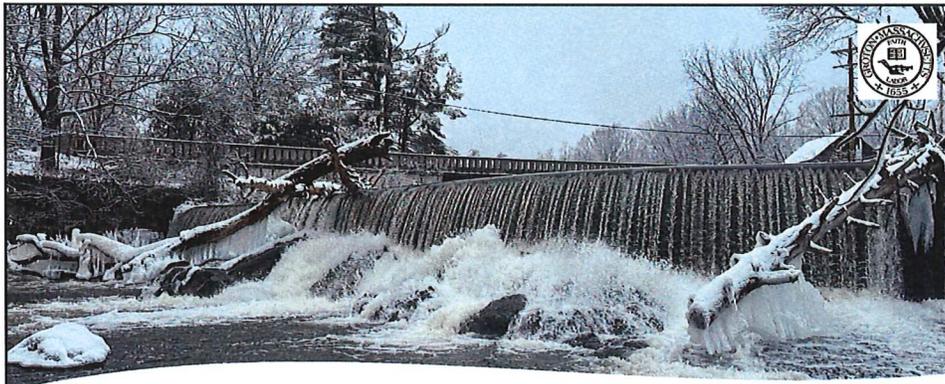
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## Recommendation

- Proceed with Repairing the Squannacook River Dam
- Construction Bid, Plus Contingency: \$812,500
- Preserves a Valued Community Asset
- Addresses Structural Issues and Preserves West Groton Village

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Town Meeting Approval Needed to Borrow Repair Funds – 2/3s Majority Required

## Approval Process

Should Town Meeting Approve the Funds, a Debt Exclusion Question on the May 19, 2026 Annual Town Election Ballot will Need to Pass by a Majority Vote

If Approved at Town Meeting and Ballot Vote, the Town will Proceed with the Repairs

Should Town Meeting Reject Funding the Repair, the Select Board will evaluate moving forward with the Removal of the Dam

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# SQUANNACOOK RIVER DAM

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THANK YOU

QUESTIONS?

Contact [townmanager@grotonma.gov](mailto:townmanager@grotonma.gov)  
For More Information





**FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING**  
Town Hall, 2nd Floor Meeting Room  
173 Main Street Groton, MA 01450  
Saturday, February 28, 2026 – 8:30 AM

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**The Finance Committee met jointly with the Select Board.**

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

Also Present: Town Manager – Mark Haddad, Town Accountant – Patricia A. DuFresne, Tax Assessor – Katie Kazanjian

Select Board members – Chair – Matt Pisani, Vice Chair – Becky Pine, Alison Manugian, John Reilly, Peter Cunningham

The meeting was opened at 8:30 AM.

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**MEETING MINUTES:**

- The Committee discussed the approval of minutes and agreed to postpone to the following meeting.
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**TOWN MANAGER PRESENTATION:**

Town Manager Mark Haddad provided a summary of changes to the FY2027 budget since its submission.

**Operating Budget Updates:**

- The Nashoba Tech assessment came in \$9,000 higher than budgeted.
- The bond bid for the Florence Roche School was finalized, and debt service numbers were updated to reflect the current interest rate, resulting in a lower figure than originally projected.

- The use of free cash and the Fire/EMS fund transfers were both reduced as a result of lower debt service.
- Health insurance came in at a 6.24% increase. The Town had been carrying 14%, resulting in approximately \$90,000 in savings. The average this year was 8.39%, and Groton came in below average due to a younger workforce that is using less of the resource.
- State aid was adjusted to reflect the Governor's budget, which carries approximately \$20,000 more than previously budgeted.
- The overall budget decreased from the January submission. The Town is currently \$85,159 under the anticipated levy limit for FY2027.

#### Levy Limit and Fiscal Notes:

- Town Manager Haddad stated that he does not wish to commit the \$85,159 surplus at this time to anything specific. Potential uses include: addressing the upcoming quinquennial revaluation, offsetting the snow and ice deficit, and keeping it for the first 50% payment toward the regional dispatch center in FY2028.
- Dunstable is carrying a number in their budget sufficient to match Groton's assessment (based on their share per the regional agreement) and is not planning an override.

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## COUNTRY CLUB PRESENTATION:

The Country Club Director, Shawn Campbell, presented the FY2027 operating and capital budgets.

#### Operating Budget:

- The overall budget reflects an increase of approximately \$2,000 over FY2026.
- Summer camp sold out in 26 minutes after opening on January 15th. All 400 spots were filled, with 275 children on a waitlist. Space and driving range capacity are the main constraints. Three additional driving range bays were added last year, allowing the camp to expand from 36 to 50 spots per session.
- Salaries: Buildings and Grounds are increasing by approximately \$15,000 to add one part-time seasonal staff member for the summer.
- The pool budget is increasing by approximately \$12,000 to support additional lifeguards. Group swim lessons have doubled in revenue.
- The pool heaters experienced a flow issue at the end of last season, believed to be pump-related. Pump maintenance is scheduled for this spring. Worst-case cost for heater replacement is estimated at approximately \$10,000.
- The ground superintendent position is year-round.
- Revenues reached \$1 million for the first time in FY2026. As of the meeting date, revenues are approximately \$50,000 ahead of the prior year.

- Non-resident membership rates were increased 10% for FY2027. Resident rates, greens fees, and park fees remained unchanged. Summer camp rates increased slightly to offset new software costs.
- The budget is balanced and does not require taxpayer subsidy. The general fund was subsidizing approximately \$250,000 annually when the Town Manager arrived. Over the last several years, more than \$200,000 has been returned to the general fund and certified as free cash.

#### Enterprise Fund Discussion:

- Town Manager Haddad reiterated his opposition to converting the Country Club to an enterprise fund, stating his preference to keep any surplus flowing to the general fund. He noted that the Country Club is tracked as if it were an enterprise fund for accountability purposes, though it is not formally designated as one.
- A Select Board member raised the question of whether enterprise fund designation would provide greater clarity. Town Manager Haddad disagreed, comparing it to other estimated local receipts such as motor vehicle excise and building permits, which benefit the Town by closing to free cash if they bring in a surplus.
- Several members expressed support for keeping the current structure to allow surplus revenues to benefit the general fund, noting the significant demand at the club suggests it may be undercharging relative to market.

