



TOWN OF GROTON

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

Select Board

Peter S. Cunningham, *Chair*
Rebecca H. Pine, *Vice Chair*
Nicholas J. Degaitas, Jr., *Clerk*
John F. Reilly, *Member*
Matthew F. Pisani, *Member*

Town Manager
Mark W. Haddad

SELECT BOARD MEETING
MONDAY, OCTOBER 26, 2026
AGENDA
GROTON CENTER
163 WEST MAIN STREET
WEST GROTON, MA

- 6:45 P.M. Announcements and Review Agenda for the Public
- 6:46 P.M. Public Comment Period
- I. 6:50 P.M. Town Manager's Report
1. Fiscal Year 2028 Update
 2. Update on Select Board Meeting Schedule through the End of the Year
- II. 6:55 P.M. Items for Select Board Consideration and Action
1. Consider Approving a One Day Wine and Malt Beverages License for the Friends of Prescott's Cheese and Wine Tasting: An Evening in Beaujolais, France, to be held on Thursday, November 5, 2026, from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.
 2. Consider Approving a One Day Wine and Malt Beverages License for the Friends of Prescott's Spelling Bee, to be held on Friday, November 13, 2026, from 7:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.
 3. Consider Approving a One Day Wine and Malt Beverages License for the Friends of Prescott's Paint and Sip: Colors of Autumn, to be held on Saturday, November 14, 2026, from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.
 4. Consider Approving a One Day Wine and Malt Beverages License for the Friends of Prescott's A Taste of Sparkling Wines, to be held on Thursday, December 10, 2026, from 6:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.
- III. 7:00 P.M. In Joint Session with the Finance Committee – Pursuant to Section 6.4.1 of the Groton Charter – Determine Budget Guidance for the Town Manager to Develop the Fiscal Year 2028 Proposed Operating Budget

OTHER BUSINESS -

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

- A. PFAS Issue
- B. UMass Satellite Emergency Facility
- C. Fire Department Staffing
- D. West Groton Dam Removal
- E. Main Street Study
- F. Flock Cameras

SELECT BOARD LIAISON REPORTS

IV. Minutes: Regularly Scheduled Meeting of October 19, 2026

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: *October 26, 2026*

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

Please note that Monday's Meeting will be held at the Groton Center in West Groton and begin at 6:45 p.m. 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 is one item scheduled on Monday's Agenda. Pursuant to Section 6.4.1 of the Groton Charter, the Select Board will be meeting in Joint Session with the Finance Committee to provide budget guidance to the Town Manager to develop the Fiscal Year 2028 Proposed Operating Budget. Enclosed with this Report is a memorandum from me providing the Board with information to assist in this matter.

1. Obviously, the update on the Fiscal Year 2028 Budget will be discussed with the Finance Committee. This item is a permanent place holder on the Agenda until the Budget is finalized.
2. Please see the update to the Meeting Schedule that will take the Board through the end of the year:

Monday, November 2, 2026 -	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, November 9, 2026 -	No Meeting
Monday, November 16, 2026 -	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Thursday, November 19, 2026 -	Public Hearing on Main Street Study (at PAC)
Monday, November 23, 2026 -	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, November 30, 2026 -	No Meeting
Monday, December 7, 2026 -	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, December 14, 2026 -	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, December 21, 2026 -	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, December 28, 2026 -	No Meeting (Christmas Holiday)
Monday, January 4, 2027 -	No Meeting (New Years' Holiday)
Monday, January 11, 2027 -	Regularly Scheduled Meeting

ITEMS FOR SELECT BOARD CONSIDERATION AND ACTION

1. I would respectfully request that the Board consider approving a One Day Wine and Malt Beverages License for the Friends of Prescott's Cheese and Wine Tasting: An Evening in Beaujolais, France, to be held on Thursday, November 5, 2026, from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.
2. I would respectfully request that the Board consider approving a One Day Wine and Malt Beverages License for the Friends of Prescott's Spelling Bee, to be held on Friday, November 13, 2026, from 7:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.
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4. I would respectfully request that the Board consider approving a One Day Wine and Malt Beverages License for the Friends of Prescott's A Taste of Sparkling Wines, to be held on Thursday, December 10, 2026, from 6:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

MWH/rjb
enclosures



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Town Manager
Mark W. Haddad

To: *Select Board
Finance Committee*

From: *Mark W. Haddad – Town Manager*

Subject: *Fiscal Year 2028 Budget Guidance*

Date: *October 14, 2026*

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide information and a recommendation on the Fiscal Year 2028 Budget Guidance. Section 6.4.1 of the Groton Charter requires the Town Manager to meet with the Select Board and Finance Committee to determine budgetary guidance for the subsequent fiscal year. This guidance will be used by the Town Manager and Finance Team to develop the Town Manager's Proposed Fiscal Year 2028 Operating Budget that is due by January 31, 2027. As the Select Board and Finance Committee are aware, the Town of Groton is facing significant financial challenges in Fiscal Year 2028. Given the anticipated budget deficit for FY 2028, we initiated the budget development process considerably earlier than in previous years. This proactive approach is intended to provide sufficient time to thoroughly evaluate projected revenues and expenditures, identify the factors contributing to the anticipated shortfall, and develop a responsible and sustainable financial plan that addresses the Town's fiscal challenges while continuing to provide essential municipal and educational services.

