



TOWN OF GROTON

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Select Board

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

Town Manager
Mark W. Haddad

To: *Select Board*

From: *Mark W. Haddad – Town Manager*

Subject: *Weekly Agenda Update/Report*

Date: *November 6, 2023*

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

In addition to the Town Manager's Report, Items for Select Board Consideration and Action and a review of the On-going Issues List, there is one item scheduled on Monday's Agenda. The Select Board will be meeting in joint session with the Board of Library Trustees to consider appointing Jennifer Petersen to the Library Trustees. Ms. Petersen's expression of interest is enclosed with this Report.

1. It is my intention to have a standard weekly update under the Town Manager's Report at each meeting as we develop and work to approve the FY 2025 Operating Budget. As far as this week's update is concerned, we held the Budget Kick-Off last week and Departments are in the process of preparing their budgets. I will provide any further update at the meeting.
2. Please see the update to the Select Board's Meeting Schedule that will take you through the end of the end of the year:

Monday, November 20, 2023	-Annual Tax Classification Hearing
Monday, November 27, 2023	-No Meeting
Monday, December 4, 2023	-Workshop to Discuss Transition to new Light Department General Manager and Climate Change Initiatives
Monday, December 11, 2023	-Public Safety Officials – Review Housing Construction Impact and Examine Traffic Patterns, etc.
Monday, December 18, 2023	-Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, December 25, 2023	- No Meeting (Christmas Holiday)
Monday, January 1, 2024	-No Meeting (New Years Day)
Monday, January 8, 2024	-Regularly Scheduled Meeting

Select Board
Weekly Agenda Update/Report
November 6, 2023
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ITEMS FOR SELECT BOARD CONSIDERATION AND ACTION

1. I would respectfully request that the Select Board approve a One Day Wine and Malt Beverage License the Prescott Community Center/Friends of Prescott for the Community Spelling Bee to be held on Friday, November 17, 2023, from 6:30 p.m. to 10:30 p.m.

MWH/rjb
enclosures

Mark Haddad

From: Vanessa Abraham <vabraham@gpl.org>
Sent: Wednesday, November 1, 2023 12:54 PM
To: Mark Haddad
Cc: Kara Cruikshank
Subject: FW: Library Trustee to be Jennifer Petersen

Hi, Mark! Here is Jennifer Petersen's letter of interest in becoming a Library Trustee. Thank you! We'll see you Monday night!

From: [Jennifer Petersen <jennifer94@aol.com>](mailto:jennifer94@aol.com)
To: Groton Trustees <gpltrustees@gpl.org>
Subject: Board of Trustees Vacancy

Hello!

I am writing to express my desire to be considered as a Groton Public Library Trustee. By way of background, I have been involved with the library on a number of levels since moving to Groton with my husband and four children in 2003. When my children were young, we spent many joyful hours in the library reading, exploring, and participating in programs and reading challenges. As middle-schoolers, instead of coming home and watching television on half-days, the kids happily chose to go to the library for "Llama Lounge." The library has also been a special place for me, personally, to learn and grow and have fun: for many years now, I have participated in the Great Books and Page Turners book groups, and now that our children have left for college and careers, my husband and I continue to enjoy the lifelong learning, crafts, and other adult programming.

When I think of libraries, most especially our Groton Public Library, the word that comes to mind first is "sanctuary." Part of my interest in being on the Board of Trustees stems from my strongly-held belief that our library is, perhaps, our town's most precious asset. It is a place of learning, community, growth, reflection, exploration, collaboration, and joy! I truly appreciate how the library is able to maintain more traditional offerings such as books, audio-visual materials, educational groups, and programming, while simultaneously adapting to the multi-faceted needs and increasingly-diverse interests of the community. By continuing to evolve and stay relevant, the library will continue to provide our town and those who visit with both roots and wings.

Thank you for your consideration, and have a great weekend!

