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, JANUARY 22, 2024
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. **Consider Ratifying the Town Manager's Appointment of Jonah Gaboriault to the Groton Country Club Staff**
2. **Update from the Town Manager on Filling Council on Aging Director Vacancy – Consider Ratifying the Town Manager's Appointment of Nandi Munson as Interim Council on Aging Director**
3. **FY 2025 Budget Update**
4. **Update on Select Board 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 for the Prescott Community Center/Friends of Prescott for Open Mic Night to be held on Friday, February 9, 2024 from 6:30 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.**
2. **Consider Approving a One Day All Alcoholic Beverages License for the Prescott Community Center/Friends of Prescott for a Bubbly Cocktails/Mixology Class to be held on Friday, February 9, 2024 from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.**

III.	**6:15 P.M.**	**Discussion with Public Works Director on the Preliminary Review of the Potential Removal of the Squannacook River Dam**
IV.	**7:00 P.M.**	**Consider Changing the Date of the 2024 Spring Town Meeting to March 26, 2024. Call for a Special Override Election on Tuesday, April 2, 2024**

OTHER BUSINESS

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

A. **PFAS Issue**
B. **Green Communities Application and Implementation**
C. **Florence Roche Elementary School Construction Project**
D. **Administrator's Working Group on FY 2025 Budget**

SELECT BOARD LIAISON REPORTS

V.	**Minutes:**	**Regularly Scheduled Meeting of January 8, 2024**

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: ***January 22, 2024***

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

In addition to the Town Manager's Report, Items for Select Board Consideration and Action and a review of the On-going Issues List, there are two items scheduled on Monday's Agenda. First, Public Works Director Tom Delaney will be in attendance at Monday's Meeting to update the Board on the preliminary review of the potential of removing the Squannacook River Dam. Second, time has been scheduled on the Agenda for the Select Board to consider changing the date of the 2024 Spring Town Meeting from April 27, 2024 to March 26, 2024. Please see the attached memorandum outlining the reasons and potential schedule should the Select Board consider making this change. In addition, I would respectfully request that the Select Board call for a Special Election on April 2, 2024 for the Town to consider overriding Proposition 2½ to provide additional funding in Fiscal Year 2025 that would provide enough funding for the next three Fiscal Years. The specific question would be 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?"

We can discuss all of this in more detail at Monday's Meeting.

1. I would respectfully request that the Select Board consider ratifying my appointment of Jonah Gaboriault to the Groton Country Club Staff.

2. Please note that I will be implementing the following process to replace Ashley Shaheen as the Council on Aging Director. First, we will be advertising the vacancy in all of our usual platforms (MMA, Groton Herald, Lowell Sun, Facebook, Town Website and COA Listserv). Second, I will have a Screening Committee to help me conduct the preliminary screening and interviews of candidates. The Screening Committee will be made up of the following members: Executive Assistant Kara Cruikshank; Human Resources Director Melisa Doig; Community Engagement Specialist Nandi Munson; Select Board Member John Reilly; Council on Aging Member Michelle Collette; Myself.

Continued on next page – Over >

2. ***Continued:***

Once we narrow down the field to 2 or 3 finalists, I will schedule interviews with the full Council on Aging for their review and recommendation. Once this process is complete, I will bring forward my choice to the Select Board for their consideration and ratification. I hope to have someone on board by the end of May. Since Ms. Shaheen's last day is February 9th, I would respectfully request that the Select Board ratify my appointment of Nandi Munson as Interim Council on Aging Director, effective February 9, 2024.

3. With regard to the FY 2025 Budget Update, please note that the Finance Committee and Select Board will be meeting in joint session on Saturday, January 27, 2024 to continue the review of the FY 2025 Proposed Operating Budget. The meeting will commence at 8:30 a.m. In addition, we have set the times and locations of the two budget forums. The first forum will be held on Tuesday, February 27, 2024 beginning at 7:00 p.m. at the Swallow Union Elementary School, 522 Main Street, Dunstable, MA. The second forum will be held on Wednesday, March 6, 2024 beginning at 7:00 p.m. at the Groton (Senior) Center, 163 West Main Street, West Groton, MA. Enclosed with this Report is a Flyer that will be contained in the February Light Department Bill, as well as posted in various locations around Town, including the Town's website.