Understanding that the financial challenges facing Groton are closely tied to the financial circumstances of the Town of Dunstable and the Groton-Dunstable Regional School District, Dunstable Town Administrator Jason Silva and I established the Town Manager's/Town Administrator's Budget Working Group. The purpose of this Working Group is to bring together representatives from all three entities to collaboratively review projected FY 2028 revenues and expenditures, assess the anticipated financial pressures facing each community and the School District, and develop a common recommendation to address the deficit during the development of the Fiscal Year 2028 Proposed Operating Budget. The Working Group consists of the following representatives:

Town of Groton: Town Manager Mark Haddad, Select Board Member Nick Degaitas, and Finance Committee Member Bud Robertson.

Town of Dunstable: Town Administrator Jason Silva, Select Board Member Ron Mikol, and Advisory Committee Member Matthew Naughton.

Groton-Dunstable Regional School District: Regional School Committee Chair Lacey McCabe, Superintendent Dr. Geoff Bruno, and Director of Business Sherry Kersey.

In addition to the members of the Working Group, members of Groton's Finance Team, including Patricia DuFresne, Katie Kazanjian, Tammi Mickel, Melisa Doig, and Kara Cruikshank, have participated in the meetings, providing valuable support throughout the process.

To date, the Working Group has held several meetings during which we have conducted a comprehensive review of anticipated revenues and expenditures for FY 2028 for the Towns of Groton and Dunstable, as well as the Groton-Dunstable Regional School District. These discussions have focused on identifying projected revenue growth, anticipated increases in operating expenses, and the financial implications of the Regional School District's budget on both member communities. The collaborative nature of these discussions has been particularly important, as decisions made by one entity will inevitably have financial implications for the others.

Based on our preliminary analysis, it is clear that both Groton and Dunstable are facing significant projected budget deficits in Fiscal Year 2028. While these projections will continue to be refined as additional financial information becomes available, the magnitude of the anticipated shortfalls requires that we begin addressing these challenges immediately. It is equally important that we approach this process with a shared understanding that the financial resources available to support municipal operations and public education are limited. Balancing these competing needs will require difficult decisions, meaningful cooperation, and a commitment by all parties to developing budgets that are both fiscally responsible and sustainable over the long term.

With that background, I believe it is important for the Select Board and Finance Committee to have a clear understanding of the Town's anticipated financial position before establishing formal budget guidance for FY 2028. The following chart summarizes the Town of Groton's preliminary projected revenues and expenditures for Fiscal Year 2028 and shows the anticipated budget shortfall that will need to be addressed as we move forward with the budget development process:

<u>Category</u>	<u>FY 2028</u>
Unexpended Levy Capacity	\$ 37,714
Anticipated FY 2028 Levy Increase (\$18 Million in New Growth)	\$ 1,302,821
Anticipated FY 2028 Local Receipts Increase	\$ -
Anticipated FY 2028 State Aid Increase (2.5% Estimated Increase)	\$ 31,690
Available New Revenue for Fiscal Year 2028	\$ 1,372,225
Initial Set Aside for Municipal Budget (40%)	\$ 548,890
Initial Set Aside for GDRSD Operational Assessment (60%)	\$ 823,335
Anticipated Increase in GDRSD Assessment (9.24% Increase)	\$ 2,721,757
<u>Anticipated Increases in Municipal Budget</u>	
Salaries/Wages - All Union Contracts Call for 3% COLA	\$ 293,877
Pension - (Estimated Increase of 6.54%)	\$ 132,115
Health Insurance - (Estimated Increase of 10%)	\$ 184,578
Anticipated Increase Patriot RECC - Communications Budget	\$ 180,000
Anticipated Increase in Nashoba Tech (2½% Increase)	\$ 23,490
Total	\$ 814,060
Anticipated FY 2027 Preliminary Surplus(Deficit)	\$ (2,163,592)

A projected budget deficit of this magnitude cannot be overcome without making significant reductions to both the Town's municipal operating budget and the operating assessment of the Groton-Dunstable Regional School District. The financial challenges facing both communities are substantial, and there is simply no realistic scenario in which we can close the anticipated budget gap through minor spending adjustments, operational efficiencies, or modest reductions in departmental budgets. Without a significant infusion of additional revenue, both the Town and the School District will be forced to make difficult decisions that will have a direct and lasting impact on the level and quality of services provided to our residents.