#### Capital Budget:

- Golf Cart Fleet Replacement: The prior lease has been paid off. The fleet will be traded in for a new lease following Town Meeting approval. Carts will be gas-powered. An evaluation of electric carts was conducted, and GELD determined the required \$150,000 infrastructure investment would take approximately 100 years to recoup through electric rates and declined to support the project. The four existing electric carts will be kept. A request was made for the Town's energy and sustainability staff to explore grant opportunities.
  - Irrigation System: \$100,000 per year is in the capital budget awaiting receipt of bids. The first payment on the debt service is expected in FY28. The new system will expand from approximately 75 heads to 295 heads and will incorporate drainage improvements. A Conservation Commission site walk is scheduled. Water is sourced from the on-site pond. An emergency tie-in to the town water supply exists but is not routinely used.
  - Greens Equipment: Includes lease payments for the Truckster and greens mowers, plus new fairway and rough mowers, totaling approximately \$20,000 per year over five years.
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## LIBRARY PRESENTATION:

Library representatives (Vanessa Abraham & Mark Gerath) presented the FY2027 operating and capital budgets.

### Operating Budget:

- Following a request from the Town Manager, the Library Trustees agreed to increase the allocation from the Trust Commissioners for books and materials from \$70,000 to \$90,000 for FY2027. The Town Manager asked that this be made a permanent increase but the Trust Commissioners agreed to review it year by year.
- The Trustees voted to use approximately \$30,000 in accrued state aid to fund Sunday hours (costs of approximately \$20,000) and for additional services that would otherwise have been eliminated due to budget reductions. The Library currently receives approximately \$17,000 per half-year in state aid (\$34,000 annually). The trustees acknowledged that continued state aid at this level is not guaranteed and that this approach will be discussed annually.
- The Library is \$8,300 above the Municipal Appropriation Requirement (MAR) threshold, maintaining eligibility for ongoing state aid. A total of approximately \$50,000 is being funded through alternative sources, allowing the Library to deliver a budget without additional taxpayer appropriation.
- Salary increases reflect union contract obligations only. The summer reading wages line was removed from the operating budget as those hours are now funded through state aid.
- The electric budget has decreased by approximately \$10,000 per year as a result of Green Community Grant improvements, including lighting upgrades and weatherization.
- Electronic materials costs continue to increase. Libraries pay five to ten times the consumer price for e-books and audiobooks. The Library participates in a consortium to maximize access and reduce costs.
- Programming attendance continues to grow. People counter data shows 600–700 children visiting on school half-days. The Library is legally prevented from charging fees for most programs.

### Capital Budget:

- Interior Repainting: Deferred to FY2028 following rear door repairs funded in the current fiscal year.
- HVAC Rooftop Unit Replacement (FY2029 and FY2030): Eight rooftop units; most recent date to 2014-2015 and will be approximately 15 years old by the time of replacement. Staff hope to pursue Green Community grant funding.
- Elevator Modernization: Recommended by the elevator service company due to increasing difficulty sourcing parts.
- Garden improvements and AV/children's room upgrades will be funded through Trust Fund endowments.

A member raised a safety concern regarding the absence of a stop sign at the intersection of Playground Road and Broadmeadow Road. Town Manager Haddad referred the matter to DPW Director for installation.

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## **POLICE DEPARTMENT PRESENTATION:**

Chief Michael Luth and Administrative Assistant Joan Tallent presented the FY2027 operating and capital budgets.

### **Operating Budget:**

- The department is authorized for 20 officers but will fund 19, leaving one patrol officer position vacant following a September 2025 retirement. Current staffing: Chief, Deputy Chief, four Sergeants, four Duty Officers, and 13 patrol officers. The department is authorized for two SROs but currently staffs one.
- Of the 13 patrol officers, seven would have three years of experience or less. The Chief described this as a significant liability concern. The most common basis for federal lawsuits against police departments are failure to supervise and failure to train.
- The Chief's major initiative is an additional Sergeant. This represents a shift from prior years' requests for an investigator and is driven by the change in workforce experience levels.
- Of 21 weekly shifts, four Sergeants can cover 16 without overtime under ideal conditions. Adding training, sick time, and vacation, hundreds of shifts per year are currently unsupervised. If the 20th position were funded, the Chief would designate it as a fifth Sergeant.
- Six officers have left within their first six years in recent years. The most recent departure was to the private sector for higher compensation.
- Patriot Regional Dispatch (Pepperell): The Chief reported the department is satisfied with service. Needs are being met and the director is well-regarded.
- Fuel is handled at DPW and charged directly to departments based on key card usage.
- The upcoming UMass emergency room facility is anticipated to significantly increase Police Department workload. The Ayer Police Department responded to the NVMC emergency room 160-185 times per year. The Chief expects a comparable level of demand in Groton. UMass Police will have primary responsibility for security but are not expected to be stationed at the facility. Members recommended proactive coordination with UMass on security planning before the facility opens.

### **Capital Budget:**

- Cruiser Replacement: Ongoing replacement program, in the second year of a two-year agreement.

- Police Minor Capital: Includes second year of Flock camera system agreement, rolling body armor replacement (six soft vests, two heavy vests), and approximately \$2,000 to remove aluminum-lined insulation from the Gibbet Hill Communications Tower room following a July 2024 lightning strike.
  - Electronic Control Devices/Tasers: Third of five annual payments. A state grant covers half the total cost.
  - Body-worn cameras are not funded in FY2027. The Chief expressed support for future purchase and noted significant town liability protection benefits. Key barriers include high data storage costs and estimated six-figure equipment costs. The Chief indicated body cameras are a priority within the next three to four years and that grant funding will be needed. He stated his current priority is a fifth Sergeant before cameras.
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## **DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS PRESENTATION:**

DPW Director Brian Callahan presented the FY2027 operating and capital budgets.

### Operating Budget:

- The DPW is down two highway positions. One was eliminated last year and a second vacancy from a retirement has not been filled due to a hiring freeze. Current staff: The Director, a highway foreman, two mechanics, one stormwater technician, one landscaper, two transfer station staff, and four road workers (reduced from six). Two custodians, a transfer station desk administrator, and a stormwater/highway administrative assistant are funded in separate budget lines.
- The three most recent hires did not have CDLs, limiting the pool for sanding routes. CDL training for those employees is planned for this summer.
- Winter impact: With seven people on the sanding rotation, crews have been on call for six consecutive weeks at a time. Director Callahan has been personally plowing a route all winter.
- Summer impact: Mowing requires two people. Pulling one highway worker for mowing will effectively reduce the project crew by three. Town Manager Haddad expressed serious concern about the department's capacity to maintain services this summer. The fully loaded cost of one additional highway position is approximately \$95,000.
- A consultant has been engaged through Chapter 90 funds and a LEAP grant application to complete a Main Street assessment.
- Tree Warden budget was substantially reduced in FY2027. The DPW will remove fewer dead trees than in prior years. The Director identified a contractor capable of removing 50+ trees in two days at approximately \$4,000 per day.
- Municipal Buildings: Town Hall will require furnace replacements. An updated Green Community plan is in development to add buildings to grant eligibility. The fire alarm system upgrade at the American Legion is included in this year's capital budget.