4. Please see the update to the Select Board's Meeting schedule through the Spring Town Meeting:

Saturday, January 27,	-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 – Held at Groton Center
Tuesday, February 27, 2024	-Special Budget Forum – Swallow Union Elementary School
Monday, March 4, 2024	-Regularly Scheduled Meeting – REMOTE MEETING
Wednesday, March 6, 2024	-Special Budget Forum – Groton (Senior) Center
Monday, March 11, 2024	-Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, March 18, 2024	-No Meeting
Monday, March 25, 2024	-Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Tuesday, March 26, 2024	-Potential New Date of the 2024 Spring Town Meeting
Monday, April 1, 2024	-Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Tuesday, April 2, 2024	-Special Election to Consider an Override of Proposition 2½
Monday, April 8, 2024	-Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Modnay, April 15, 2024	-No Meeting – Patriot's Day Holiday
Monday, April 22, 2024	-Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Saturday, April 27, 2024	-Current Date of the 2024 Spring Town Meeting

ITEMS FOR SELECT BOARD CONSIDERATION AND ACTION

1. I would respectfully request that the Select Board consider approving a One Day Wine and Malt Beverage License for the Prescott Community Center/Friends of Prescott for Open Mic Night to be held on Friday, February 9, 2024 from 6:30 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.

2. I would respectfully request that the Select Board consider approving a One Day All Alcoholic Beverages License for the Prescott Community Center/Friends of Prescott for a Bubbly Cocktails/Mixology Class to be held on Friday, February 9, 2024 from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

MWH/rjb
enclosure

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Town Manager
Mark W. Haddad

To: ***Select Board***

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

Subject: ***Request to Consider Changing the Date of the 2024 Spring Town Meeting***

Date: ***January 17, 2024***

Last week, I wrote to you about the decision of the Dunstable Board of Selectmen to call for a Special Town Meeting on March 26, 2024, to consider approving their FY 2025 Budget prior to the proposed April 2, 2024 Special Override Election. I had stressed to you the importance of having Groton vote its FY 2025 Budget on the same day. I requested that the Groton Select Board consider calling for a Special Town Meeting on that date as well to stay consistent with Dunstable. I had also pointed out that there could be a wrinkle with doing this as there is specific language in the Groton Charter that outlines the approval of the Annual Operating Budget. Unfortunately, that wrinkle is now fact. Section 2.1 of the Groton Charter reads that (underlining and emphasis added):

"The annual town meeting shall meet in regular session twice in each calendar year. The first meeting, which shall be the spring town meeting, shall be held in March, April or May on a date fixed by by-law and ***shall*** *be primarily concerned with the determination of matters involving the expenditure of town funds* ***including, but not limited to, the adoption of an annual operating budget*** *for all town agencies, electing officers and determining all other matters to be decided by ballot of the voters. The second meeting, which shall be the fall town meeting, shall be held in the last 4 months of the calendar year on a date fixed by by-law; provided, however, that the fall town meeting shall not include the election of officers."*

Based on this wording, Town Counsel has opined that the Annual Operating Budget cannot be approved at a Special Town Meeting but has to be approved at the Annual Spring Town Meeting. Therefore, my proposal for a Special Town Meeting to approve the budget cannot happen.

That said, I still firmly believe that we need to vote on the same day as Dunstable. To that end, I would request that the Select Board consider changing the date of the Spring Town Meeting from April 27, 2024 to March 26, 2024. While this will put the Annual Election on April 23, 2024 (three weeks after the Special Election), it will not cost the Town any more money as we would still be holding two local elections (Special Override Election and Annual Town Election). As a matter of fact, it will save the Town the cost of an additional Town Meeting (printing and mailing of the Warrant, etc.).