Unfortunately, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has not proven to be a reliable partner in helping municipalities address these growing financial challenges. While the FY 2027 State Budget provides for the establishment of a Committee to study the Chapter 70 education funding formula, I do not believe that the Committee's work will be completed in time to result in any meaningful increase in education funding for the Groton-Dunstable Regional School District in FY 2028. Furthermore, despite a significant lobbying effort by the Massachusetts Municipal Association to increase Unrestricted General Government Aid (UGGA) in FY 2027, the Town of Groton received an increase of only \$84,871, or 7.1%. While any increase in state aid is appreciated, this amount does very little to address the escalating costs of providing municipal services. I have no reason to anticipate a substantial increase in unrestricted state aid in FY 2028. Simply stated, depending on the Commonwealth to provide the additional financial resources necessary to resolve our FY 2028 budget deficit is neither a realistic nor a responsible budget strategy.

Based on the Working Group's discussions and financial analysis, it is clear that we are facing two choices in Fiscal Year 2028. We can either seek an Override of Proposition 2½ in both Groton and Dunstable for FY 2028 or make significant reductions to both municipal operating budgets and the Regional School District's operating budget. Neither alternative is without considerable challenges. However, given the magnitude of the projected deficit, I believe we have no choice but to seriously consider pursuing an override as a means of preserving the essential services that our residents have come to expect from both the Town and School District. I fully recognize that pursuing a Proposition 2½ override in Groton will be a difficult undertaking. The Town has not successfully passed a Proposition 2½ operating override since 2004, and our history demonstrates that obtaining voter support for additional property taxes is far from certain. Nevertheless, the financial circumstances we are facing in FY 2028 are significant, and I do not see a viable alternative that would allow us to maintain our current level of municipal and educational services without seeking additional revenue. The reductions necessary to balance the budget without an override would be severe and would detrimentally reduce the level of services we are able to provide. In my opinion, we need to fully explain the magnitude of the problem and identify the exact reductions/impacts if we fail to address it. This will provide an opportunity for residents to determine the level of services they are willing to support.

Making this even more difficult is the fact that the Town of Groton is also facing a significant staffing shortage within the Fire Department that must be addressed as part of the FY 2028 budget process. The Fire Staffing Working Group has been reviewing the Department's staffing needs and is recommending, at a minimum, that the Town hire one additional Firefighter/EMT as soon as possible. This would bring each group to three Firefighter/EMTs. However, the ultimate goal is hiring a total of five additional Firefighter/EMTs, which would bring each group to four Firefighter/EMTs. These staffing needs are not simply a matter of enhancing existing services. As presented to the Select Board and Finance Committee at your joint meeting of September 28th, they are directly related to the Town's ability to provide adequate fire protection and emergency medical services to our residents. Addressing this critical public safety need will require additional financial resources at precisely the same time that we are struggling to

maintain existing municipal and educational operations. This further reinforces the need to consider an Override of Proposition 2½ in Fiscal Year 2028.

Recognizing Groton's history with Proposition 2½ overrides, the Budget Working Group determined that it would be beneficial to learn from other Massachusetts communities that have recently faced similar financial challenges and successfully obtained voter approval for additional operating revenues. To that end, members of the Working Group met with officials from the Towns of Grafton and Marblehead and the City of Melrose. Each of these communities successfully pursued and passed multi-year, multi-level overrides to address structural budget deficits and avoid significant reductions in municipal and educational services. The discussions with these communities were extremely valuable and provided important insight into the challenges associated with developing, communicating, and ultimately obtaining voter support for an operational override. While each community approached its financial challenges somewhat differently, each community outlined the importance of clearly demonstrating to residents the financial realities facing their community, the specific services that would be impacted without additional revenue, and the long-term benefits of establishing a sustainable financial plan. These communities recognized that simply presenting voters with a request for additional funding was not sufficient. Residents needed to understand why the additional revenue was necessary, how it would be utilized, and what the consequences would be if the override were unsuccessful.

Another important takeaway from these discussions was the value of considering a multi-year approach to addressing structural budget deficits. Rather than seeking additional revenue to address only a single fiscal year's shortfall, these communities developed strategies intended to provide greater financial stability over multiple fiscal years. This approach requires careful financial forecasting, clearly defined spending priorities, and a commitment to managing future expenditures within the additional revenue authorized by the voters. It also requires transparency and accountability so that residents can have confidence that the additional tax dollars are being utilized for their intended purposes. I believe the experiences of Grafton, Marblehead, and Melrose provide a useful framework as we consider our options for FY 2028. While there are important differences between these communities and Groton, their experiences demonstrate that voters may be willing to support additional operating revenues when presented with a clear, credible, and well-documented explanation of the community's financial needs. Equally important, these discussions reinforced that a successful override effort must begin well in advance of the actual vote and must be grounded in accurate financial information, realistic expenditure projections, and a clear understanding of the services that are at risk.