- Solid Waste: The recycling market is self-funding. The DPW purchased its own roll-off trailer hauler, saving approximately \$10,000 per year. Glass grinding saves disposal costs; Pepperell's glass is also processed for a fee. A New Hampshire sandblasting company is piloting the ground glass product.
- Snow and Ice deficit is projected at approximately \$300,000 for FY2026 (typical year: \$100,000–\$150,000). The Town Manager identified funding from set-aside free cash and reallocation of the Country Club irrigation capital item to cover approximately two-thirds, with additional free cash being used as needed.
- A Finance Committee member requested that the Town Manager prepare a document summarizing budget cuts made over the past two to five years, outside the context of any override discussion, to support more productive public conversation about service levels and resource constraints at Town Meeting.

#### Capital Budget:

- Dump Truck: Replacement ordered over two years ago; expected to arrive within the next few months.
- Truck Painting (\$25,000 – Capital Asset Stabilization Fund): Fleet sandblasting and repainting to extend vehicle life. A pilot truck was completed last year with good results.
- Municipal Buildings Minor Capital: Increased from \$90,000 to include \$30,000 for fire alarm system upgrade at the American Legion.
- IT Infrastructure: Annual allocation for ongoing technology replacement and upgrades.
- Prescott Center Renovation (\$5,000,000 placeholder in FY2029 – Bond/CPA): A building committee study estimated a full renovation at approximately \$5 million. This is a recurring placeholder that advances one year annually.
- Transfer Station: No capital needs in FY2027. Trash trailers, refurbished 10-15 years ago, will likely need replacement in FY2028.

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## **FIRE DEPARTMENT PRESENTATION:**

Fire Chief Art Cheeks and Deputy Chief Terence Gardner presented the FY2027 operating and capital budgets.

#### Operating Budget:

- The FY2027 budget reflects no change in staffing. At the Town Manager's request, scenarios for adding two or six additional firefighters were modeled to illustrate cost impact but neither is included in the budget. The current full-time staff is 10 firefighters plus the Chief, Deputy Chief, and an administrative assistant.
- Call firefighter membership has declined from 50+ to approximately 19-20, with roughly 7-8 reliably available for response. The department experiences consistent turnover as call staff

seek full-time positions elsewhere and functions as a feeder program for other departments.

- Overtime: The department is contractually obligated to maintain minimum staffing. When call firefighters and per-diem staff are unavailable to fill gaps, full-time firefighters work overtime. The overtime shift coverage line and the call firefighter/EMT line are managed as a single wage bucket.
- Software maintenance costs continue to increase due to federally mandated reporting requirements.
- New UMass Emergency Room Facility: The Chief described the facility as a community benefit but cautioned its impact on call volume will be more than anticipated. The facility cannot admit patients to a connected hospital, is expected to reach capacity and divert calls frequently, and cannot handle all medical emergencies (e.g., cardiac catheterization, OB, major trauma). Transfers to Worcester will create ambulance coverage gaps. Coastal has been contracted by UMass for interfacility transfers. The Chief is seeking a meeting with UMass leadership and area chiefs to discuss operational planning.
- Patriot Regional Dispatch: Overall service has improved. The centralized system allows simultaneous notification of multiple mutual aid departments, reducing response times. An ongoing inconsistency is call categorization: dispatcher prompts can trigger higher-level responses than the call ultimately requires, leading to frequent mutual aid cancellations.

#### Capital Budget:

- PFAS-Free Structural Gear: Final batch to complete full department compliance. Supply delays continue due to fabric manufacturer setbacks and increasing multi-state demand. A January 2027 labeling mandate applies to all PFAS-free gear vendors.
  - SCBA Replacement: New gear arrived the day before this meeting. The bond authorization was obtained at Fall Town Meeting without bids in hand; the final cost came in at \$379,000 versus the \$500,000 authorization. The bond will be reduced by \$121,000 at renewal.
  - Ambulance 1 Replacement: Ongoing annual payment.
  - Ambulance 2 Replacement: A bond authorization will be sought at Spring Town Meeting due to an approximately two plus year lead time. Funds will not be borrowed until needed.
  - Portable Radio Replacement: Removed from the FY2027 capital warrant. State grant funding will cover full replacement. Existing radios are approximately 15 years old and do not comply with P25 interoperability standards. The item will appear in next year's capital budget as a grant-funded expenditure and does not require a Town Meeting appropriation.
  - Technology Upgrade/Fire HQ: Covers phone systems, internal technology, and training equipment. A portion of the state radio grant has also been earmarked for station technology.
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## SCHOOL PRESENTATION:

The school budget was presented by School Committee Members Lacey McCabe and Rosanne Casavecchia as Superintendent Dr. Geoff Bruno and Sherry Kersey were unable to attend. Any unanswered questions would be relayed to the Superintendent for follow-up.

### District Goals and Context:

- The FY2027 budget is grounded in the district's improvement goals: ensuring student achievement for all, fostering a culture of continuous improvement, enhancing partnership with both towns, and maintaining full and consistent communication.
- The district has lost 35 positions over the past three fiscal years. The budget was built with the goal of maintaining current services as efficiently as possible.

### Efficiencies Incorporated into FY2027:

- Worked with Dee Bus to streamline routes and eliminate one bus, generating \$86,000 in annual savings.
- A maintenance vacancy was filled with a licensed electrician, yielding savings on outside contractor costs.
- Several positions were not filled, including two student services positions.
- The K-8 Math Coordinator position was replaced with a math interventionist at lower cost.
- Content area coordination at the middle and high school level was shifted from an administrative role to teacher stipends.
- A special education teacher was replaced with an adjustment counselor at the high school, which was identified as a necessary service for students.
- Under the new collective bargaining agreement, employees will absorb an additional 2% of health insurance premiums, reducing district costs.
- Sherry Kersey has been working to improve fee collection systems for kindergarten, athletic, and activity fees, with early positive results.
- A scheduling consultant (grant-funded) is reviewing middle and high school schedules for consolidation opportunities.