Sincerely,

Jennifer Petersen
447 Longley Road
Groton, MA 02108
978-448-1419 (talk)
978-877-7898 (text)
jennifer94@aol.com

**SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, OCTOBER 30, 2023
UN-APPROVED**

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

Also Present: Mark Haddad, Town Manager; Kara Cruikshank, Executive Assistant to the Town Manager; Hannah Moller, Treasurer/Collector; Dawn Dunbar, Town Clerk; Melisa Doig, Human Resource Director; Patricia Dufresne, Assistant Finance Director/Town Accountant; Dr. Laura Chesson, GDRSD Superintendent

Finance Committee Members: Bud Robertson, Chair; David Manugian; Colby Doody; Gary Green; Mary Linskey (virtually), and Mike Sulprizio

Mr. Cunningham called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Ms. Pine asked everyone to please come vote in favor of the Debt Exclusion Override for the PFAS problem. Ms. Dunbar announced early voting started after Town Meeting and will continue through Friday during normal business hours. The last day to request a ballot by mail is Tuesday, October 31st, by 5:00 p.m., and all mail-in ballots must be submitted by 7:00 p.m. on Election Day.

Mr. Pisani announced that during trick-or-treating hours, the Fire Explorers would be offering drinks and hot dogs at the Union Congregational Church..

Ms. Pine announced a Sustainability Seminar on Home Solar and Battery on Wednesday, November 1st, at 7:00 p.m. at the Groton Center.

Mr. Reilly said on Halloween, the Mountain Lakes Club will hold a haunted walk through the woods, which will take place at the Lost Lake Fire Station. Ms. Pine wanted to thank the Fire and Police Departments for keeping trick-or-treaters safe.

Mr. Cunningham wanted to congratulate the Groton Garden Club and the work that they do. He said they received an award for the garden on the side of Town Hall planted with Native plants.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Robertson called the Finance Committee to order at 7:07 p.m.

TOWN REPORT

- 1. Consider Ratifying the Town Managers Appointment of Robert Dixon as a Custodian for the Department of Public Works Maintenance Division.**

Ms. Pine made a motion to ratify the Town Manager's appointment of Robert Dixon as a Custodian for the Department of Public Works Maintenance Division. Mr. Pisani seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

2. Fiscal Year 2024 First Quarter Financial Report.

Mr. Haddad said that the first quarter financials were ready to be reviewed. Ms. Patricia Dufresne, Assistant Finance Director/Town Accountant, was present at the meeting to help answer any questions. Mr. Haddad said motor vehicle excise taxes were higher than last year. He added that the local meals tax and room occupancy revenues were similar to the previous year. He announced there was a newly opened marijuana shop. Mr. Haddad said they will see what revenue will be generated from the new shop. The Country Club had a record year last year and has been growing since. Mr. Haddad reported a high investment income. He also stated that the town’s overall revenue and expenses were good for the first quarter.

Update on Fiscal Year 2024 Goals and Objectives.

Mr. Haddad said that the Board's goals and objectives were on the agenda to be reviewed. He provided the updates. (Reference the attached Goals of the Groton Select Board).

Mr. Cunningham asked Mr. Haddad to add a statement in the update for Environmental Contamination issues regarding their efforts to secure funding relief from the Legislature.

Ms. Pine wanted to include in the “Reducing Costs of Government” how seniors can access financial assistance from the state for people having trouble paying their taxes. They must file their state taxes. The Center assists seniors in doing so.

Ms. Pine didn’t have an update on Diversity, Equality and Inclusion.

3. 2023 Fall Town Meeting Follow-up.

Mr. Haddad said Ms. Dunbar, the Town Clerk, will prepare the necessary documentation to submit the Charter change to the Legislature. He also said Ms. Dufresne was working on the Budget adjustments. Mr. Haddad said he hopes the Override ballot question passes on November 7th and at the Dunstable Town Meeting and subsequent override election.

Ms. Dunbar reported that the poll pads worked well at Town Meeting. Mr. Haddad said Town Meeting went great and congratulated the Town.

4. Update on Select Board Meeting Schedule Through the End of the Year

Monday, November 6, 2023	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, November 13, 2023	No Meeting
Monday, November 20, 2023	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, November 27, 2023	No Meeting
Monday, December 4, 2023	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, December 11, 2023	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, December 18, 2023	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, December 25, 2023	No Meeting (Christmas Day)
Monday, January 1, 2023	No Meeting (New Year's Day)
Monday, January 8, 2023	Regularly Scheduled Meeting

ITEMS FOR SELECT BOARD CONSIDERATION AND ACTION

- 1. Vote to Create a Gift Fund for the Park Commission (Donation in the Name of Former Cable Advisory Committee Chari Robert Piche).**

Mr. Reilly made a motion to authorize the creation of a Gift Fund for the Park Commission. Ms. Pine seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