I believe it is crucial that the Select Board, Finance Committee, along with the Town of Dunstable and the Groton-Dunstable Regional School District approach this challenge together. An override should not be viewed as an opportunity to expand government spending without restraint, but rather as a way to preserve essential services, address critical public safety needs, and establish a more sustainable financial foundation for the future. At the same time, we must recognize that any request for additional taxpayer support must be accompanied by a demonstrated commitment to controlling costs and ensuring that every available tax dollar is spent responsibly. This was a hallmark to the strategy used by the Town of Marblehead. The Finance Committee and School Committee entered into an agreement outlining the terms and commitment by both Boards on budget growth over the course of the projected override length. Ultimately, the decision to pursue an override will rest with the Select Boards of both Groton and Dunstable, and the final decision on whether to authorize additional property tax revenue will rest with the voters of Groton and Dunstable. However, given the severity of the projected FY 2028 deficit, I believe we have an obligation to fully explore this option and develop a comprehensive plan that allows our residents to make an informed decision about the future of municipal services and public education in Groton and Dunstable.

Based on the work undertaken by the Town Manager's/Town Administrator's Budget Working Group, including our review of projected revenues and expenditures, the anticipated structural deficits facing both communities, and the experiences of other municipalities that have successfully pursued Proposition 2½ overrides, I am recommending that the Select Board and Finance Committee adopt the following budget guidance for Fiscal Year 2028. I believe it is essential that we approach this process with complete transparency and provide our residents with a clear understanding of the financial challenges facing the Town and the consequences of not obtaining revenues necessary to maintain services. Please consider the following:

Alternative One: Develop of a Balanced FY 2028 Budget Without a Proposition 2½ Override

The Select Board should direct the Town Manager to prepare and submit a balanced Fiscal Year 2028 Operating Budget that does not rely on the passage of a Proposition 2½ override. This budget must be developed using available revenues within the Town's existing levy limit, together with other reasonably anticipated revenue sources. The Town Manager shall identify the specific reductions necessary to bring the municipal operating budget into balance. In addition, working collaboratively with the Groton-Dunstable Regional School District, identify the reductions in the School District's operating assessment that would be necessary to achieve a balanced budget without additional property tax revenue. This budget must clearly identify the positions, programs, services, and operational capabilities that would be eliminated or reduced. Residents deserve to understand precisely what a balanced budget without an override would mean for public safety, public works, general government, and the educational services provided to our children. While this will require difficult decisions, I believe it is a necessary first step. Regardless of whether the Town ultimately pursues an override, I am legally required to provide a Balanced Budget. In addition, developing this Budget will establish a clear baseline against which residents can evaluate the benefits and costs of any proposed override.

Alternative Two: Consideration of a Three-Year, Multi-Level Proposition 2½ Override

The Select Board, with the support of the Finance Committee, should consider seeking voter approval of a multi-year Proposition 2½ operating override designed to address the Town's financial needs over Fiscal Years 2028, 2029, and 2030. Based on our discussions with officials from Grafton, Marblehead, and Melrose, the Working Group believes that a multi-year financial strategy, coupled with multiple override questions offering different levels of service, provides a reasonable approach for consideration. In particular, the Towns of Marblehead and the City of Melrose utilized multiple override questions to provide voters with choices regarding the level of municipal and educational services they wished to support.

I believe this approach is especially appropriate for Groton. Rather than presenting voters with a single take-it-or-leave-it override proposal, we should provide them with clearly defined funding alternatives that distinguish between maintaining existing services and making targeted investments to restore services and address critical staffing deficiencies. The Working Group has developed three potential override funding scenarios for consideration.

Level One – Maintain Level Services Override

The first proposed override level would provide the funding necessary to maintain the current level of municipal and educational services over the next three fiscal years. Based on the projected Municipal Budget and Operating Assessment from the School District over the next three years, we have estimated that the three-year override requirement would be **\$6,450,000.**

This funding level is intended to stabilize municipal and School District operations and avoid another round of significant service reductions over the three-year planning period. It is important to emphasize that this is not a restoration budget. It does not seek to replace positions eliminated during previous budget cycles, restore every program that has been reduced, or address all of the Town's identified staffing needs. Instead, this scenario is designed to provide the additional revenue necessary to maintain the level of services currently being delivered to our residents and students. Given the reductions that have already occurred in both municipal government and the School District, I believe this represents the minimum additional investment necessary to preserve our existing operations.

Level Two – Restoration Investment Override

The second proposed override level would build upon the Maintain Level Services scenario by providing additional funding for targeted staffing restorations and critical service needs within both the Groton-Dunstable Regional School District and the Town's municipal departments. Unlike the first scenario, which is intended solely to stabilize existing operations, this level recognizes that reductions made over the last several fiscal years have had a meaningful impact on the Town's and School District's ability to deliver services. However, this proposal is not intended to restore every previously eliminated position or expenditure. Instead, it focuses on carefully selected investments that would have the greatest impact on core municipal services, public safety, and educational programming.

