

May 6, 2013

Board of Selectmen Meeting  
First Floor Meeting Room  
173 Main Street  
Groton, Massachusetts

Selectmen present: Stuart Schulman, Chair  
John Petropoulos  
Anna Eliot  
Joshua Degen

Others: Mark Haddad, Town Manager  
Barbara Ganem, Conservation Administrator

Chair Stuart Schulman convened the meeting at 7 p.m. with an overview of the agenda and a few announcements. Anna Eliot announced that the Groton Pool and Golf Center will be holding a free open house on Saturday, May 11<sup>th</sup> from 11 am to 4 pm, rain or shine.

Town Manager Mark Haddad offered his congratulations to Joshua Degen and Stuart Schulman for their respective re-election to seats on the Board of Selectmen. Haddad asked Barbara Ganem to introduce a request for Board of Selectmen approval of a conservation restriction for Baddacook Pond. Joshua Degen recused himself from this item. Barbara Ganem explained that the original agreement called for reciprocal conservation restrictions (CRs) between the Town of Groton and the Groton Conservation Trust, a private nonprofit land trust in Groton. Ganem noted that Town Meeting voters voted in 1999 and 2000 to accept the idea of exchanging conservation restrictions, but that this request to the Selectmen is for permission to place the actual conservation restriction. A portion of the land has been preserved as an envelope for possible withdrawal for well water use. The current plan has the support of the Water Commissioners. There are no known objections to the conservation restriction.

Speaking as an individual and not as a member of the Board of Selectmen, Joshua Degen expressed reservations to granting a conservation restriction to the Groton Conservation Trust (GCT). Degen recalled the experiences at several Lost Lake holdings and wonders about GCT's capacity to respond. John Petropoulos also shared his concern. Degen noted that his litigation with the GCT settled six or seven years ago and he has observed the group's actions since that time. In particular, other landowners have had to spend money when GCT has not stepped up to enforce use restrictions on a site. Anna Eliot stated that the Town of Groton owns the land and that this land is the Town's responsibility to manage. In her view, the GCT does a good job managing its holdings.

*Anna Eliot moved to accept a conservation restriction on Baddacook Pond, also referred to as the Shattuck Homestead. John Petropoulos seconded and motion carried 3:0 (Peter Cunningham absent. Joshua Degen recusal).*

Barbara Ganem next asked the Board of Selectmen to accept a conservation restriction from the American Baptist Churches of Massachusetts (TABCOM) for the Whitaker Lane Conservation land, which land was a part of the Whitaker Lane subdivision permitting. This conservation restriction proposal has been pending since 1994. The original intent from the Planning Board was to allow trail access yet the electrical utility (National Grid) that holds the easement for its high tension power lines does not allow public access. The utility threatened to sue if the Town acts to recognize any public access. Selectmen briefly discussed this proposal and decided to defer action until Peter Cunningham can participate as he may have concerns about a bicycle trail.

Haddad asked the Selectmen to consider re-appointing Carol Quinn to a three year term on the Board of Registrars. Registrar composition is balanced between the two main political parties – Republican and Democratic.

*Anna Eliot moved to appoint Carol Quinn to a three year term on the Board of Registrars. John Petropoulos seconded and motion carried 4:0 (Peter Cunningham absent).*

Haddad stated that the highway department did culvert repair work on Route 40 this past weekend. This work required the assistance of paid detail officers. Haddad asked the Board of Selectmen to appoint two Leominster police officers – Peter \_\_\_\_ and Evan Donnelly -- as special detail officers with a term to end on June 30, 2013.

*Joshua Degen moved to appoint Peter \_\_\_\_ and Evan Donnelly -- as special detail officers with a term to end on June 30, 2013. Anna Eliot seconded and motion carried 4:0 (Peter Cunningham absent).*

Haddad drew the Selectmen's attention to a May 3, 2013 letter from the Town of Groton Affordable Housing Trust. The Trust asks the Board to appoint Fredrick J. Dunn to the present vacancy on the housing trust. Dunn is a real estate attorney and the Trust believes that his practice area would be an asset to the group.

*Anna Eliot moved to appoint Fredrick J. Dunn to the vacant trustee position on the Town of Groton Affordable Housing Trust with a term ending June 30, 2014. John Petropoulos seconded and motion carried 4:0 (Peter Cunningham absent).*

Haddad asked the Selectmen's approval of his proposed vacation schedule for May. Haddad plans to take six days off starting on May 20, 2013. In the interim, Haddad shared his plans to appoint Town Clerk Michael Bouchard as Acting Town Manager. Bouchard has served in this capacity in the past.

*John Petropoulos moved to approved Mark Haddad's proposed vacation schedule for May, 2013. Joshua Degen seconded and motion carried 4:0 (Peter Cunningham absent).*

Haddad stated that Police Chief Donald Palma's employment contract expires on June 30, 2013. Haddad has negotiated a new contract with Chief Palma which contains an extra week's vacation and a salary adjustment in accordance with the recent Town Meeting vote. Stuart Schulman commented that the police force is well managed. That the tone and personality of the department has improved. This force and its chief interacts well with the public. Schulman stated that he is happy to support this contract.