- 2. Consider Approving a One Day All Alcoholic Beverages License for the Prescott Community Center/Friends of Prescott for Holiday Spirits to be held on Friday, December 15, 2023 from 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.**

Ms. Pine made a motion to approve a One Day All Alcoholic Beverage License for The Prescott Community Center/Friends of Prescott for Holiday Spirits to be held on Friday, December 15, 2023 from 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Mr. Pisani seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

- 3. Consider Approving a One Day All Alcoholic Beverages License for the Prescott Community Center/Friends of Prescott for Wonders of Rum to be held on Friday, November 3, 2023, from 7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.**

Mr. Pisani made a motion to approve a One Day All Alcoholic Beverage License for The Prescott Community Center/Friends of Prescott for Wonders of Rum to be held on Friday, November 3, 2023, from 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Ms. Pine seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

- 4. Consider Approving a One Day Wine and Malt Beverages License for the Prescott Community Center/Friends of Prescott for Open Mic Night to be held on Friday, November 10, 2023 from 6:30 p.m. to 10:30 p.m.**

Ms. Manugian. made a motion to approve a One Day A Wine and Malt Beverages License for The Prescott Community Center/Friends of Prescott for Open Mic Night to be held on Friday, November 10, 2023, from 6:30 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. Mr. Pisani seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

- 5. Consider Approving a One Day Wine and Malt Beverages License for Groton Neighbors for a Social Gathering of New Neighbors to be held at First Parish Church on Friday, December 1, 2023, from 4:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.**

Ms. Pine. made a motion to approve a One Day A Wine and Malt Beverages License for Groton Neighbors for a Social Gathering to be held at First Parish Church on Friday, December 1, 2023, from 4:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. Mr. Pisani seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

7:15 P.M. Meet in Joint Session with the Finance Committee- Pursuant to the Groton Charter- Provide Guidance to the Town Manager for the Development of the Fiscal Year 2025 Proposed Operating Budget

Mr. Haddad said he provided the Boards with a proposal for the Fiscal Year 2025 Budget Guidance. He explained the Town Manager's Working Group worked cooperatively with the School Committee, Finance Committee, and Select Board over the summer of 2023 with the specific task of reviewing the issues impacting the Fiscal Year 2025 Budget as soon as possible. The Working Group conducted a detailed review of current spending, developed preliminary revenue projections and spending assumptions, and developed a five-year Financial Plan for the Town of Groton. The outcome of the work showed that the Town would be facing an anticipated FY 2025 Budget Deficit of \$3.9M and a major budget deficit over the next five fiscal years. To address this, the Working Group provided three options to the Select Board and Finance

Committee for the development of the Fiscal Year 2025 Proposed Operating Budget; specifically, the options included the following:

1. Reduce the Anticipated Fiscal Year 2025 Proposed Operating Budget by \$3,918,075
2. Seek an Override of \$3,918,075 to Eliminate the Projected Fiscal Year 2025 Deficit
3. Seek an Override of Proposition 2 ½ to Eliminate Projected Five- Year Budget Deficit

Mr. Haddad said the Finance Committee and Town's budget aligned with where they should be, providing the necessary quality services they can provide. They have managed to maintain their budget without seeking additional revenue sources and have succeeded in doing so, thanks to an influx of federal government revenue. Mr. Haddad emphasized to the Board members that additional revenues would be necessary next year to maintain services for the school and municipality. When putting together revenue projections, Mr. Haddad said they were conservative. However, they are anticipating an increase in revenues. Earlier that day, he discussed the worst-case scenario numbers during a meeting with the School Superintendent, Chair and Vice-Chair of the Finance Committee, and Assistant Finance Director/Town Accountant. They discussed the possibility of making full-time kindergarten a separate override question, with a 3-year \$6 million override.

Mr. Haddad said the Select Board and Finance Committee, pursuant to the Town of Groton Charter, have continued the requirement of providing specific budget instructions. The Charter also requires the Town Manager to prepare and present the proposed budget to the Finance Committee and Select Board by December 31, 2023. Mr. Haddad recommended a balanced and level services budget and a budget showing areas where reductions could be made.