Over the past three fiscal years, the Groton-Dunstable Regional School District has reduced staffing by more than 40 full-time equivalent positions (FTEs). These reductions have been significant, and the District has made clear that it is not seeking to restore every position eliminated during this period. Rather, the District has undertaken a review of its educational and operational needs and identified approximately 7.6 FTEs that it believes are necessary to support the continued delivery of a quality educational program. I will defer to the School Committee and District Administration to provide the specific details of these proposed restorations and explain their educational and operational importance. The estimated additional funding required for the School District's proposed restoration is approximately \$1,140,000, of which Groton's anticipated share is approximately \$855,000.

On the municipal side, I have reviewed the staffing reductions implemented during the last two fiscal years, as well as the operational needs identified by our Department Heads. Based on this review, I am recommending the restoration of three previously eliminated positions: One Police Officer, eliminated from the FY 2027 Operating Budget and Two Department of Public Works employees, eliminated over the last two fiscal years. The total estimated FY 2028 cost of restoring these three positions is \$356,893.

I believe these are reasonable and targeted restorations that would directly improve the Town's ability to deliver essential municipal services. The Police Department and Department of Public Works provide fundamental services that our residents rely upon every day. Restoring these positions would help address operational pressures resulting from previous staffing reductions and strengthen our ability to meet existing service demands. In addition to these restorations, we must address the significant staffing deficiencies identified through the Fire Department Staffing Study and the work of the Fire Staffing Working Group. The Fire Department's staffing needs present a particularly important challenge because they directly affect the Town's ability to respond to fires, medical emergencies, and other public safety incidents. The staffing recommendations can be viewed as two distinct stages.

The first stage calls for the immediate addition of one Firefighter/EMT. This would bring staffing to three Firefighter/EMTs assigned to each of the Department's four shifts. The second stage would provide for the addition of four more Firefighter/EMTs, bringing the total proposed increase to five positions and resulting

in four Firefighter/EMTs assigned to each shift. Given the financial implications of these recommendations, I believe it is appropriate to present voters with two versions of the Restoration Investment Override, allowing them to determine the level of additional investment they are willing to support.

Restoration Investment – Version One: Three Firefighter/EMTs Per Shift

This scenario would include the funding necessary to maintain existing services, together with the following targeted investments:

- Restoration of approximately 7.6 FTEs within the Groton-Dunstable Regional School District. **(\$855,000)**
- Restoration of one Police Officer. **(\$195,493)**
- Restoration of two Department of Public Works employees. **(\$161,400)**
- Addition of one Firefighter/EMT (three Firefighter/EMTs on each of the four shifts.) **(\$147,474)**

This option would restore several critical municipal and educational positions while addressing the Fire Department's most immediate staffing recommendation.

The estimated three-year override requirement for this scenario is \$7,900,000.

Restoration Investment – Version Two: Four Firefighter/EMTs Per Shift

The final scenario would include all of the funding and staffing investments identified in Version One, with the additional commitment to implement the full staffing recommendation contained in the Fire Department Staffing Study. Specifically, this scenario would provide funding for four additional Firefighter/EMTs **(\$589,896)** beyond the initial position included in Version One, resulting in a total increase of five Firefighter/EMTs and bringing each of the Department's four shifts to four Firefighter/EMTs. I believe this option deserves serious consideration because it addresses not only the immediate staffing deficiency within the Fire Department but also establishes a more appropriate long-term staffing model for the delivery of fire protection and emergency medical services in Groton.

The estimated three-year override requirement for this scenario is \$8,530,000.

Summary of Proposed Override Funding Levels

Based on the Working Group's preliminary analysis, the following three-year override funding framework is recommended for further consideration:

- Question #1 – Maintain Level Services - \$6,450,000
- Question #2 – Restoration/Investment – One Additional FF/EMT - \$7,900,000
- Question #3 – Restoration/Investment – Five Additional FF/EMT - \$8,530,000

These three scenarios represent progressively greater investments in municipal and educational services. The first would provide the resources necessary to maintain current operations. The second would preserve existing services while restoring targeted positions and addressing the Fire Department's immediate staffing need. The third would provide those same restorations while implementing the full Fire

Department staffing recommendation. It is important to emphasize that these figures represent preliminary three-year funding targets and will continue to be refined as we finalize revenue projections, School District assessments, staffing costs, and other expenditure assumptions. The precise annual override amounts, the structure of the ballot questions, and the estimated impact on residential property taxes will need to be developed as part of the Final Town Manager's Proposed Fiscal Year 2028 Operating Budget. Any multi-year override proposal must also recognize that voter-approved levy capacity becomes part of the Town's ongoing property tax base.

