

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MINUTES FEBRUARY 10, 2014
APPROVED**

Present: Peter S. Cunningham, Chairman; Josh A. Degen, Vice Chairman; Anna Eliot, Clerk; Stuart M. Schulman; John G. Petropoulos

Also Present: Mark W. Haddad, Town Manager; Dawn Dunbar, Executive Assistant

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mr. Cunningham said that he along with the Fire Chief and Conservation Commission had a meeting with Mass Audubon the previous Friday. He said that they discussed how important it was to the Town to be able to manage and respond to fires on the property. He said that their goal was to look at the access roads to be able to respond. Mass Audubon said that fires weren't always a bad thing as it was healthy to get rid of the overgrown brush.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

1. Mr. Haddad said that they had received one (1) bid for the sale of the Center Fire Station from Steve Webber who offered to purchase the property for \$1,000. Mr. Haddad said that he had received numerous calls since the recent newspaper article. He said that there were quite a few people interested in the property. He said there was no guarantee but they could re-issue the RFP if the Board wanted to do so. Mr. Webber said that he wanted to purchase the property. He said that he hadn't given up on the Station Ave overlay. Mr. Webber said that the building would take a lot of work and if his offer was accepted he would put plans on hold until he knew what he would like to do with it. Mr. Petropoulos said that it was an investment just to maintain the building. Mr. Webber said that his immediate plans would protect it from damage, make it safe and put it back on the tax role. Mr. Degen said that if that many people had come forward expressing interest, it might behoove them to re-issue the RFP. Mr. Schulman said that when the first RFP went out there was quite a bit of interest but no one bid. He said that they should consider putting the RFP out again adding that he was not optimistic that anything would change. Mr. Haddad said that like the last time he could place the RFP on the Central Register and in the local newspaper and send it to those who were interested adding that he hoped Mr. Webber re-applied. Ms. Eliot said that if they didn't re-issue the RFP they would risk possible criticism. Mr. Webber said that if the Board re-issued the RFP he would have to re-think the parking next door. Mr. Degen said that parking was a premium and maybe it was time to start looking into a municipal parking lot. Ms. Eliot said that an ideal municipal parking area was the GELD surplus land. Mr. Haddad said that the Memorandum of Understanding with GELD would be on the Board's February 24th agenda adding that it was the goal of the Light Department to re-coop money spent on the Downes property.

Mr. Degen moved to reject the RFP submitted by Mr. Steve Webber without prejudice for the Center Fire Station building and authorize the Town Manager to re-issue the RFP. Mr. Schulman seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

BOARD OF WATER COMMISSIONERS/GREAT POND ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Mr. Cunningham started by acknowledging that the decision made was solely that of the Water Commissioners. He said that they were not going to get into the merits of the decision adding that it wasn't the right time to do that. Mr. Jim Luening, Chair of the Great Ponds Advisory Committee (GPAC), said that there was an invasive weed problem which was diminishing the pond. He said that there was a wide gap in their points of view. He said that the GPAC had asked Mass DEP and EPA to review the feedback and hoped at the end of the discussion that they could request the Water Commissioners to reconsider their decision. Mr. Cunningham said that it was a lot of information to process but at the end of the day the decision was up to the Water Commissioners. Mr. Petropoulos asked if the Water Commissioners had seen the new information from DEP and EPA. Mr. Haddad said that he had forwarded

all the information to the Tom Orcutt who sent it out to the Water Commissioners. Mr. Petropoulos questioned whether or not they should be hearing this. Mr. Cunningham said that the GPAC was a Board of Selectmen appointed Committee who asked to come in before them to discuss the decision of the Water Commissioners prior to going back to the Water Commissioners. Mr. Petropoulos thought that a precedent was being set. Mr. Degen said that the Board needed a full understanding adding that any new information may help the Water Commissioners possibly take another look. He said that he would like to hear what everyone had to say. Mr. Schulman didn't think that they should ask the Water Commissioners to make any statements as it was an informal meeting. Mr. Luening said that Natick was opposed to herbicides and brought experts in to do testing. He said that they didn't test private wells for flordone as it doesn't migrate to wells. Mr. Luening said that there were other ways to treat the weeds such as harvesting, which was a slow process, dredging, which was an expensive process and installation of mats, which usually are for a small areas and a nightmare to maintain. Mr. Cunningham asked the Water Commissioners if they wanted to comment. There were no comments made. Mr. Art Prest, President of Groton Lakes Association asked the Water Commissioners to go through the new information and respond to it. Ms. Susan Horowitz thought that it was important to have a member of the Board of Selectmen and Water Commissioners serve as a liaison on the GPAC. She thought that the decision should be based on all the information presented.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT CONTINUED