There is still plenty of time to change the date of the Spring Town Meeting. The only issue is that it will move up the closing of the Warrant and the Public Hearing etc. The following would be the Schedule should the Select Board agree to change the date:

Monday, January 22, 2024 -	Groton Select Board votes to change the date of the 2024 Spring Town Meeting from April 27, 2024 to March 26, 2024 (this will comply with the Bylaw and the Charter as long as you give six (6) weeks' notice – this will provide nine (9) weeks' notice). This would change the date of the Annual Town Election from May 21, 2024 to April 23, 2024. The Warrant for the Spring Town Meeting would now close on February 9, 2024 (instead of original date of February 23rd). Groton Select Board calls for a Special Override Election on Tuesday, April 2, 2024.
Tuesday, January 23, 2024 -	Nomination Papers for the 2024 Annual Town Election are available.
Saturday, January 27, 2024 -	Finance Committee/Select Board Hearing on Proposed FY 2025 Operating Budget.
Wednesday, January 31, 2024 -	Groton Dunstable Regional School District Committee holds Public Hearing on their Proposed Fiscal Year 2025 Operating Budget.
Wednesday, February 7, 2024 -	Groton Dunstable Regional School District Committee votes to approve the FY 2025 Operating Assessments to the Towns of Groton and Dunstable.
Friday, February 9, 2024 -	Warrant Closes for the 2024 Spring Town Meeting.
Tuesday, February 13, 2024 -	Groton Finance Committee approves the FY 2025 Operating Budget for the Town of Groton.
Monday, February 26, 2024 -	Groton Select Board/Finance Committee Public Hearing on the Articles contained in the 2024 Spring Town Meeting Warrant (original date for the hearing was March 11th).
Tuesday, February 27, 2024 -	Budget Forum held at the Swallow Union Elementary School in Dunstable.
Friday, March 1, 2024 -	Last Day to request nomination papers for the 2024 Annual Election.

Monday, March 4, 2024 -	Groton Select Board approves and issues the Warrant for the 2024 Spring Town Meeting.
Tuesday, March 5, 2024 -	Last Day to Submit nomination papers for the 2024 Annual Election to the Board of Registrars.
Wednesday, March 6, 2024 -	Budget Forum held at the Groton (Senior) Center.
Tuesday, March 12, 2024 -	Warrant for the 2024 Spring Town Meeting is Posted.
Tuesday, March 26, 2024 -	2024 Spring Town Meeting in Groton and Special Town Meeting in Dunstable to consider the FY 2025 Budget.
Tuesday, April 2, 2024 -	Special Override Election held in both Groton and Dunstable.
Tuesday, April 23, 2024 -	2024 Annual Town Election in Groton.

While I understand that this moves the Spring Town Meeting up by one month, I do think it's important to consider this. I have attached a new Town Meeting Notice Memorandum for your review should you decide to make this change.

Thank you for your attention and consideration of this matter.

MWH/rjb
enclosure

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Town Manager
Mark W. Haddad

To: ***All Departments, Boards, Committees and Commissions***

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

Subject: ***Spring Town Meeting – CHANGED TO TUESDAY, MARCH 26, 2024***

Date: ***January 23, 2024***

Please be advised that at the regularly scheduled meeting of the Select Board held on Monday, January 22, 2024, the Board voted to change the date of the 2024 Spring Town Meeting from April 27, 2024 to Tuesday, March 26, 2024. The Warrant will now close at the close of business on Friday, February 9, 2024.

All articles should be submitted in writing to the Select Board as soon as possible to allow for as much time as possible for legal and financial review. All articles should be submitted with a written summary. These summaries will be included in the Spring Town Meeting Warrant so they must be submitted with the proposed Article. The following is the proposed timeline:

Tuesday, January 23, 2024 -	Warrant for 2024 Spring Town Meeting Opens
Friday, February 9, 2024 -	Warrant for 2024 Spring Town Meeting Closes
Monday, February 26, 2024 -	SB – FinCom Public Hearing on Articles
Monday, March 4, 2024 -	Select Board Finalizes Warrant
Tuesday, March 12, 2024 -	Post Warrant
Tuesday, March 26, 2024 -	Spring Town Meeting

As has been the case in the past, please plan on attending any meeting of the Select Board in which they review an article you have submitted. I will provide all Departments, Boards, Committees and Commissions with a schedule once it is developed.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. Please feel free to contact me with any additional questions or concerns.

MWH/rjb

cc: Select Board
Finance Committee
Dawn Dunbar – Town Clerk
Jason Kauppi – Town Moderator
Brian Falk – Town Counsel

Fiscal Year 2025 Budget Forums

Are you interested in the future of our Communities? Join us for the Fiscal Year 2025 Budget Forums, where we will be presenting, reviewing, and answering questions on the proposed budgets for the Town of Groton, the Town of Dunstable, and the Groton Dunstable Regional School District.