### Requested Positions Not Funded:

- BCBA (Board Certified Behavior Analyst): vacancy unfilled for approximately two years
- 4th Grade Teacher at Florence Roche School: consistently requested in prior years
- Administrative Assistant
- HVAC Specialist: noted as having long-term savings potential through reduced outside contractor reliance
- Additional Groundskeeper and Maintenance Position

### Budget Scenarios:

- Scenario 1 (Superintendent's Proposed Budget): 6.46% increase. Presented to demonstrate true district need to the state but not anticipated to be funded.
- Scenario 2 (Balanced to Dunstable's Capacity): 4.68% increase, requiring a \$907,891 reduction from the Superintendent's proposal. Requires Groton-only funding above Dunstable's contribution.
- Scenario 3 (Both Towns Can Fund): 4.08% increase, requiring approximately \$1.2 million in reductions. Currently anticipated as the most likely outcome. Groton's FY2027 operating assessment: approximately \$29,468,000. Dunstable's: approximately \$9,063,000.
- The presentation was based on an assumed \$150 per pupil minimum aid increase. If the Governor's budget of \$75 per pupil holds, district revenue decreases by \$169,500, raising required reductions to approximately \$1.1 million (Scenario 2) and \$1.4 million (Scenario 3).

#### Revenue Assumptions:

- Chapter 70 represents 24.6% of the district budget. Groton funds 56.5% of the budget; Dunstable 17.4%; miscellaneous 1.5%.
- For every \$50 added to the per-pupil minimum aid amount, the district receives approximately \$110,000 in additional revenue.
- The state's minimum required contribution formula increases the combined towns' obligation by \$909,743, while the Governor's budget increases state funding by only \$169,500.
- Transportation reimbursement: Governor at 80%; FY2025 was reimbursed at 85%. Each additional percentage point adds approximately \$13,000.
- Excess and Deficiency use in the budget is planned to decrease from \$400,000 to \$300,000 but may be revised as the state revenue picture clarifies.

#### Capital Budget:

- Capital assessments: Dunstable \$125,000; Groton \$424,500.
- Capital items include computer leases, routine maintenance, and security improvements to the middle school entry. The main office has no line of sight to the front door, which parents and School Committee members have raised as a concern. No safety incident has occurred, but the design is acknowledged as a vulnerability.
- Additional items include parking lot repaving, maintenance truck replacement, bathroom renovations at Boutwell, snow equipment, and sidewalk repair.
- Dunstable has been accepted into the MSBA program for roof repair at Swallow Union School. Groton has no students at Swallow Union so future repair costs will be Dunstable's responsibility.
- A Capital Stabilization Fund contribution of \$250,000 (Free Cash) is included for FY2027, with \$500,000 per year planned for FY2028–FY2031.
- A CPC application for playground renovation at Boutwell School is pending before the Groton Community Preservation Committee.

## Chapter 70 State Advocacy:

- The School Committee developed a QR code-based letter-writing campaign targeting state legislators, with customizable letter templates available. The QR code is posted on the Town's website and will appear in the Groton Herald.
- State Representative Margaret Scarsdale has confirmed that letters and phone calls are effective and valuable. The Select Board is scheduled to vote on Monday to send a formal letter of support.
- Groton-Dunstable is one of 272 minimum aid communities in Massachusetts not funded to the appropriate level. The district is coordinating outreach to other minimum aid towns to encourage parallel letter-writing campaigns ahead of Ways and Means hearings and House and Senate budget deliberations.
- The long-term ask is a revision to the Chapter 70 funding formula, not simply additional one-time funding.

## Finance Committee Discussion:

- Finance Committee members noted that Groton-Dunstable is not an outlier in spending compared to similar districts. The growth problem is structural – the state is not growing its revenue share equally.
  - A Finance Committee member stated that an efficiency audit is not the solution. One-time cuts reduce spending, but do not address the structural growth rate. He asked the School Committee to focus on what drives natural budget growth, 80% of which is contractual wages, salaries, and benefits, and whether this can be discussed through collective bargaining to slow growth while maintaining competitiveness as an employer.
  - It was acknowledged that this is being worked on as they enter a contract negotiation cycle. Ms. McCabe noted that surrounding districts such as North Middlesex have taken steps including closing an elementary school, increasing class sizes (average mid-30s at the middle school level), using paraprofessionals in library positions, eliminating foreign language, streamlining bus routes, and not funding capital stabilization. Some of these options are being considered by the district; others, such as eliminating foreign language, would require significant deliberation.
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## **ADJOURNMENT:**

- A motion was made and seconded by both the Finance Committee and the Select Board to enter Executive Session for matters pertaining to collective bargaining, not to return to open session. All in favor by a roll call vote. Motion carried.

*Respectfully submitted by Andrea Rollo, Per Diem Minute Taker*

**SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES  
MONDAY, MARCH 3, 2026  
UN-APPROVED**

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

**Select Board Members Absent:** Peter Cunningham;

**Also Present:** Mark Haddad, Town Manager; Kara Cruikshank, Executive Assistant to the Town Manager; Tom Delaney, Consultant; Jonas Procton, Horsely Witten Group; Brian Callahan, DPW Director.

Chair Pisani called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and reviewed the agenda.

**7:00 P.M. Public Hearing on the Squannacook River Dam**

Mr. Haddad read the Public Hearing notice into the record.

*Ms. Manugian made a motion to open the public hearing. Ms. Pine seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

Mr. Haddad announced that the public hearing was being held to receive public input on options for repairing or removing the Squannacook River Dam, and that information on both alternatives would be presented. Mr. Pisani thanked everyone for attending that evening and explained that the public hearing would be replayed on the Groton Channel. If anyone has any questions, they should reach out to the Town Manager directly.

**Discussion for the Removal of the Dam**

Horsley Witten Group was hired to determine the feasibility and process for removing the Dam. Mr. Jonas Procton, a consultant of the Horsley Witten Group, attended the public hearing to provide a PowerPoint Presentation on the Squannacook River Dam Removal Assessment. The presentation provided an overview of the background and objectives of this project. Mr. Procton discussed the area's history before the construction of the Dam and its current state. He emphasized that the Dam is in need of repairs. The presentation outlined key tasks involved in evaluating the Dam's removal. He highlighted the ecological benefits of removing the Dam and emphasized that these changes would benefit the ecosystem. The potential next steps in the removal process were also discussed, with Mr. Procton stating that the total cost is estimated at \$1.2 million to \$1.7 million. He explained that state and federal grants are available and could potentially cover the entire cost of the removal. (Please refer to the attached full presentation for more details.)

