



TOWN OF GROTON

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

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

SELECT BOARD MEETING
MONDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2023
AGENDA
SELECT BOARD MEETING ROOM
2nd FLOOR
GROTON TOWN HALL

6:00 P.M. Announcements and Review Agenda for the Public

6:05 P.M. Public Comment Period

I. 6:06 P.M. Town Manager's Report

1. FY 2025 Budget Update -- Review Preliminary FY 2025 Town Manager's Proposed Budget
2. Proposed Select Board Meeting Schedule through the 2024 Spring Town Meeting

II. 6:10 P.M. Items for Select Board Consideration and Action

1. Consider Approving a One Day Wine and Malt Beverage License the Prescott Community Center/Friends of Prescott for Open Mic Night to be held on Friday, January 12, 2024 from 6:30 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.

OTHER BUSINESS -Authorize the Town Manager and One Member of the Select Board to Sign Warrants for the next 30 Days

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

- A. Water Department – Manganese Issue
- B. PFAS Issue
- C. Green Communities Application and Implementation
- D. Florence Roche Elementary School Construction Project
- E. Administrator's Working Group on FY 2025 Budget

SELECT BOARD LIAISON REPORTS

IV. Minutes: Regularly Scheduled Meeting of December 11, 2023

ADJOURNMENT

Notes 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: *December 18, 2023*

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

Other than the Town Manager's Report, Items for Select Board Consideration and Action and a review of the On-going Issues List, there is nothing specifically scheduled on Monday's Agenda.

1. Please see the attached Memorandum providing an update on the creation of the Town Manager's Proposed FY 2025 Operating Budget. I would like to spend some time at Monday's meeting reviewing this with the Select Board and Finance Committee.
2. I would like to propose the following meeting schedule that will take the Board through the Spring Town Meeting:

Monday, January 8, 2024	-Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, January 15, 2024	-No Meeting – Martin Luther King Holiday
Monday, January 22, 2024	-Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Saturday, January 27 th or Saturday, February 3 rd	- Potential Saturday Joint Budget Meeting with FinCom
Monday, January 29, 2024	-Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, February 5, 2024	-Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, February 12, 2024	-Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, February 19, 2024	-No Meeting – President's Day Holiday
Monday, February 26, 2024	-Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Wednesday, February 28, 2024	-Special Budget Forum – Time and Location TBD
Monday, March 4, 2024	-Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Wednesday, March 6, 2024	-Special Budget Forum – Time and Location TBD
Monday, March 11, 2024	-Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, March 18, 2024	-No Meeting
Monday, March 25, 2024	-Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, April 1, 2024	-Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Tuesday, April 2, 2024	-Potential Date for a Special Election to Consider an Override of Proposition 2½
Monday, April 8, 2024	-Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, April 15, 2024	-No Meeting – Patriot's Day Holiday
Monday, April 22, 2024	-Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Saturday, April 27 th or Monday, April 29 th	- 2024 Spring Town Meeting

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 Open Mic Night to be held on Friday, January 12, 2024 from 6:30 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.

MWH/rjb
enclosure



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Town Manager
Mark W. Haddad

To: *Select Board
Finance Committee*

From: *Mark W. Haddad – Town Manager*

Subject: *Update on Preparation of Fiscal Year 2025 Proposed Budget*

Date: *December 18, 2023*

The Finance Team and I are in the final stages of preparing the Fiscal Year 2025 Budget. This has been a very challenging process and before I finalize the Proposed Budget, I thought it was important to provide you with the status of where things stand. Please consider the following:

1. The Groton Dunstable Regional School District Committee voted unanimously to amend their original budget guidance to the School Superintendent allowing her to decrease the dependency on the use of E&D over the next three years, instead of all at once in FY 2025. In addition, they will continue to phase out the fee associated with all day kindergarten over the next three years as well. This will significantly help balance the FY 2025 Budget. The School Committee would like to enter into a memorandum of understanding with Groton and Dunstable memorializing this approach. I wholeheartedly support this and will schedule it for discussion with the Select Board and Finance Committee at a future meeting.
2. In compliance with the Budget Guidance voted by the Select Board and Finance Committee, we have developed a Level Services Budget for FY 2025 that is over the Projected FY 2025 Levy Limit by \$2,383,222. In addition, the three year anticipated deficit, based on level services, is \$5,388,913. Accordingly, it is my intention to propose an override of \$5,500,000 in FY 2025 that should allow us to balance the budget without needing any other overrides for the next three years, possibly four years. As far as how a potential override question should be worded, we met with our Department of Revenue Representative to clarify the issue (I sent the Select Board and Finance Committee an update under separate cover). We can put one Override Question before the voters to increase the levy to support the budget over the next three years. The question would read as follows:

“Shall the Town of Groton be allowed to assess an additional \$5,500,000 in real estate and personal property taxes for the purpose of funding the operating budget of the Town and the Assessment of the Groton Dunstable Regional School District for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2024?”

3. In order to balance the Budget in FY 2025 in the event that an override is unsuccessful, we will need to reduce the Level Services budget by \$2,383,222. Following previous guidance in which the School Assessment would absorb 60% of the reduction and the Municipal Budget would absorb 40%, I would need to reduce the Municipal Budget by \$958,288, while the School District would need to reduce their Groton Assessment by \$1,429,934. Considering the anticipated growth in the level services budget for FY 2025 is \$371,580, the Town would need to reduce the current Fiscal Year 2024 Budget by \$581,708 to meet this reduction.

4. I had asked the various Departments to provide me with the impact of an eleven (11%) percent reduction in their Level Services Budget. The Finance Team and I have used this information to reduce the budget by the required \$958,288. Currently, I am considering the following reductions by function of Government:

<u>Department</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Original Request</u>	<u>Amount Reduced</u>	<u>Percentage Reduced</u>
TOTAL GENERAL GOVERNMENT		\$ 2,472,927	\$ 80,382	3.25%
TOTAL PUBLIC SAFETY		\$ 4,515,079	\$ 334,775	7.41%
TOTAL DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS		\$ 2,389,516	\$ 289,486	12.11%
TOTAL LIBRARY AND CITIZEN SERVICES		\$ 2,192,957	\$ 133,954	6.11%
TOTAL EMPLOYEE BENEFITS		\$ 5,174,990	\$ 114,691	2.22%
=====				
TOTAL MUNICIPAL BUDGET		\$ 17,261,969	\$ 953,288	5.52%

I would like to take some time at the Select Board Meeting on Monday, December 18th discussing the impact of reducing these functions by the proposed amount, so that I can receive feedback from the Select Board and Finance Committee before finalizing the Budget.

I look forward to discussing this with the Select Board and Finance Committee as we finalize the creation of the Town Manager’s Proposed Fiscal Year 2025 Operating Budget.

MWH/rjb

**SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, DECEMBER 11, 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; Steele McCurdy, Fire Chief; Art Cheeks, Deputy Fire Chief; Dr. Laura Chesson, GDRSD Superintendent; Police Sergeant Henehan; Police Sergeant Gemos; Tom Delaney, DPW Director; Brian Callahan, DPW Director In Training; Hannah Moller, Treasurer/Tax Collector

Mr. Cunningham called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mr. Cunningham said that the Board has decided to start the Select Board meetings at 6:00 p.m. for a trial period of three months. A memo was sent out to Boards and Committees to gather feedback regarding changing the start time to 6:00 p.m. on Mondays and to see if this change would affect the operation of their Board/Committee. Ms. Manugian then read a letter into the record from Mr. Josh Degen that was submitted in response to the memo. Ms. Pine expressed her concern about the meeting starting at 6:00 p.m. She mentioned that a future Select Board candidate may not run due to the timing. Mr. Reilly stated that he had received many phone calls regarding this matter, none of which were negative. He added that surrounding towns start their meetings earlier than 7:00 p.m. Mr. Cunningham suggested continuing the trial for three months and revisiting the topic.