The first forum will be held on Tuesday, February 27, 2024 beginning at 7:00 p.m. at the Swallow Union Elementary School, 522 Main Street, Dunstable, MA

The second forum will be held on Wednesday, March 6, 2024 beginning at 7:00 p.m. at the Groton (Senior) Center, 163 West Main Street, West Groton, MA

As both towns are facing unusually large budget deficits in FY25, we especially need your input. These forums provide an opportunity for residents to voice their opinions, ask questions, and gain a deeper understanding of the budgetary plans for the upcoming fiscal year. Your participation is crucial in shaping the future of our Communities.

Mark your calendars and make sure to attend one of the budget forums. Your input matters, and we look forward to seeing you there!

SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, JANUARY 8, 2024
UN-APPROVED

SB Members Present: Peter Cunningham, Chair; John Reilly, Vice Chair; Alison Manugian, Clerk; Matt Pisani
SB Member Virtually Present: Becky Pine
Also Present: Mark Haddad, Town Manager; Kara Cruikshank, Executive Assistant to the Town Manager; Patricia Dufresne, Assistant Finance Director/Town Accountant; Tammi Mickel, Assistant Assessor; Attorney Paul Alphen; Jaydeep Patel; Romulo Roma
Finance Committee Members: Michael Sulprizio; David Manugian; Bud Robertson; Mary Linskey; Colby Doody; Scott Whitefield
Finance Team: Dawn Dunbar; Melisa Doig; Hannah Moller; Megan Foster; Michael Harnett

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mr. Cunningham said the Police Department's K-9, named Bane, was hit by a car and suffered injuries. Bane had to undergo surgery at Tufts Medical Center, but he was recovering well. Bane is expected to resume his duties within the next few months. Mr. Cunningham said the Police Department wanted to express their gratitude for the Community's outreach and support.

Ms. Foster, the Principal Assessor, wanted to review the available exemptions for Seniors. These exemptions included the Disabled Veteran's Exemption, the Blind Person Exemption, the Elderly and Surviving Spouse Exemption, the Elderly Exemption Clause 41C, the Senior Deferral Exemption, and the CPA Abatement. Applications are available in the Assessor's Office. Ms. Foster said that if you are eligible for any of these exemptions, the application deadline is April 1, 2024.

Ms. Moller, the Tax Collector/Treasurer, announced that Groton's TREAD program will be available online for eligible applicants.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

None

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

1. **Update from the Town Manager on the Status of Joining the Patriot Regional Emergency Communications Center- Approve Intermunicipal Agreement with Pepperell, Townsend, Ashby, and Dunstable.**

   Mr. Haddad said the Town of Pepperell has begun the renovations to expand the Patriot Emergency Communications Center to accommodate adding the Towns of Groton and Dunstable. IT Director Mike Chaisson and Mr. Haddad have met with Patriot RECC officials to discuss the implementation. He believed they were in good shape and expected a smooth transition in July. A Preliminary meeting with the Communication Officers was held, and an additional meeting is scheduled in two weeks. He will keep the Board apprised of the progress of discussions. He announced that he had completed negotiations with the Towns of Pepperell, Townsend, Ashby, and Dunstable on the Final Intermunicipal Agreement (IMA) for joining Patriot RECC. Town Counsel had reviewed the document and provided

comments/edits. All Town Counsel's edits were accepted in the Final Document and provided to the Board for review. Mr. Haddad respectfully requested that the Board vote to approve and sign the IMA.

Mr. Reilly made a motion to approve the Inter-Municipal Agreement to join the Patriot Regional Emergency Communications Center with Pepperell, Townsend, Ashby, and Dunstable. Mr. Pisani seconded the motion. Roll Call: Pine-aye; Reilly-aye; Manugian-aye; Cunningham-aye; Pisani-aye.

Mr. Reilly made a motion to authorize Mr. Haddad to sign the IMA on behalf of the Town. Mr. Pisani seconded the motion. Roll Call: Pine-aye; Reilly-aye; Manugian-aye; Cunningham-aye; Pisani-aye.