2. Mr. Haddad said that he had been working with Town Counsel to settle issues with Western Surety relative to TLT Construction. He said that they had thoroughly reviewed the Schedule of Values relative to work that was supposed to be completed by TLT. It was determined that TLT undervalued its work by \$220,000. He was hoping that Western Surety would provide the Town with the necessary shortfall to cover those costs. He said that it was likely that the Bond Company would agree with the Town's numbers.

3. Mr. Haddad said that the school administration had released the proposed budget to the School Committee which could be found on the Town's website and in the Town Clerk's office. Mr. Cunningham said that there was a public hearing Wednesday night at the Performing Arts Center. Mr. Haddad said that what had been proposed was a level services budget. Groton's assessment would be \$1.9M. He said that he had had a long conversation with the Business Manager Jarod Stanton who said that they were carrying a \$500K contingency to build back up their E&D.

Mr. Haddad said that the Finance Committee asked him to reduce the municipal budget by \$500K adding that it was difficult to do. He said that he was not in favor of any of his proposed cuts adding that he thought the municipal budget was lean as it was. He said that he looked at what would impact services and anything new that was added to this fiscal years proposed budget. Mr. Schulman said that they needed to look at the cuts and remember that anything that would be cut may be difficult to restore. Mr. Haddad said that he couldn't cut \$500K without cutting employees. The ZBA Assistant, Wed Developer, PT Building Inspector and cuts to the Police and Fire wages were all positions being considered. He said that a reduction in library hours, summer reading were also things on the table. He added that at the time he wrote his Town Manager's Report he thought the district needed \$2M but it was now \$2.7M needed. Mr. Haddad said that they could consider excluding the Fire Station debt also. He said that if the district needed \$1.9M from the Town, the impact on Groton residents would be a tax increase of approximately \$428 on the average home valued at \$400K.

Mr. Haddad said that if they wanted to exclude the Fire Station debt they should think about holding a special election before town meeting so that there would be no contingent votes. The cost to hold the special election would be approximately \$5K. A majority vote would be necessary; the ballot question would need to be posted 35 days prior to the election date. He was looking at possibly doing that around April 1st if the Board chose to proceed that way. Ms. Eliot said that it needed to be clear that this did not solve the schools budget problem. It was simply shifting what was available. Mr. Degen said that he would like to wait and meet with the Finance Committee to explore the contingent budget a little further. Mr. Degen wondered if it made sense for the Board to meet with the Groton Finance Committee and Dunstable BOS and Finance Committee. Ms. Eliot thought it was a good idea adding that the School Committee should be present also. It was decided that they would set up a meeting the following Tuesday, Feb 18th.

4. Mr. Haddad said that the Economic Development Committee was requesting that the Board appoint Gregory Troughton of 87 Blossom Lane to the Committee to fill a vacancy.

Ms. Eliot moved to appoint Gregory Troughton to the Economic Development Committee with a term to expire on June 30, 2014. Mr. Schulman seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

LIASION REPORTS

Ms. Eliot said that the Planning Board held a public hearing on proposed zoning amendments to be presented at the Spring Town Meeting. Ms. Collette said that it was still a work in progress but the Board appreciated the land owners involvement. Three (3) different business zones were being made out of one (1).

Mr. Petropoulos said that the Lost Lake Sewer Advisory Committee (LLSAC) had reached their conclusion and planned to present their final report to the Board in March.

MINUTES

Ms. Eliot moved to approve the meeting minutes of January 13, 2014. Mr. Petropoulos seconded the motion. The motion carried 4-0-1 with Mr. Cunningham abstaining.

Mr. Degen moved to adjourn. Mr. Petropoulos seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Approved: _____

Anna Eliot, Clerk

Date Approved: 3/10/14

respectfully *submitted*,
Dawn Dunbar, Executive Assistant