**Public Comments/Questions**

*Several members of the public raised questions and voiced concerns about the removal of the dam. Some worried about a possible rise in mosquito populations if the Dam were removed. Additionally, one property owner expressed concerns about how the removal could impact property values.*

Mr. Haddad explained that the 2024 Fall Town Meeting allocated \$160,250 to hire two consultants, Haley Aldrich and Horsley Witten Group. They were hired to study both the removal and repair of the Dam, as well as to determine the related costs and impacts. Mr. Pisani clarified to the residents that this meeting was an informational session so residents could make an informed decision, and the issue will be up for debate at the 2026 Spring Town Meeting. Mr. Haddad clarified that the Town of Shirley supports some action on the Dam but will not provide funding for either removal or repair.

### **Discussion for the Repair of the Dam**

Haley and Aldrich, Inc. was hired to develop plans and specifications for the repair of the Squannacook River Dam. Consultant Mr. Tom Delaney was present to provide information regarding the repair process. He explained that the Office of Dam Safety has been inquiring about potential solutions for fixing the Dam. The Town Meeting allocated funds to hire an engineer to assess the Dam's condition and then went out to bid for the repair work. A total of eight bids were received, with three in the \$500,000 range and the others exceeding \$1 million. Mr. Delaney explained that the low bidder will hold the bid price until the 2026 Spring Town Meeting. He clarified that this bid would cover only the repairs to the existing structure of the Dam, estimated at \$812,500. If the town decides to proceed with the repairs, it will also need to take responsibility for ongoing maintenance costs.

### **Public Comments/Questions**

*Several members of the public raised questions about the dam's repair. Some inquired about the cost of repairs and the ongoing maintenance required.*

Mr. Haddad recommended that the Select Board include the repair article on the Spring Town Meeting Warrant, but it is the Board's decision on whether it will be for the repair or removal. Whether through a Debt or Capital Exclusion, the proposal requires a 2/3rds majority vote at the Town Meeting and a corresponding ballot question during the May 19th Annual Town Election. Mr. Pisani thanked everyone for attending that evening, and Mr. Haddad respectfully asked the Board to close the public hearing.

*Ms. Manugian made a motion to close the public hearing. Mr. Reilly seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

The Select Board adjourned at 9:12 p.m.

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

**SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES**  
**MONDAY, MARCH 9, 2026**  
**UN-APPROVED**

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

**Finance Committee Members Present:** Bud Robertson, Chair; David Manugian; Kristina Lengyel; Gary Green;

**Finance Committee Members Absent:** Scott Whitefield, Jamie McDonald, and Mary Linskey, Vice Chair;  
**Also Present:** Mark Haddad, Town Manager; Kara Cruikshank, Executive Assistant to the Town Manager; Brian Callahan, DPW Director; Grace Bannasch, Town Clerk; Toralben Patel, President and Manager of Shree AM and UM Inc.; Tom Delaney, Squannacook River Dam Consultant; Arthur Cheeks, Fire Chief; Shawn Campbell, Groton Country Club General Manager; Megan Foster, Principal Assessor; Katie Kazanjian, Treasurer/Tax Collector; Michael Luth, Police Chief; Bruce Easom, CPC Treasurer;

**Virtually Present:** Attorney Glenn Alberich, Representing Shree AM and UM Inc.

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

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

None

**PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD**

None

**TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT**

**1. FY 2027 Budget Update.**

Mr. Haddad provided an update on the current status of the operating budget. He reviewed the levy calculations and noted that the Levy Limit remains unchanged, with New Growth still estimated at approximately \$21.5 million. The Levy Limit for FY 2027 is projected to be around \$40 million. He also discussed the total tax levy calculation for FY 2027, explaining that he reduced the excluded debt by \$5,209 to reflect the actual interest rate on the BAN (Bond Anticipation Note) for Florence Roche Elementary School. Reviewing Estimated Receipts, Mr. Haddad noted that Unrestricted Government Aid increased by \$23,503 to reflect the Governor's Budget, which is up \$47,000 from last year (2.5%). Free cash was reduced by \$77,463 due to the school's capital and debt service. Mr. Haddad clarified that the Capital Stabilization Fund has been reduced by \$295,000, reflecting the removal of portable radios and the irrigation debt service at the Country Club. Fire Chief Cheeks plans to use a portion of the \$1 million state grant to cover the cost of replacing the portable radios, which amounts to \$195,000. These funds were originally set aside in the FY 2027 Capital Plan. Additionally, \$100,000 was allocated for first-year debt service on the proposed irrigation system at the Groton Country Club; however, this funding will not be needed until FY 2028. Mr. Haddad explained that the EMS/Conservation Fund Receipts Reserve was reduced by \$361 because interest rates came in lower on the ambulance. He then reviewed the changes to the FY 2027 proposed

Expenditures (refer to the included memo). Mr. Haddad stated that the overall budget has been reduced by \$354,531, reflecting reductions in the Operating and Capital Budgets.

Ms. Manugian took a moment to thank Mr. Haddad for the clear spreadsheets showing where the budget stands.

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

Monday, March 16, 2026 -	No Meeting
Monday, March 23, 2026 -	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, March 30, 2026	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, April 6, 2026 -	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, April 13, 2026 -	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, April 20, 2026 -	No Meeting – (Patriots’ Day Holiday)
Monday, April 27, 2026-	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Saturday, May 2, 2026 -	2026 Spring Town Meeting

**ITEMS FOR SELECT BOARD CONSIDERATION AND APPROVAL**

**1. Vote to Include the Inclusion of a Vacancy on the Park Commission on the 2026 Annual Town Election Ballot.**

Ms. Grace Bannasch, Town Clerk, was present to request that, pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 41, Section 10, the Select Board vote to add a vacancy on the Park Commission to the 2026 Spring Town Election Ballot to serve the remaining unexpired term (2 years). Mr. Haddad respectfully asked the Board to vote.

*Ms. Manugian made a motion to add the Park Commission vacancy on the 2026 Annual Town Election Ballot. Mr. Cunningham seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

**6:15 P.M. -Public Hearing- Consider the Transfer of the Off-Premise All Alcohol Package Store License for the Groton Market, John Madigan, President, to Shree AM and UM Inc., DBA Groton Market, Toralben Patel, President and Manager.**

Mr. Haddad read aloud the public hearing notice into the record.