2. **Update from the Town Manager on Negotiations on the Intermunicipal Agreement with Pepperell and Dunstable for Phase 2 of PFAS Solution at Groton Dunstable Regional High School.**
Mr. Haddad said Town Counsel had put together the first draft of the Intermunicipal Agreement between Groton, Dunstable, and Pepperell for Phase II of the PFAS Solution at the Groton Dunstable Regional High School, which was provided to the Board for review. Mr. Haddad shared it with the Pepperell and Dunstable and is awaiting their comments or changes. He said it was pretty straightforward, outlining the terms the Groton Select Board and Dunstable Board of Selectmen discussed during Phase I negotiations. Once Mr. Haddad hears back from Dunstable and Pepperell, he will schedule it for the Select Board to further discuss. Ms. Manugian asked Mr. Haddad to review the timeline for any grant applications. He shared that they have applied for SRF funding, and the town was third on the list. He spoke with Mary Jude Pigsley from the Department of Environmental Protection regarding a grant application that was also submitted. Mr. Haddad explained that during Phase 2, Pepperell will be the lead applicant for SRF funding. Mr. Haddad had a strategy meeting last week where they discussed the permitting process and stressed the importance of getting the IMA approved for Phase Two so that they could begin Phase One.

3. **FY 2025 Budget Update**
The Select Board and Finance Committee will discuss the FY 2025 Budget at 7:00 P.M., including the Town Manager's presentation of the Proposed Operating Budget.

4. **Update on Select Board Meeting Schedule Through the 2024 Spring Town Meeting**

Monday, January 15, 2024	No Meeting (Martin Luther King Day)
Monday, January 22, 2024	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Saturday, January 27, 2024	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- Presidents Day
Monday, February 26, 2024	REMOTE MEETING-Call for Special Override Election
Tuesday. February 27. 2024	Special Budget Forum- Time and Location TBD
Monday, March 4, 2024	Regularly Scheduled Meeting- REMOTE 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	Special Election to Consider an Override of Proposition 2 1//2
Monday, April 8, 2024	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, April 15, 2024	No Meeting- Patriots Day
Monday, April 22, 2024	Regularly Scheduled Meeting

Monday, April 22nd or Saturday, April 27th or Monday, April 29th-2024 Spring Town Meeting

ITEMS FOR SELECT BOARD CONSIDERATION AND ACTION

1. **Call for the 2024 Spring Town Meeting- Open the Warrant for Said Meeting.**

   Mr. Haddad said it was that time of year for the Board to call for the 2024 Spring Town Meeting. He explained that the default date for the Town Meeting is the fourth Monday in April, which would be April 22, 2024. He said the Board could also schedule the Town Meeting on the following Saturday (April 27th) or Monday (April 29th). Should the Town Meeting be held on April 22nd, the Annual Election would be held on May 14th. He said that should the Town Meeting be held on either April 27th or 29th, the Election would be May 21st. Mr. Haddad recommended not holding the meeting on April 22nd because it is the first night of Passover. He recommended holding Town Meeting on Saturday, April 27; if needed, the backup day would be Monday, April 29th. Ms. Pine said the Board has met on Saturdays for the last few years and thought it worked well. The Groton Dunstable School Superintendent told Mr. Haddad that parents would prefer Town Meeting on Monday.

   Mr. Reilly made a motion to call for the 2024 Spring Town Meeting to be held on Saturday, April 27, 2024, with Monday, April 29, 2024 as a secondary date. Mr. Pisani seconded the motion. Roll Call: Pine-aye; Reilly-aye; Manugian-aye; Cunningham-aye; Pisani-aye.

   Ms. Manugian made a motion to open the warrant for the Spring Town Meeting on January 8, 2024, at 8:00 a.m. and to close the warrant on Friday, February 23, 2024, at the end of the business day. Mr. Pisani seconded the motion. Roll Call: Pine-aye; Reilly-aye; Manugian-aye; Cunningham-aye; Pisani-aye.

   Ms. Pine mentioned that the Town Clerk's office could help anyone submitting a warrant article while the warrant is still open.

2. **Approve the Financial Policies of the Town of Groton**

   Mr. Haddad said Section 6.3 of the Groton Charter states that the Select Board and Finance Committee shall annually review and update the Town's overall financial management policies. Enclosed with the Town Manager's Report are the current policies. The Finance Committee had voted to approve the policies with no changes for this year. In compliance with the Charter, Mr. Haddad respectfully requested that the Select Board vote to approve the financial policies as they are currently written; no changes have been made.