The following Chart shows the potential impact on the Average Tax Bill over the next three fiscal years:

Override Level	FY2027	FY2028	Increase	FY2029	Increase	FY2030	Increase
Balanced Budget - Without Override							
Estimated Tax Rate	\$ 15.44	\$ 15.81	\$ 0.37	\$ 16.11	\$ 0.30	\$ 16.38	\$ 0.27
Estimated Average Tax Bill	\$ 11,756	\$ 12,038	\$ 282	\$ 12,266	\$ 228	\$ 12,472	\$ 206
Level Services - \$6,450,000							
Estimated Tax Rate	\$ 15.44	\$ 16.55	\$ 1.11	\$ 17.49	\$ 0.94	\$ 18.52	\$ 1.03
Estimated Average Tax Bill	\$ 11,756	\$ 12,601	\$ 845	\$ 13,317	\$ 716	\$ 14,101	\$ 784
Estimated Tax Rate Increase for Override			\$ 0.74		\$ 0.64		\$ 0.76
Estimated Tax Bill Increase for Override			\$ 563		\$ 488		\$ 578
Restoration - One Firefighter/ EMT \$7,900,000							
Estimated Tax Rate	\$ 15.44	\$ 16.99	\$ 1.55	\$ 17.96	\$ 0.97	\$ 19.01	\$ 1.05
Estimated Average Tax Bill	\$ 11,756	\$ 12,936	\$ 1,180	\$ 13,675	\$ 739	\$ 14,474	\$ 799
Estimated Tax Rate Increase for Override			\$ 1.18		\$ 0.67		\$ 0.78
Estimated Tax Bill Increase for Override			\$ 898		\$ 511		\$ 593
Restoration - Five Firefighter/ EMTs \$8,530,000							
Estimated Tax Rate	\$ 15.44	\$ 17.19	\$ 1.75	\$ 18.16	\$ 0.97	\$ 19.22	\$ 1.06
Estimated Average Tax Bill	\$ 11,756	\$ 13,088	\$ 1,332	\$ 13,827	\$ 739	\$ 14,634	\$ 807
Estimated Tax Rate Increase for Override			\$ 1.38		\$ 0.67		\$ 0.79
Estimated Tax Bill Increase for Override			\$ 1,050		\$ 511		\$ 601

I believe this proposed Budget Guidance provides the Select Board and Finance Committee with a responsible and transparent path forward. By first developing a balanced budget without an override, we will clearly establish the consequences of attempting to address the FY 2028 deficit solely through expenditure reductions. By simultaneously developing three distinct override funding scenarios, we can provide residents with meaningful choices about the future level of municipal and educational services in Groton. It is also important that we approach this process with the understanding that an override, regardless of the amount ultimately proposed, is not a substitute for continued fiscal discipline. Every department, including the School District, must remain committed to controlling expenditures, identifying efficiencies, and ensuring that available resources are utilized effectively. Any additional revenue approved by the voters must be supported by a credible, sustainable, multi-year financial plan.

I look forward to discussing this in more detail with the Select Board and Finance Committee during your Joint Meeting scheduled for Monday, October 26, 2026 at the Groton Center in West Groton. In the meantime, please feel free to reach out to me with any questions or concerns prior to the joint meeting.

MWH/rjb

cc: Dr. Geoff Bruno – Superintendent, Groton Dunstable Regional School District
Sherry Kersey – Director of Business, Groton Dunstable Regional School District
Lacey McCabe – Chair, Groton Dunstable Regional School District Committee
Jason Silva – Dunstable Town Administrator
Patricia DuFresne – Assistant Director of Finance/Town Accountant
Katie Kazanjian – Treasurer/Tax Collector
Tammi Mickel – Principal Assessor
Melisa Doig – Human Resources Director
Kara Cruikshank – Executive Assistant to the Town Manager

SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2026
UN-APPROVED

Select Board Members Present: Peter Cunningham, Chair; Nick Degaitas Jr., Clerk; John Reilly; Matt Pisani; Becky Pine, Vice Chair;

Also Present: Mark Haddad, Town Manager; Kara Cruikshank, Executive Assistant to the Town Manager; Patricia DuFresne, Assistant Director of Finance/Town Accountant; Fran Stanley, Groton Housing Coordinator.

Chair Cunningham called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM and reviewed the agenda.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mr. Degaitas announced that he attended a Groton Lakes Association meeting, found it informative, and appreciated all the work they do to preserve the lakes.

Ms. Pine said the Groton Herald ran an article about the Affordable Housing units owned by the Groton Housing Authority at Sandy Pond. She said the article was based on minutes from about a year ago. She explained that there has been further development over the past year, and that Russ Harris will write an updated article. Ms. Pine also explained that Ken Martin, since taking over the management of the Groton Affordable Housing is bringing in a lot of grant money.