Mr. Robertson, Finance Committee Chair, said after the Joint School Committee, Select Board, and Finance Committee meeting on October 25th, the Finance Committee had met to discuss guidance to the Town Manager. They agreed an Override would be necessary to get through FY25. They didn't want to consider a 5-year Override, as the numbers were too big. The number they came up with that evening was \$2 million for a one-year Override. Mr. Robertson expressed his and Mr. Doody's desire for the Finance Committee to weigh in on a 3-year \$6 million Override and a separate kindergarten Override question after meeting with the Town Manager, the Superintendent, and the Assistant Finance Director/Town Accountant that afternoon. Ms. Linskey, a Finance Committee Member, posed the question of whether the town should weigh in on the 60/40 deficit split between the school and the town.

Select Board Comments/Questions

Mr. Cunningham expressed his concerns about supporting a 5-year Override. He said a two or 3-year Override would be something he would like to explore. Mr. Haddad said a 3-year Override would allow the School Committee to put an offer on the table for the School Teacher's Union. Dr. Chesson stated anything less than a 3-year Override would be hard to negotiate with the Teachers.

Ms. Manugian said she agreed with a 60/40 deficit split.

Mr. Reilly said that none of the information from the Report was surprising, but seeing the numbers was shocking. He stated that all sides were doing their best and were all in this together.

Ms. Pine said she was opposed to a separate Override for kindergarten because she saw it as divisive. She would prefer that the School Committee gradually drop the price of full-day kindergarten. Mr. Robertson agreed with Ms. Pine and did not support having kindergarten as a separate Override. She suggested they need to educate the town on how an Override would work so everyone understands. Ms. Linskey said adding kindergarten was not level servicing the budget. Mr. Pisani said they have to present something that has a chance to pass.

Mr. Green, a Finance Committee member, had to leave the meeting.

Mr. Haddad expressed it had been a wonderful experience collaborating with Dr. Chesson, Ms. Kersey, the GDRSD Finance Director, and the School Committee.

After much deliberation, the Select Board and Finance Committee gave the following budget guidance to the Town Manager for Fiscal Year 2025:

Select Board Vote:

Ms. Pine made a motion for Mr. Haddad to prepare two proposed budgets for Fiscal Year 2025 as follows:

- 1. One Budget shall be balanced with no proposed Override of Proposition 2 ½.*
- 2. The second budget shall be a level services budget (maintains services at the FY 2024 level and does not add any new services) that proposes a three-year potential override of Proposition 2 ½ to eliminate a projected three-year deficit.*

Also, the Town Manager shall work with the Groton Dunstable Regional School District and Nashoba Valley Technical School District representatives to create these two budgets.

Ms. Manugian seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Finance Committee Vote:

Mr. Doody made a motion for Mr. Haddad to prepare two proposed budgets for Fiscal Year 2025 as follows:

- 1. One Budget shall be balanced with no proposed Override of Proposition 2 ½.*
- 2. The second budget shall be a level services budget (maintains services at the FY 2024 level and does not add any new services) that proposes a three-year potential override of Proposition 2 ½ to eliminate a projected three-year deficit.*

Also, the Town Manager shall work with the Groton Dunstable Regional School District and Nashoba Valley Technical School District representatives to create these two budgets.

Mr. Manugian seconded the motion. Roll call: Linskey-aye; Robertson-aye; Manugian-aye; Sulprizio-aye; Doody-aye.

OTHER BUSINESS

Consider Sending a Letter to the Zoning Board of Appeals in Support of the Variance Request for 25 Station Avenue.

The Zoning Board of Appeals will meet on November 15th for a Variance request for 25 Station Avenue. The landowner would like to separate a portion of 25 Station Avenue to convey it to the Town of Groton for use as a public way. Ms. Manugian said a variance is typically granted due to a hardship. She did not believe this request would fall under a hardship according to State Law. Another concern Ms. Manugian had was that this had been used as a roadway but did not meet any of the requirements of a proper roadway. She thought it was important to be clear on what they were purchasing. Mr. Cunningham believed this was something they should pursue. Ms. Pine was also in favor and didn't think it should have been sold in the first place and should be rectified.

Mr. Haddad respectfully requested the Select Board support the Variance request for 25 Station Ave.

Ms. Pine made a motion to authorize the Town Manager to write a letter of support to the ZBA for a Variance Request for 25 Station Ave. Mr. Pisani seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a majority vote, 4 in Favor, 1 Against – Manugian

ON-GOING ISSUES

No Updates

Approval of Minutes from October 16th and October 25, 2023

M. Pine made a motion to approve the minutes of the regularly scheduled meeting from October 16 and 25, 2023, as presented. Mr. Manugian seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:43 p.m.

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