   Mr. Pisani made a motion to approve the financial policies as they are currently written. Ms. Manugian seconded the motion. Roll Call: Pine-aye; Reilly-aye; Manugian-aye; Cunningham-aye; Pisani-aye.

6:15 P.M. PUBLIC HEARING- CONSIDER ISSUING AN ALL-ALCOHOL PACKAGE STORE LICENSE TO INDRALOK, INC. (DBA COUNTRY FARM), 127 MAIN STREET, GROTON, MA; ROMULO ROMA, MANAGER

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

Ms. Manugian made a motion to open the public hearing. Mr. Reilly seconded. Roll call: Pine-aye; Reilly-aye; Manugian-aye; Cunningham-aye; Pisani-aye.

Attorney Paul Alphen was in attendance to represent applicant Jaydeep Patel. The Manager, Romulo Roma, was also present. Attorney Alphen explained that a few years back, the Board approved issuing a Beer and Wine Package license for Country Farm, located at 127 Main Street, to add to the convenience store. Mr. Patel would like to change the classification to an All-Alcoholic Beverage License. If the Board approves the license, the area Mr. Patel uses for wine would be used for the storage and the sale of Alcoholic beverages and the area behind the sales counter, as well. The store layout would essentially remain the way that it currently is. A completed application was submitted to the Town Manager's Office.

Mr. Haddad read a letter from Police Chief Luth aloud into the record. A drawing of the floor plan was provided and presented to the board. Mr. Patel said alcoholic beverages would be located behind the counter. Mr. Pisani said the Police Chief was nervous about alcohol being hidden and easily accessible for children to reach. Mr. Cunnigham asked if there would be any displacement of current items in the store to make room for the liquor. Mr. Patel said he would downsize the cigarette section behind the counter and add the liquor there. Mr. Reilly said he went to the store and inspected the layout. He noticed that the wine storage area was not visible. He requested Mr. Patel not to store any hard liquor on the opposite side of the wine rack, where there was no visibility. He also asked Mr. Patel to pay attention to IDs and to please ID everyone. Mr. Patel said he would do so. Ms. Pine wanted to make clear that if the business were to be sold in the future, the liquor license would not transfer automatically. She noted that a number of people were concerned about the possible loss of inventory in the convenience store and appreciated that Mr. Patel had no intention of reducing the convenience store goods.

No public comments were made.

Ms. Manugian made a motion to close the public hearing. Mr. Pisani seconded. Roll Call: Pine-aye; Reilly-aye; Manugian-aye; Cunningham-aye; Pisani-aye.

Mr. Haddad requested that the Board adopt a motion to grant an Off-Premise Retail, All-Alcoholic Package Store License to Indralok, Inc., doing business as Country Farm, located at 127 Main Street, and the license is managed by Romulo Roma. The hours of operation are from Monday to Saturday, 8:00 A.M. to 11:00 P.M., and Sunday, 10:00 A.M. to 8:00 P.M.

Ms. Manugian made a motion to grant an Off-Premise, All-Alcoholic Package Store License to Indralok, Inc., doing business as Country Farm, located at 127 Main Street, and the license is managed by Romulo Roma. The hours of operation are from Monday to Saturday, 8:00 A.M. to 11:00 P.M., and Sunday, 10:00 A.M. to 8:00 P.M. Mr. Pisani seconded. Roll Call: Pine-aye; Reilly-aye; Manugian-aye; Cunningham-aye; Pisani-aye.

OTHER BUSINESS

ON-GOING ISSUES

A. Florence Roche Elementary School Construction Project- Mr. Haddad told the Select Board that he would work with the Florence Roche Construction team to schedule a special tour of the facility for Select Board Members. He announced that the tour would be held on Tuesday, January 16th, at 12:00 p.m. Mr. Haddad said the construction is going well, and he thinks everyone will be impressed.

Approval of Minutes from December 18, 2023

Mr. Reilly made a motion to approve the minutes of the regularly scheduled meeting from December 18, 2023. Mr. Pisani seconded the motion. Roll Call: Pine-aye; Reilly-aye; Manugian-aye; Cunningham-aye; Pisani-aye.

The Board recessed at 6:42 and will reconvene at 7:00 p.m. for the Budget Presentation.