Mr. Cunningham said there has been significant discussion about the MDM Transportation Study. He announced a public forum on Thursday, November 19th, at the Marion Stoddart Building at 7:00 p.m. to discuss the Report's findings in more detail and gather public feedback. He asked residents to take a beat and allow the public process to move forward.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD - Zoom

None

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

- 1. Consider Ratifying the Town Manager's Appointment of Mary Clay to the Greenway Committee.**

Mr. Reilly moved to ratify the Town Manager's appointment of Mary Clay to the Greenway Committee, with a term expiring on June 30, 2027. Ms. Pine seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

- 2. Update on the Approval of the Groton Charter by the Legislature and Governor.**

Mr. Haddad announced to the Select Board and Groton residents that Governor Healey signed into law Chapter 234 of the Acts of 2026 into law, "An Act Amending the Charter for the Town of Groton." He thanked the Charter Review Committee, Senator Cronin, and Representative Margaret Scarsdale for their efforts in getting the Charter approved. Mr. Haddad then reviewed the major amendments now in effect:

1. One member of the Select Board and the Town Manager can now sign all payroll and expense warrants.
2. The Town Manager will appoint the Police Chief, Fire Chief, and Town Clerk, pursuant to Select Board Policy and subject to ratification by the Select Board.
3. The Town Manager now appoints members of the Boards and Committees, subject to Select Board ratification, rather than nominating them for appointment by the Board.
4. The position of Principal Assistant Assessor is retitled Principal Assessor to conform with state law.
5. The Personnel Board is eliminated.
6. The Town Manager's Capital Budget is now due on January 31, at the same time as the Operating Budget.

Ms. Pine further explained that the appointment policy for the Police Chief, Fire Chief, and Town Clerk is designed to require collaboration between the Town Manager and the Select Board throughout the process. Mr. Haddad said the Town Clerk is preparing printed copies of the updated Charter, which will also be posted on the Town website.

3. Update from Town Manager on Fall Town Meeting Follow-Up.

Now that the Fall Town Meeting has concluded, Mr. Haddad wanted to update the Board on the actions his office took in response to the votes and decisions made at Town Meeting. He took a moment to recognize and thank his Executive Assistant, Kara Cruikshank, for her exceptional attention to detail, organizational skills, and coordination. He said her contributions are greatly appreciated. Mr. Haddad addressed the electronic voting, explaining that additional protocols and testing procedures are now in place to prevent a recurrence of the electronic voting issues. He said that Moderator Jason Kauppi and Town Clerk Grace Bannasch were well prepared to handle any challenges that arose. He added that, thanks to their planning and quick response, Town Meeting continued with very little disruption. Mr. Haddad thanked them both.

Mr. Haddad reviewed several articles from the Fall Town Meeting and summarized the actions taken. The Town Manager's Report is included with these minutes for reference and further explanation.

Article 2- Budget Amendments/Appropriation

The Board approved the job description for the part-time Economic Development Director position (15 hours per week, \$25,000 appropriated on a trial basis). The position will be advertised, and Mr. Haddad will form an interview committee.

Ms. Pine moved to approve the job description for a Part-Time Economic Development Director. Mr. Degaitas seconded the motion.

Discussion

Jeff Gordon of the Destination Groton Committee asked whether a few members could join the Economic Development Director interview committee. Mr. Haddad said absolutely.

The motion carried unanimously.

Article 10- Cow Pond Brook Fields

The low bidder for this project is M.J. Cataldo. Mr. Haddad explained that the contract is being prepared and a kickoff meeting is scheduled for Thursday, October 22nd. Work is projected to begin on November 1st. The state grant contract has been received and covers up to \$1 million in eligible costs for the \$3.9 million project. Mr. Haddad said the project must be completed by December 31, 2027.

Article 11- Country Club Irrigation System/Course Improvements

National Lawn Sprinkler, Inc. is the low bidder on this project, and the Contract was awarded to them. Mr. Haddad said the work is expected to begin at the Country Club by December 1st, so the irrigation system will be operational and the course can open on time in April 2027.

Article 12- Means Tested Senior Citizen Property Tax Exemption

The Town has filed the special legislation with the state delegation. Mr. Haddad clarified that the exemption would be funded through the overlay, rather than shifting the cost to other residential taxpayers. When setting the tax rate, Tammi Mickel, Principal Assessor, would recommend setting the percentage at 50% of the circuit breaker amount for the first year, with the Board able to re-evaluate it annually. Mr. Haddad said it would run for three years and would expire unless renewed by Town Meeting. He reiterated that this will not raise residents' taxes more than allowed under Proposition 2½.