Anna Eliot approved of Schulman's comments. Joshua Degen concurred, adding that the new hires possess a good sense of comradarie including Officer Lola, the police dog. Degen fully supports this contract.

*Joshua Degen moved to approve the proposed employment contract between Town of Groton and Police Chief Donald Palma to conclude on June 30, 2016 with a salary of \$121,578 and an additional week of vacation with all other terms to remain as before. Anna Eliot seconded and motion carried 4:0 (Peter Cunningham absent).*

Haddad asked the Selectmen to consider next steps for Squannacook Hall. Haddad explained that he has fielded three inquiries regarding use the building in recent days. He asked the Selectmen to authorize him to re-advertise a new request for proposals (RFP). Haddad recognizes that the Board of Selectmen is principally interested in a re-use of the old building. And the taxpayers would appreciate a non-municipal owner as this would end Town maintenance and responsibilities and hopefully get the property back on the tax rolls. A new RFP would emphasize the importance of building re-use over price. Haddad reminded the Board that it would retain the power to reject the proposal if it so chooses.

*Joshua Degen moved to authorize the Town Manager to re-issue a Squannacook Hall request for proposals with changes to the request for proposals as discussed. John Petropoulos seconded and motion carried 4:0 (Peter Cunningham absent).*

Haddad introduced a Class II license request from Mr. Fred Correia of 11 Cow Pond Brook Road. Mr. Correia runs a form of car dealership which is almost entirely Internet based. The group discussed possible conditions that might allow it to approve the applicant's request while containing the scope of activities that could be engaged upon on site.

*Joshua Degen moved to grant a Class II license to Mr. Fred Correia of 11 Cow Pond Brook Road with the following conditions: (a) no flags, signs or banners on site, and (b) no vehicles associated with the Class II license to be stored on site. John Petropoulos seconded and motion carried 4:0 (Peter Cunningham absent).*

Haddad advised the Board of Selectmen that a review of the State House budget shows that the Town may receive more funds from the Commonwealth than previously budgeted. Haddad explained that he carried a conservative number for state aid in the budget presented at Spring Town Meeting. If these new budget projections from the Commonwealth become the final Cherry Sheet numbers, then the Town expect its tax rate to drop three cents.

Haddad asked the Board of Selectmen to ratify the Town Manager appointments of seven individuals to the Groton Pool and Golf Center.

*Joshua Degen moved to ratify the Town Manager appointments of Megan Beatty, Johanna Fischl, McKenzie Sweeney, Lauren Duhamel, Griffin Lily, Ben Kalan and Ryan McCarthy to the Groton Pool and Golf Center. Anna Eliot seconded and motion carried 4:0 (Peter Cunningham absent).*

Haddad reported that the new Central Fire Station construction project is going well so far. The foundation is being poured. Typically, getting out of the ground is the hardest part of a new construction project as test borings and other indicia of underground conditions are not entirely predictable. In this instance, there were not a lot of surprises, i.e., unforeseen conditions that add cost, in the ground. Water was found at a depth of four feet in some places on site rather than the expected fourteen feet. Joshua Degen asked for the actual dollar cost. Haddad explained that there was an additional \$9,000 in project costs which consisted of the purchase of extra stone for the earth work. In the ensuing discussion, it was noted that the project has an overall 5% contingency, a fact that emphasized the relatively minor \$9,000 extra cost.

Anna Eliot commented that the central fire station is to receive a steel beam salvaged from the New York City 9/11 explosions. A display of this 9/11 artifact will be incorporated into the final building design. Michael MacGregor travelled to New York City on short notice to pick up this 9/11 remnant.

For liaison reports, John Petropoulos stated that the Lost Lake Sewer project is following up with the testing on Lost Lake. The scope of work is being defined with the provider. Petropoulos suggested that the goal is to gain a good sense for the health of the lake today. Presently, the lake level has been deliberately lowered to allow for the sonar (aquatic plant pesticide) application. The water level will come back up.

Haddad stated that the old Fitch's Bridge is down. Video of the bridge removal is online. The new bridge is on order. There is an erection plan for the new bridge. Currently, the contractor is repairing the stone abutments and Haddad praised the contractor's performance to date.

*Anna Eliot moved to approve the April 1, 2013 minutes as drafted. Joshua Degen seconded and motion carried 4:0 (Peter Cunningham absent).*

*Anna Eliot moved to approve the April 8, 2013 minutes as drafted. Joshua Degen seconded and motion carried 4:0 (Peter Cunningham absent).*

*At 7:40 pm, Joshua Degen moved to adjourn the meeting. John Petropoulos seconded and motion carried 4:0 (Peter Cunningham absent).*

Notes by Fran Stanley

APPROVED: 6-3-13