Mr. Haddad announced the National Council on Aging (NCOA) has officially voted unanimously to adopt the recommendation to accredit our Council on Aging. The Groton Center has been accredited by NCOA/NISA for five years, from November 2023 to November 2028. He said it is a great honor, and a celebratory event will be held on Thursday, January 18th, from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Mr. Haddad hopes that the members of the Board will be able to attend the event. He congratulated the Council on Aging, the staff, and all the volunteers who made this possible.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

None

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

1. Vote to Set the Maximum Useful Life of the New Fire Truck at 20 Years.

Mr. Haddad said that at the Spring Town Meeting on April 20, 2022, the Town voted to borrow \$800,000 for a new Fire Truck. He explained the truck was scheduled for delivery this Spring and that Treasurer/Tax Collector Hannah Moller was planning to borrow the funds in February. He said that in reviewing the debt service budget and attempting to keep the levy debt at between \$250,000 and \$300,000 annually, they have determined that it makes the most sense to pay this debt off over 20 years. Fire Trucks typically last 25 years, with a refurbishment after 15 years. To borrow the funds for 20 years, the Select Board needed to declare that the maximum Useful Life of the Fire Truck is 20 years.

Mr. Haddad respectfully requested that the Board vote to declare that the maximum useful life of the new fire truck is twenty years.

Mr. Reilly made a motion that the maximum useful life of the departmental equipment listed below to be financed with the proceeds of the \$800,000 borrowing authorized by the vote of the Town passed April 30, 2022 (Article 7) is hereby determined pursuant to G.L. c.44, §7(1) to be as follows:

<u>Purpose</u>	<u>Borrowing Amount</u>	<u>Maximum Useful Life</u>
Fire Truck	\$800,000	20 Years

Mr. Pisani seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

2. FY 2025 Budget Update

Superintendent Dr. Laura Chesson was in attendance for the discussion.

Mr. Haddad said they have been working hard on the Budget. Last Tuesday, the first Administrators' Working Group was held to discuss the FY 2025 Budget and the potential for an override to balance the Budget. Mr. Haddad formed the group to allow Groton, Dunstable, and Groton Dunstable Regional School District Officials to work cooperatively as they deal with a very difficult Budget in FY 2025. Members of the Working Group include Mr. Haddad, Patricia Dufresne, and Bud Robertson from Groton; Jason Silva and Jake Lewon from Dunstable; and Laura Chesson, Sherry Kersey, Fay Raynor and Lacey McCabe from the Groton Dunstable Regional School District. During the first meeting, he stressed the importance of Groton and Dunstable agreeing on a budget for the District. Both towns require an override to balance their respective FY 2025 Budgets, which is crucial for this Agreement. Mr. Haddad said they spent time discussing the issues surrounding the School District Budget, including budget drivers and work done by the Tri-Comm Working Group over the summer. He said it was a very positive meeting, and they are developing a plan to bring back to the Groton Select Board and Finance Committee and the Dunstable Board of Selectmen and Advisory Committee. One item Mr. Haddad wanted the Board to begin considering is when to call for an Override Vote. He said there are two schools of thought on this. One was the traditional way Groton has handled it in the past. First, Town Meeting would consider the budget and be asked to approve two budgets: a balanced budget within the current anticipated FY 2025 Levy Limit and a contingent budget based on the approval of a Proposition 2 ½ Override. The Override question would then be placed on the 2024 Annual Town Election Ballot. The second way would be to hold a Special Election prior to Town Meeting so that Town Meeting would know exactly what is available to balance the budget. Mr. Haddad said the Special Election could be held in late March/early April. He believes holding the Special Election in Groton and Dunstable on the same day is important. One suggestion was to hold the election on April 2nd. He also suggested holding a Super Town Forum in Groton and Dunstable to present the budget prior to the Override vote. This would show unity between the two towns and hopefully generate great support for the Override.

Mr. Haddad took a moment to say he and the superintendent have worked very closely, and it has been an absolute pleasure working with her as she is about to retire.

Ms. Pine asked Mr. Haddad if the town was still proposing a three-year override to be implemented. He confirmed that was the plan and they would work out how to write the Ballot Question after meeting with the Department of Revenue later this week. The Board had asked Mr. Haddad to track the progress and any changes made in the expected deficit for FY 2025. He explained that several measures have been taken to reduce the deficit, and a memo has been provided to the Board to address this request. Please refer to Revised Anticipated FY 2025 Budget Deficit for further details.