Article 16-Citizens' Petition- Study of Housing Opportunities

Mr. Cunningham thought resources might be available to prepare a report. Ms. Pine has been considering who could bring the Committee together and move the effort forward. She spoke with a Planning Board member, who said they are beginning to revise the existing multifamily zoning bylaw, potentially creating more opportunities. Ms. Pine suggested involving the Housing Partnership and possibly meeting with Russ Harris, the Citizen Petitioner. Mr. Cunningham agreed that the Housing Partnership could lead the study. Mr. Degaitas asked whether representatives from various committees and boards could lead it. Mr. Haddad advised Mr. Degaitas to contact various boards to find volunteers, then bring a group of members back to the Board to formalize the group. Mr. Cunningham will contact the Housing Partnership members and begin the process.

4. Fiscal Year 2028 Update.

The Town Manager stated that the Select Board will meet with the Finance Committee in joint session next Monday, October 26, at the Groton Center to establish Budget Guidance for Fiscal Year 2028. He sent a memorandum to both the Select Board and the Finance Committee under separate cover in advance of the meeting, and it will be included in next week's packet.

Ms. Pine took a few moments to review ballot questions #5, #6, and #8, noting that they would significantly affect the Town's Budget.

5. Update on Select Board Schedule through the End of the Year.

Monday, October 26, 2026-	Provide Budget Guidance to the Town Manager
Monday, November 2, 2026-	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, November 9, 2026-	No Meeting
Monday, November 16, 2026-	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Thursday, November 19, 2026-	Public Hearing on Main Street Study (PAC)

Mr. Haddad briefly discussed the Main Street Study by MDT Transportation and emphasized that it was just the start. Ms. Pine said that, based on the Study, they believe the Town meets the criteria for a traffic light. Email questions and comments to mainstreetstudy@grotonma.gov. Comments will be forwarded to MDM for response. The Board suggested a Q&A handout for the public forum would help share information.

Monday, November 23, 2026-	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, November 30, 2026-	No Meeting
Monday, December 7, 2026-	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, December 14, 2026-	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, December 21, 2026-	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, December 28, 2026-	No Meeting (Christmas Holiday)
Monday, January 4, 2027-	No Meeting (New Year's Holiday)
Monday, January 22, 2027-	Regularly Scheduled Meeting

ITEMS FOR SELECT BOARD CONSIDERATION AND APPROVAL

1. Consider Appointing Carole Carter and Doug Dubois to the T.R.E.A.D. Committee.

Mr. Pisani moved to appoint Carole Carter and Doug Dubois to the T.R.E.A.D. Committee, terms expiring on June 30, 2027. Mr. Degaitas seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

2. Consider Request from the Groton Housing Authority to Waive Fees Related to Project at Petapawag Place.

The Board received a letter from Ken Martin, Executive Director of the Groton Housing Authority, requesting a waiver of local board and committee fees for several projects underway at Petapawag Place. Mr. Haddad explained that while the Housing Authority is not a Town department, it is a governmental entity, like the Groton Dunstable Regional School District and the West Groton Water District. Because the Board's fee waiver policy does not specifically include the Housing Authority, he brought the request to the Select Board for approval. The waiver would cover only filing and review fees charged by boards such as the Historic District Commission and the Planning Board—not building permit or electrical fees. The project, funded with approximately \$3 million in state funds, includes an elevator, door upgrades, and parking lot and accessibility improvements.

Ms. Pine moved to waive the Groton Housing Authority fees related to the Petapawag Place project. Mr. Pisani seconded the motion.

Discussion

Ms. Pine explained that Ken Martin has been an incredible asset.

The motion carried unanimously.

OTHER BUSINESS

On-Going Issues

- A. PFAS Issue – Letters were sent last week to 84 residents in the towns of Groton and Dunstable. The inspection process is underway to determine how to connect the properties that must be connected. He said contractor DeFelice and engineer Apex will conduct site visits at individual homes with Water Superintendent Dan Stoneking and DPW Director Brian Callahan.
- B. UMass Satellite Emergency Facility – On October 6th, Congresswoman Trahan and the Governor visited the facility. The facility is scheduled to open on February 1st.
- C. Fire Department Staffing – None
- D. West Groton Dam Removal-None
- E. Main Street Study –None
- F. Flock Cameras – None

SELECT BOARD LIAISON REPORTS

Ms. Pine reported that the Non-Profit Council met last week and was very well attended.

Approval of the Regularly Scheduled Meeting of September 28, 2026.

Mr. Reilly made a motion to approve the minutes from the regularly scheduled meeting on September 28, 2026. Mr. Pisani seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Approval of the Prior Meeting to Town Meeting on October 3, 2026.

Mr. Reilly made a motion to approve the minutes from the Prior Meeting to Town Meeting on October 3, 2026. M. Pisani seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Approval of the Special Meeting on October 13, 2026.

Mr. Reilly made a motion to approve the special meeting on October 13, 2026. Mr. Pisani seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Pine moved to move into Executive Session and not return to open session. Mr. Reilly seconded the motion. Roll Call: Pine-aye; Reilly-aye; Degaitas-aye; Pisani-aye; Cunningham-aye.

The Select Board adjourned at 7:03 p.m.

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