*Mr. Cunningham made a motion to open the public hearing. Ms. Pine seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

A public hearing was held to consider the transfer of the Off-Premise, All-Alcohol Package Store license for Groton Market, located at 235 Main Street, from John Madigan, President, to Shree AM and UM Inc., DBA Groton Market, with Ms. Toralben Patel serving as President and Manager. The Select Board received a copy of the application for review. Attorney Glenn Alderich was virtually present and represented the applicant, Ms. Patel. He read an opening statement into the record and provided the Board with six pages of signatures from Groton residents in support of this transfer. Attorney Alderich explained that Ms. Patel and her husband, Mr. Jaydeep Patel, previously came to the Board to acquire The Groton Market as co-owners of a company that they formed. They have the legal rights, financial means, and experience to acquire. However, their attempt was denied due to the application of a state licensing law, M.G.L. c. 128, Section

15, which limits individuals to one license per town. Since both Patels owned 50% of their corporation and Mr. Patel owns Indralock, Inc., the ABCC denied the transfer because Country Farm, located at 127 Main Street and holding a license in Groton, is owned by the Patels. He said the legal issue that prevented the previous attempt to acquire the Groton market has now been successfully resolved; therefore, Ms. Patel has returned.

Questions/Comments from the Board

*Mr. Pisani explained that many concerns were raised during the previous public hearing about changes to the store's characteristics and its historic nature. Ms. Patel plans to keep the store as is.*

*Attorney Aldrich clarified to the Board that Ms. Patel has no direct or indirect ownership or interest in Mr. Patel's company, Country Farm. Mr. Haddad stated that there have been no problems or concerns with how County Farm has been run, and it's doing well. Mr. Reilly supported the transfer.*

Public Questions/Comments

*Resident Adam Burnett asked about how to manage entry for people under 21 at the store. Mr. Reilly replied that the Groton Market does a great job and that kids usually don't enter the store there.*

The proposed hours of operation for The Groton Market are Monday through Saturday, 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., and Sundays from 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Public Comment

None

*Ms. Pine moved to close the public hearing. Mr. Cunningham seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

*Ms. Pine made a motion to grant the transfer of the license for 235 Main Street from John Madigan, President, to Shree AM and UM Inc., DBA Groton Market, with Toralben Patel as President and Manager. The hours of operation are Monday through Saturday from 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. and Sunday from 10:00 a.m.- 8:00 p.m. Ms. Manugian seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

The Select Board recessed briefly at 6:37 p.m.

**7:00 P.M. – Public Hearing- In Joint Session with the Finance Committee- Public Hearing on the Various Articles Contained in the 2026 Spring Town Meeting Warrant.**

Mr. Haddad read the Public Hearing notice into the record.

Mr. Haddad respectfully requested the Board to open the public hearing.

*Ms. Pine made a motion to open the public hearing. Mr. Reilly seconded the motion. The motions carried unanimously.*

*Mr. Robertson called the Finance Committee to order.*

The Select Board and Finance Committee held a joint session to conduct a public hearing on the articles contained in the 2026 Spring Town Meeting Warrant. Mr. Haddad provided the Board with a copy of the latest draft of the Warrant and reviewed it.

#### Article 1: Hear Reports

There were no questions.

Unanimously in favor to support.

#### Article 2: Elected Officials Compensation

The Town Moderator is proposed to receive a salary of \$1,000 in FY 2027.

Unanimously in favor to support.

#### Article 3: Wage and Classification Schedule

Mr. Haddad said this Article is for the three Bylaw employees. There were no questions.

Unanimously in favor to support.

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

This is the annual contribution to the OPEB Trust Fund, which is necessary to prevent the net present liability from increasing. Mr. Haddad recommends an appropriation of \$200,000, but if an additional Firefighter/EMT is added, he would ask the Board to raise it to \$205,000.

Unanimously in favor of supporting an appropriation of either \$200,000 or \$205,000.

#### Article 5: Fiscal Year 2027 Annual Operating Budget

Mr. Haddad discussed the line-item changes in the Operating Budget with the Finance Committee, which had already been reviewed with the Select Board during the Town Manager's Report.

Mr. Haddad recommended presenting the budget at the Spring Town Meeting as a single consent motion, since it is balanced. However, Mr. Robertson believes that the public should hear a detailed explanation of the budget and that a full presentation is necessary. Mr. Haddad stated that he is not hiding anything in the budget and that the final budget is subject to Finance Committee approval. The Finance Committee plans to finalize the budget in the next few weeks. The School Committee will certify the Superintendent's Budget on Wednesday, March 11th. Mr. Haddad said that once they set the assessment, even if State Aid comes in higher, they will decide whether to adjust. If they indicate that it will come in higher, they will vote to use more Excess & Deficiency (E&D) to try to reduce the amount.

#### Article 6: Fiscal Year 2027 Capital Budget

Mr. Haddad thanked the Fire Chief because, in the original capital budget, \$195,000 was allocated for portable radio replacement, but he is using part of the \$1 million state grant to fund them. He further explained that the \$100,000 needed for the first year of debt service for the proposed irrigation system at the Country Club will not be required until FY 2028. With \$295,000 saved within the Capital Stabilization Budget, Mr. Haddad recommended using \$180,000 to offset the snow-and-ice deficit. He also proposed an improvement to the communication system. During the budget hearing on Saturday,

February 28th, Police Chief Luth explained that there were communication issues at the Gibbet Hill Communications Tower and failures in the radio equipment. Chief Luth planned to include this issue in the capital budget for the next fiscal year. However, Mr. Haddad believes that since funding for portable radio replacements has been removed, some of those funds should be used to address the communication problems at the tower. Chief Luth obtained a quote for this work, estimating approximately \$109,000. This would leave a balance of about \$98,000 in the Capital Stabilization Fund.

Police Chief Luth attended and explained that much of the equipment in the three towers around town had been repurposed. He mentioned that some of the microwaves are at the end of their life and are failing, which is what they would like to replace. He said he planned to come to the town for an emergency reserve fund transfer to address these failures. Chief Luth also mentioned they are looking to upgrade to a digital frequency. The proposal is to keep the current system running. Mr. Cunningham asked if the Groton Electric Light Department (GELD) would help fund the project. DPW Director Mr. Brian Callahan said GELD has recently helped to fund license upgrades. Mr. Haddad explained they could reach out to GELD. Mr. Manugian noted that there are other capital needs, such as the Squannacook River Dam. Mr. Haddad respectfully emphasized that the communication needs of public safety departments are more urgent than the Dam. He respectfully asked the Select Board to add \$108,000 to the article and the capital budget.

Mr. Haddad reviewed the Capital Budget items:

Item #1- Ambulance -\$500,000-

There were no questions.

Item #2- PFAS-Free Structural FF Gear- \$50,000

There were no questions.

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

There were no questions.

Item #4-Brush Mower/Field Mower-\$30,000

There were no questions

Item #5- Truck Painting- \$25,000

There were no questions.

Item #6-IT Infrastructure-\$40,000

There were no questions.

Item #7-Municipal Building Minor Capital- \$120,000

Mr. Haddad explained that last year, all minor capital was removed from the operating budget and moved into the Capital Budget. He said this is a one-time increase. Ms. Pine asked that the summary include how the funds would be used.