The Select Board Chair reconvened the meeting at 7:00 P.M.

Mr. Cunningham said the Squannacook Greenways was seeking a CPA grant to extend the Squannacook River Rail Trail. They require $30,000 to support the engineering and designing of the next phase. He respectfully requested that the Board submit a letter of support for their grant application.

Mr. Bud Robertson called the Finance Committee meeting to order.

IN JOINT SESSION WITH THE FINANCE COMMITTEE- PRESENTATION OF THE TOWN MANAGER'S PROPOSED FISCAL 2025 TOWN OPERATING BUDGET

Mr. Haddad thanked the Finance Committee for attending the meeting. He planned to present a PowerPoint review of the proposed Fiscal 2025 Town Operating Budget that evening. He explained that this was the sixteenth budget proposal he had submitted to the Finance Committee and Select Board. He said planning for the FY 2025 Budget began earlier than in previous years. The Town Manager's Tri-Comm Working Group, which he appointed in July of 2023, began reviewing the issues surrounding the development of the Fiscal Year 2025 Budget. The Working Group conducted studies of comparable communities and School Districts. As a result of their studies, they determined that spending by the Town and the School District was in line with their comparable communities. The outcome of the Tri-Comm Working Group showed the Town of Groton would be facing a deficit of $3.9 Million in FY 2025. The group also determined that an override of Proposition 2 1/2 would be necessary to avoid significant cuts to the operating budgets of both the Town and School District. Mr. Cunningham wanted to commend everyone involved in the Tri-Comm Working Group.

Mr. Haddad said that based on the Tri-Comm's determination, in October 2023, the Select Board and Finance Committee provided the Town Manager with the following Budget Guidance for FY 2025:

The Town Manager shall submit two Budgets:

- A balanced budget with no proposed Override of Proposition 2 ½
- A level services budget that proposes a potential override of Proposition 2 ½ to eliminate a projected three-year deficit.

- The Town Manager shall collaborate with the Groton Dunstable Regional School District and Nashoba Valley Technical School District representatives to create the two budgets.

To comply with the budget guidance, the Town Manager determined that the main budget would be the Level Services Budget, which would then be reduced to bring it into balance with anticipated revenues in FY 2025. The Town Manager released budgetary instructions on November 1, 2023, asking departments to provide a Level Services Budget and a detailed memorandum considering an eleven percent reduction in their respective departments' budgets. Budgets were due on November 20th, and review meetings took place between November 27th and November 29th. Meetings were well attended by both Select Board and Finance Committee Members. Mr. Haddad said this showed the importance of the FY 2025 budget. Mr. Haddad said the Select Board will hold a Joint Session with the Finance Committee and departments on Saturday, January 27th. The session's purpose is to better understand the impact of the 11 percent reduction of the departments. To review and develop the Proposed Budget, the Town Manager was assisted by the Town's Finance Team, made up of Patricia Dufresne, Hannah Moller, Megan Foster, Dawn Dunbar, Melisa Doig, Michael Hartnett, and Kara Cruikshank.

Level Service Budget Development

Mr. Haddad thought it was important for everyone to understand that a Level Service Budget maintains services at the FY 2024 level and does not add any new services.

During Mr. Haddad's presentation on the Level Service Budget development, he explained some key points. He said the approved budget for Fiscal Year 2024 was $240,920 under the Levy Limit. He also said the FY 2023 New Growth was certified at $36 million, which added $564,180 to the FY 2024 Tax Levy. Mr. Haddad explained that the estimated FY 25 New Growth was at $20M, which would add $301,800 to the tax levy. The Proposed Fiscal Year 2025 Town Operating Budget anticipated level funding State Aid at $1,116,143. He said they anticipate an additional $126,500 increase in Estimated Receipts.

Mr. Haddad shared a chart that indicated an anticipated increase of 3.08% in New Revenues for the Fiscal Year 2025. Mr. Haddad explained that building permit revenues, solid waste, and meal taxes were down. The town has not yet received the first payment from the cannabis shop, estimated to be around $150,000. However, Mr. Haddad does not think the town would come anywhere near that amount.