Mr. Haddad said that based on the several steps taken to reduce the deficit, the new anticipated FY 2025 Deficit was now \$2,383,222, and the projected three-year deficit was \$5,500,000. Dr. Chesson said she would like to see the Super Town Forums held in February and March so people have enough time to ask questions and give them some time to think. Mr. Pisani expressed the need for unified and accurate information for the towns. Ms. Manugian asked for more details about the school adjustment and requested if they could be broken down further. Dr. Chesson said she had the exact numbers that she could provide. Mr. Haddad thanked Dr. Chesson for attending.

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

Monday, December 18, 2023	Preliminary FY 2025 Budget Presentation
Monday, December 25, 2023	No Meeting (Christmas Day)
Monday, January 1, 2024	No Meeting (New Year's Day)
Monday, January 8, 2024	Town Manager's FY 2025 Proposed Budget Presentation

ITEMS FOR SELECT BOARD CONSIDERATION AND ACTION

1. Consider Annual License Renewals

Mr. Haddad had provided the Board with a Memo from Executive Assistant Kara Cruikshank listing the various license renewals for 2024. The Memo contained the names, hours, and managers of all establishments. (Said memo is attached to these minutes). Mr. Haddad stated he would read each page into the record and ask the Board to approve them. He first read page one of the Memo and asked the Board to approve them as presented.

Ms. Manugian made a motion to approve the licenses as presented on page one. Ms. Pine seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Haddad read page two of the Memo and asked the Board to approve them as presented.

Ms. Pine made a motion to approve the licenses as presented on page two. Mr. Pisani seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Haddad read page three of the Memo and asked the Board to approve them as presented.

Mr. Pisani made a motion to approve the licenses as presented on page three. Ms. Manugian seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Haddad read page four of the Memo and asked the Board to approve them as presented.

Ms. Pine made a motion to approve the licenses as presented on page four. Mr. Reilly seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Haddad announced that the Cravens package store will no longer be in business and their license would expire on December 31st. The town has five package store licenses available, of which three can be located anywhere in town. One is reserved for West Groton, and the other is for the Forge Village area. The license previously provided to Cravens can be used anywhere in town. Mr. Haddad also announced that Country Farms will submit an application for the license once held by Cravens Package store. He requested the Board to renew Country Farms Wine and Malt license on page 5, but they will be petitioning the Board for the package store license.

Mr. Haddad read page five of the Memo. He noted a typo on 786 Mobil Mart; they do not have a BYOB license. Mr. Haddad asked the Board to approve the licenses with the amendment.

Ms. Pine made a motion to approve the licenses on page five. Mr. Pisani seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

1. Consider Drafting a Letter Supporting the Affordable Housing Trust's CPA Application for the Second Installment of the Plan to Build up Cash Reserves to Respond to Properties Coming on the Market.

The Affordable Housing Trust has requested that the Select Board consider drafting a letter to the Community Preservation Committee to support their CPA Application for the Second Installment of their plan to build up their cash reserves to respond to properties coming on the market. Ms. Pine, as the Affordable Housing Chair, said they would like to increase their cash reserves, and the Affordable Housing Trust had requested \$400,000 this year. She said there weren't any other applications submitted for the use of the housing money other than the wages of the Housing Coordinator. Mr. Cunningham said he had no problem with this and thought it made sense. Ms. Manugian asked if any specific criteria were in place for accepting properties. Ms. Pine said there were no written criteria but a discussion among the Affordable Housing Trust. She said water, sewer, accessibility, wetland, species, etc., are considered while evaluating properties.

Mr. Pisani made a motion to send a letter supporting the Affordable Housing Trust's CPA Application for the second installment of the plan to build up cash reserves to respond to properties coming on the market. Mr. Reilly seconded the motion. The motion carried 4 in favor- Pine abstained.