Item #8- Property Improvements-\$25,000

Ms. Pine requested changing the last sentence of the summary to "to keep various park properties in good shape."

Item #9-Police Cruisers-\$147,010

There were no questions.

Item #10-Police Minor Capital- \$34,750

Ms. Pine inquired about the number of flock cameras in town. Chief Luth stated that there are four locations, all under the Police Department's control.

Item #11-Electronic Control Devices- Tasers- \$10,500

There were no questions.

Item #12-Golf Carts- \$27,000

Mr. Haddad explained that the purpose of this item is to replace the Country Club's fleet. He hoped to convert all vehicles to electric carts, but he asked GELD to pay for the installation of the necessary infrastructure; however, they determined there would be no return on their investment. As a result, the Town will purchase twenty-three gas carts and four electric carts since the Club has the infrastructure to support them.

Item #13-Ventrac Attachments- \$10,918

Ms. Manugian asked how many years the attachment would last. Country Club General Manager Mr. Shawn Campbell stated that the attachments would last for a long time.

Item #14- Greens Equipment-Truckster XD- \$14,736

Ms. Pine asked that the summary be updated to refer to the equipment as a truck.

Item #15-Greens Equipment- Greens Mower- \$12,067

There were no questions.

Item #16 Greens Equipment- Fairway Mower and #17 Greens Equipment-Rough Mower (Each \$20,000)

There were no questions.

Item #18- Irrigation and Course Improvements- \$1.4 million

Mr. Haddad stated that they would borrow the money and pay it off over 10 to 15 years. This would make a significant difference at the club and help keep the fairway in good condition. Mr. Haddad mentioned this as one of the project options for improving the course holes during the installation of the irrigation system. Ms. Pine asked for clarification of the summary to make it clearer. Mr. Haddad explained that the expected debt service would be between \$100,000 and \$110,000 annually.

Item #19- Roof for the Pavilion- \$14,200

There were no questions.

#### Article 7: Community Preservation Funding Accounts

Mr. Haddad explained that this article is standard for allocating CPC funds to subaccounts, making the money available for Article 8: Community Preservation Funding recommendations. The Community Preservation Committee (CPC) is voting on the final recommendations that evening.

#### Article 8: Community Preservation Funding Recommendations:

##### CPC Proposal A: Lighting Improvements- \$9,750

The Town Manager's office and the Prescott Community Center are requesting \$9,750. The Prescott Community Center had submitted an application for \$500,000 to conduct a complete electrical upgrade. However, the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) did not have the necessary funds, so the application was withdrawn. Prescott was then asked whether anything could be done regarding lighting at the Prescott Center, which is the focus of this current application. Ms. Manugian stated that she was extremely uncomfortable with funding this. Ms. Pine is asking if Prescott would be eligible for Green Communities funding. Ms. Charlotte Weigel of the Sustainability Commission was in attendance and stated that she would look into this funding.

##### CPC Proposal B: Cow Pond Brook Fields improvements- FY 2026-\$4,284,000

Mr. Haddad discussed with CPC Treasurer Bruce Easom that a grant will cover \$1 million, leaving \$3.2 million still to be funded. He explained that the expected annual debt service is \$320,000. Mr. Haddad advised against permanently bonding the project and suggested using bond anticipation notes with mandatory principal paydowns starting in the third year. He said that this approach would allow for faster repayment of the debt.

##### CPC Proposal C: Housing Coordinator- FY 2027-- \$72,830

This proposal covers the Housing Coordinator's salary and benefits. Mr. Haddad stated that this is money well spent.

##### CPC Proposal D: Pollinator Pathway Garden- \$2,200

There were no questions.

##### CPC Proposal E: FY 2027 Housing Request- \$300,000

There were no questions.

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

There were no questions.

##### CPC Proposal G: Boutwell Playground Renovation-\$675,000

The school department submitted a request to upgrade the playground at Boutwell. Mr. Haddad believed the funding request had been reduced because it would not be fully funded. Ms. Manugian asked whether the school could submit its long-term plan for Boutwell. Ms. Pine

inquired whether Dunstable has a corresponding application, since there are also Dunstable students attending.

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

Mr. Haddad stated that this article would exempt certain uncontrollable costs, specifically health insurance and pension expenses, from the Tax Levy. He also explained that the municipality is required to provide health insurance and pension benefits to any employee who works more than 20 hours per week. Mr. Haddad believes that the state should exempt the municipality from these requirements, as the town has no choice but to hire full-time employees to provide services. He has made efforts to bring this issue before the legislature. If the town votes on this matter and approves it, it will then be submitted to the legislature.

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

Ms. Charlotte Weigel of the Sustainability Commission was present. Mr. Haddad reported that the Sustainability Commission attended a Select Board meeting to update the Board on the new Specialized Stretch Energy Code. The Sustainability Commission is holding a public hearing on Thursday, March 12th, at 7:00 p.m. in the First-Floor Meeting Room to discuss this further and answer questions.

There were no questions.

#### Article 11: Squannacook River Dam Repair-

A public hearing was held on Tuesday, March 3rd, at the Groton Center to discuss the Squannacook River Dam. During the meeting, Mr. Haddad asked the Board whether to present the \$812,500 repair proposal at the Spring Town Meeting for consideration. He explained that if the proposal is brought forward, it could be funded through a debt exclusion under Proposition 2 ½ or a Capital Exclusion, which would authorize a one-time increase in the Levy Limit to raise the full amount. Whether through a Debt or Capital Exclusion, the proposal requires a 2/3rds majority vote at the Town Meeting and a corresponding ballot question during the May 19th Annual Town Election. Mr. Haddad asked the Boards whether they agreed with his proposal to bring the repair to the Spring Town Meeting. He explained that there are more opportunities for grant funding for removal than for repair. Since the responsibility for repairs would fall entirely on the Town of Groton, he believes the Town Meeting should weigh the cost of repairs and decide whether to proceed with repairing the dam. Consultant Tom Delaney is working with the Engineer to determine any future maintenance costs needed to maintain the Dam after the repairs are complete. Mr. Robertson agreed to put forward the proposal for the Dam repair at the Town Meeting. Mr. Gary Green asked if the project could be funded by the Community Preservation Committee (CPC). Mr. Haddad explained that Ms. Pine asked the same question, but the dam has not been designated as a historic structure and therefore is not eligible for CPC historical funding. Chair of the Historical Committee, Aubrey Theall, will include the Dam on the agenda for the upcoming Historic Commission meeting for further discussion. If this Historical Commission votes to designate the Squannacook River Dam as a historical structure, Mr. Haddad would recommend removing the Squannacook River Dam Article from the warrant and submitting a CPC application in the Fall to see whether they would fund the repair. Ms. Manugian expressed that a statement should be included at the beginning of the summary, indicating that action is needed regarding the dam—either repair or removal. Mr. Haddad emphasized that both debates should happen at the Town Meeting. The Board

debated whether the Dam should be considered historical and whether a vote was necessary on this matter. They requested that Mr. Haddad proceed with the Historical Commission regarding this discussion and gather information for the Board before the Historical Commission votes. The article regarding the repair of the Dam will remain on the Spring Town Meeting Warrant.