Mr. Haddad said that the work conducted by the Tri-Comm Working Group was proved to be very accurate. The Level Service Budget was $3.9 million out of balance based on total anticipated revenues in FY 2025. Mr. Haddad discussed the steps taken to save the anticipated $2.3 million deficit for FY 2025. He said the GDRSD has decided to phase out the use of E & D and phase in full-day kindergarten tuition over three years. Mr. Robertson mentioned the original plan was to eliminate E & D entirely but decided to phase it out. The Select Board voted to join the Patriot Regional Emergency Communications Center; the Select Board voted to join MIIA for health insurance; a more accurate assessment came forward from Nashoba Tech; the Finance Team found areas to increase from the original estimate developed by the Tri-Comm Working Group, and miscellaneous adjustments were made to the Municipal Budget.

At the Saturday, January 27th meeting, the first commitment for motor vehicle excise and Ms. Dufresne's update on the second quarter will be reviewed. Ms. Manugian asked what MIIA has seen in increase rate over

the years. Mr. Haddad stated that MIIA's increase would not be more than 5.25%. The town plans to eliminate the cable enterprise and use $155,422 from the town's free cash account to allow the cable receipts to accumulate over the next year. Additionally, it was mentioned that there are no major initiatives in the Operating Budget.

Mr. Haddad said that the Capital Budget was submitted separately and looks forward to reviewing it more on January 27th. Ms. Pine asked Mr. Haddad if the capital budget could be reduced to address the need for an override. Mr. Haddad explained that you cannot use one-time revenue sources to offset operating budgets; if they were used to fund the operating budget, they would not be available for the following year.

Level Service Budget Summary

Mr. Haddad said the Municipal Operating Budget is increasing by 2.89%, with the town's operating expenses only increasing by 2.2%.

Mr. Haddad noted that Nashoba Tech was increasing by $200,000 due to enrollment next year. Ms. Pine asked if there was a limit on the number of Groton students who could enroll in technical schools. Mr. Haddad said he did not believe there was ever a time when Nashoba Tech had limited students.

Mr. Haddad said in compliance with the Guidance issued by the Finance Committee and Select Board, the Town Manager determined that the Level Service Budget was out of balance by $2,383,222. Mr. Haddad had estimated that an override in FY 2025 of $5.5 million would be needed to cover an anticipated three-year deficit.

The projected tax Levy Limit for FY 2025 is expected to be $48,587,870, and other estimated revenues would be an additional $7,787,986.

Balanced Budget Summary

For the Town Manager to create a balanced budget, he must reduce the Proposed Level Service Budget by $2,383,222. He had previously explained that in the past, the GDRSD had absorbed 60% of the deficit and the Town absorbed 40%. He said to eliminate the deficit this year, the School District would need to reduce its budget by $1,429,934, and the Town would need to reduce its proposed level service budget by $953,288. This means a total reduction of $2,383,222, or 5.11% of the Proposed Level Service Budget.

Mr. Haddad reviewed the proposed budget cuts for the departments, and many would be devastating. He said that the cuts should come directly from the department heads. When the Boards meet with them on January 27th, they can discuss how the cuts would affect the Operating Budgets.

If the Town sees new commercial growth, it could help reduce taxes. Mr. Haddad pointed out that several other areas, including Westford, Dracut, Acton, and Dunstable, face major budget deficits. Groton is not alone. (Please refer to the PowerPoint presentation attached to the minutes for additional details).

The Working Group recommended holding an override election vote on the same day as Dunstable to demonstrate unity. He said working collaboratively would show that the Towns are in this together. The Town Administrator of Dunstable and Mr. Haddad would like to hold two Budget Forums, one at the end of February

and the other at the beginning of March, to discuss the budget and get feedback. The Special Election will be held on April 2nd.

Mr. Haddad said the Superintendent and School Committee will attend the meeting in Joint Session with the Finance Committee and Select Board on Saturday, January 27th. Mr. Haddad said to prepare for that meeting, he requested Select Board Members and Finance Committee to provide him with their questions as soon as possible so he could provide them to the School Superintendent and the School Committee in advance so they could answer them. Mr. Cunningham asked why not propose an override for one year. Mr. Haddad said it would only postpone the problem until the following year.

Mr. Haddad said the PowerPoint would be available for viewing on the Town of Groton website and encouraged everyone to read the Budget Message. Mr. Haddad acknowledged the efforts of every department and said they did a great job.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

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