WORKSHOP WITH PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICIALS TO REVIEW THE IMPACT OF NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS IN GROTON

DPW Director Tom Delaney, DPW Director in Training Brian Callahan, Police Sergeant Kevin Henehan, Sergeant Derrick Gemos, Deputy Fire Chief Art Cheeks, and Fire Chief Steele McCurdy were in attendance for the discussion.

Mr. Haddad explained that one of the Select Board's goals is to review the impact of new housing developments in Groton with Public Safety officials, including the Haze Woods subdivision, Groton Farms, and potentially Heritage Landing.

Impact on the Fire Department

Fire Chief McCurdy said with residential developments, they must factor in the demographics of the residents, including pre-existing medical conditions, as these factors may lead to increased calls to the Fire Department. Also, they analyze the current projects in the area, considering the number of units and the age of residents. By looking at the number of calls generated from these projects year-over-year, they can estimate future calls for future growth. Ms. Pine said she wanted to be clear that the units at Heritage Landing would primarily be families.

Future Needs of the Fire Department

Chief McCurdy wanted to note that the call department is diminishing over time for various reasons, and housing developments continue to grow. Tasks such as conducting inspections are becoming increasingly challenging. Additional staffing will be required, and there is a need for an additional person per shift within the next few years. Ideally, they would like four people on at all times. Chief McCurdy said he wanted to make clear that he has no plans to replace the call department outright; he is fully committed to maintaining the call department in Groton. Chief McCurdy will apply for a grant seeking funding to add additional fulltime firefighters to the Department. The Grant would cover the firefighters first three years of employment.

Impact on the Police Department

Sgt. Gemos expressed his concerns about the increasing number of calls for service and traffic on Main Street, a very busy road. A traffic study was conducted in February of 2022 at Deluxe (500 Main Street), but Sgt. Gemos believes the numbers were skewed due to the pandemic and the days of the week the study was conducted. He suggested that signage will be needed at the Mill Street intersection, and staffing levels will need to be increased due to the new housing units. He also noted that the Police Department is facing shortages in the budget.

Future Needs of the Police Department

Sgt. Gemos said additional staffing levels will be needed for the increase in population. Mr. Haddad said FBI standards show a town the size of Groton should have a force of 24; Groton currently has 20 members.

Impact on the Department of Public Works (DPW)

Mr. Haddad asked if the Town has any influence on signage at 500 Main Street. He said a slip lane was proposed there, but after the traffic study, it was indicated that there wasn't a need for a slip lane. Mr. Delaney said you must go through a process if you approach the state with a signage plan. Mr. Reilly asked who controls the speed limit and the passing zone, which should probably be reduced because of more activity that will take place there. Mr. Delaney said the state was responsible. Mr. Haddad said the bottom line was that the public safety departments would be impacted. Several new subdivisions, including Hayes Woods and the recently adopted roads of Academy Hill will impact the DPW.

Mr. Haddad explained to the Board that he would like the Board to start thinking about the need for additional public safety and DPW employees to deal with the new housing developments and additional population. Mr. Pisani said the complexities of emergency responses have changed; it is essential to have professionals like medical and fire responders. He said additional resources from Fire, Police, and DPW will be required to address these changes. Mr. Haddad believed the discussion was an excellent start and

expressed the need for additional police and fire in the upcoming years. Mr. Haddad thanked everyone for attending.

ON-GOING ISSUES

- A. Water Department- Manganese Issue- Mr. Haddad said they were in the final stages of constructing the water treatment plant. Mr. Haddad wanted to congratulate Mr. Orcutt, the Water Superintendent. He said testing of the new plant is scheduled to start next week
- B. Florence Roche Elementary School Construction Project- Mr. Haddad mentioned he would like to set up a tour for the Board to view the building. He said approximately six months of construction are left; they are on time for completion. The MSBA is currently working on determining the final reimbursement amount for the additional funding approved to address the pandemic impact on the project.

Approval of Minutes from December 4, 2023

Ms. Pine made a motion to approve the minutes of the regularly scheduled meeting from December 4, 2023. Mr. Reilly seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:33 p.m.

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