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

Town Planner Takashi Tada was in attendance and explained that, at the request of the Town Counsel, the Planning Board will hold a public hearing on April 2<sup>nd</sup>. The purpose of the hearing is to consider bringing this matter forward to the Spring Town Meeting. Mr. Tada said this would formalize, in writing, the processes the Planning Board currently follows for handling appeals related to site plan decisions. This was not specified in the Site Plan Review section of the Bylaw.

There were no questions.

**Article 13: Funding for Destination Groton Committee-**

This article provides \$15,000 in funding for the Destination Groton Committee to carry out its charge.

There were no questions.

**Article 14: Transfer Within the Water Sewer Enterprise**

This is a placeholder.

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

This is a placeholder.

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

The Four Corner Sewer Enterprise Fund will need to transfer \$20,000 to the Fiscal Year 2026 Four Corners Sewer Enterprise Department Budget.

**Article 17: Prior Year Bills-**

This is a placeholder.

**Article 18: Appropriate Funding to Offset Snow and Ice Deficit**

Mr. Haddad stated that they are projecting a \$300,000 deficit for Snow and Ice. He recommends using \$180,000 from the Capital Stabilization Fund and \$120,000 from Free Cash.

**Article 19: Debt Service for the Middle School Track- \$648,945**

The CPC is requesting \$648,945 (\$627,000 in principal payment and \$ 21,945 in interest). Mr. Haddad said the CPC paid off \$2.4 million over five years. Ms. Pine would like to include in the summary that this is the final payment for the track.

Article 20: Funding on Main Street Traffic Study

This is a placeholder to fund the second part of the Main Street Traffic Study. \$50,000 will come from Chapter 90 to fund this study, and the Town is awaiting word on whether it will receive a LEAP Grant. Ms. Manugian asked that the items to be included in the study be added to the summary.

Article 21: Appropriate to Fund Town Forest Expenses- \$12,000

The Town Forest Committee is seeking \$12,000 to fund the removal of a dead stand of Red Pines that poses a hazard in the Town Forest. Ms. DuFresne said there is currently approximately \$74,000 in the trust.

Article 22: Establishing Limits for Various Revolving Funds

Mr. Haddad explained that this is an annual article to amend the Revolving Fund Bylaw to set the limits of the various revolving funds. These changes are based on usage, and the Park Commission has added a revolving account, with a \$100,000 spending limit due to its potential to set fees.

CPC Treasurer Bruce Easom attended to inform the Board of the CPC recommendations

Mr. Easom stated that all projects were voted unanimously in favor, and reviewed the votes and bucket numbers of the Committee:

CPC Proposal A: Lighting Improvements – Prescott -\$9,850 (Historic)

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

CPC Proposal C: Housing Coordinator – FY 2027 - \$72,829 (Community Housing)

CPC Proposal D: Pollinator Pathway Garden - \$2,500 (Open Space & Recreation)

CPC Proposal E: FY 2027 Housing Request -\$100,000 (\$92,985 out of Community Housing and \$7,015 will come from unallocated reserve)

CPC Proposal F: Cutler Softball Field Establishment- \$99,000- (Open Space and Recreation)

CPC Proposal G: Boutwell Playground Renovation - \$233,923 (\$42,329 from Open Space and \$191,594 will come from the Unallocated Reserve)

Mr. Haddad respectfully requested the Board to close the public hearing on the warrant.

*Mr. Reilly made a motion to close the public hearing. Ms. Manugian seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

Ms. Pine suggested they hold another public session to discuss the Dam, as there is a lot to cover. Mr. Haddad said there is plenty of time to schedule another hearing. He requested some time to prepare a PowerPoint presentation so that the Board can discuss the next steps.

*The Finance Committee moved to another location to continue its meeting.*

**OTHER BUSINESS**

**Authorize the Town Manager and One Member of the Select Board to Sign Warrants for the Next Thirty Days.**

Mr. Reilly made a motion to authorize the town manager and one member of the select board to sign warrants for the next thirty days. Ms. Pine seconded the motion.

#### Discussion

Mr. Haddad explained that the Charter has been brought to the House, voted on favorably, and is now moving on to the Senate vote.

The motion carried unanimously.

#### **On-Going Issues**

- A. PFAS Issue –None
- B. UMass Satellite Emergency Facility –
- A. Fire Department Staffing – The Working Group met last week and is scheduled to meet again tomorrow with a consultant to discuss strategies for outreach and redesigning the website to make it more user-friendly. Mr. Haddad reported they are making progress. He mentioned that they are not filling as many overtime shifts as hoped, but they are filling some. The consultant reviewing comparison data wants to analyze information dating back to 2021 due to increased call volume. Mr. Haddad thought he had a good approach and is looking forward to the upcoming meeting with the consultant.
- B. West Groton Dam - Mr. Haddad stated that he was pleased with the turnout at the public hearing on the West Groton Dam held on Tuesday, March 3rd, considering the snowstorm. Mr. Haddad explained that some people have questioned why the repair article is on the warrant instead of the removal option. He said there is a greater likelihood of securing grant funding for removal than for repair. Mr. Haddad believes it makes more sense to include the repair article on the warrant, since taxpayers will need to fund it. This way, Town Meeting can take a position on the issue. If the repair article fails, they can then revisit the discussion about removal. Mr. Haddad believes the debate regarding both the repair and removal will be at the discretion of the Moderator, but he will seek further clarification during the Pre-Town Meeting review meeting. Ms. Pine expressed that there should have been a report on the repair. Mr. Haddad clarified that the funding was intended for the bid specifications.
- C. Main Street Study – The Study was discussed during the public hearing.

#### **SELECT BOARD LIASON REPORTS**

None

#### **Approval of the Regularly Scheduled Meeting of March 2, 2026**

Ms. Pine made a motion to approve the regular meeting minutes of March 2, 2026. Ms. Manugian seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

The Select Board adjourned at 8:32 p.m.

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