

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING
MINUTES MARCH 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

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

1. Mr. Haddad said that back a few months ago, the Board ratified the appointment of Reserve Dispatcher Sam Welch. He said that Mr. Welch came to the Town with many years of dispatch experience and was highly recommended. Mr. Haddad asked the Board to ratify the appointment of Sam Welch as a Full-Time Dispatcher. Chief Palma said that it didn't take Mr. Welch long to train due to all his years of experience adding that it was his intent to make Mr. Welch retired dispatcher April Moulton's replacement. Mr. Cunningham said that it was great that the Chief found someone local and with great experience. Mr. Cunningham asked Mr. Welch what about coming to Groton was appealing to him. Mr. Welch said that the Town and department had a great reputation.

Mr. Degen moved to ratify the appointment of Sam Welch as a Full-Time Dispatcher effective March 10, 2014. Mr. Schulman seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

2. Mr. Haddad said that he was going to bring the new HR Director before the Board that evening but because he was late in getting the background check to Lt. Cullen he was going to hold off until the background check was done.
3. Mr. Haddad said that the Board received a request from the Nashoba Valley Chamber of Commerce for a one day liquor license for their annual Taste of Nashoba Valley event to be held at Lawrence Academy on Tuesday, March 18, 2014 from 5:30pm to 8:00pm.

Ms. Eliot moved to approve a one day liquor license for the Taste of Nashoba for March 18, 2014 from 5:30pm-8:00pm. Mr. Schulman seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

MINUTES

Ms. Eliot moved to approve the Selectmen and Fire Station Building Committee meeting minutes of January 27, 2014. Mr. Degen seconded the motion. The motion carried 3-0-2 in favor with Mr. Schulman and Ms. Eliot abstaining.

Ms. Eliot moved to accept the Regular Session meeting minutes of February 3, 2014. Mr. Schulman seconded the motion. The motion carried 3-0-2 in favor with Mr. Schulman and Mr. Degen abstaining.

Ms. Eliot moved to approve the Executive Session meeting minutes of February 3, 2014 and release them. Mr. Schulman seconded the motion. The motion carried 4-0-1 in favor with Mr. Petropoulos abstaining.

Ms. Eliot moved to approve the Regular Session meeting minutes of February 10, 2014. Mr. Schulman seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

CONSERVATION COMMISSION VACANCY

Mr. Haddad said that the Conservation Commission had interviewed potential candidates to fill the vacancy on the Commission and recommended Susan Black and David Pitkin as the 2 finalists. Mr. Cunningham asked each of the finalists to provide the Board with a brief overview of why they wanted to serve on the Conservation Commission.

Mr. Pitkin said that he previously served on the Conservation Commission for 4 years but had to step down due to personal matters. He said that he had however stayed on as an associate member to stay informed as to what was going on. He said that he still had timing issues with work but that was the only issue he would have if chosen. He added that he was a member of the Trails Committee and Greenway Committee also. Mr. Degen asked what kind of time issues he thought he would have with his work schedule. Mr. Pitkin said it was hard to tell. Mr. Petropoulos asked if his travel schedule was the same as the last time he served. Mr. Pitkin said it was different this time and involved more travel.

Ms. Black said that she felt like she was at the point in her life where she had time to be able to serve. She said that it was a good administration and good working group and felt as though this was important to her. Mr. Cunningham said that it appeared as though forestry was what Ms. Black liked. Ms. Black said "yes" adding that she worked for New England Forestry for many years. Ms. Eliot asked Ms. Black if she was still employed by New England Forestry. Ms. Black said "no." Mr. Petropoulos asked how Ms. Black saw herself making decisions on things and if decisions would be different based on residential and business use. Ms. Black said that you had to stick to the rules as much as you can. She said that you have to look at each situation and what resources would be affected. Ms. Black said that there are more rules now than when their homes were originally built. Mr. Degen disclosed that Ms. Black had been an employee of his on a part-time basis for many years but was no longer working for him. He said that would have no influence on his decision. Mr. Degen added that Ms. Black over the years had expressed concerns to him about land acquisition and the management of it. Ms. Black said that owning conservation land was like owning a house. She said you have to check on it regularly and in this case was not sure if this was something the Commission was doing but was interested in finding out.

Mr. Degen offered Susan Black as a nominee for the Conservation Commission vacancy. Mr. Haddad added that this would be a 2 year term which would expire on June 30, 2016. The nomination was supported unanimously.

Mr. Cunningham said that his support for Ms. Black was based on her experience and background managing property. He said that Mr. Pitkin's experience was a valuable asset and hoped that he stayed on as an associate. Mr. Degen said that Mr. Pitkin's time constraints were of concern to him and thought it would be good to have someone with new ideas. Mr. Schulman said that both were perfectly qualified adding he hoped Mr. Pitkin would remain on as an associate. Mr. Petropoulos said that he was interested in what Ms. Black could bring to the Committee. Ms. Eliot said that she was really torn and was going to vote for Mr. Pitkin until she heard of his time constraints.

LOST LAKE SEWER ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Mr. Cunningham said that it was his understanding that more information had come forward and the Committee would like to review that information prior to presenting its report. Mr. Petropoulos said that a minority report had been submitted after the final presentation was done and the Committee had no time to review it. They had also received a letter from the previous consultant which they wanted to review and would therefore be pushing off the final presentation for about a month. Mr. Schulman said that the deadline for funding was coming closer and closer. Mr. Petropoulos said that the majority of the Committee didn't think that sewer would be recommended. Mr. Schulman asked what the split was. Mr. Petropoulos said that at the time the final report was done 4 were in favor of not recommending sewer. The minority report was from one member.

POLLING RELOCATION COMMITTEE

Mr. Schulman said that the Polling Relocation Committee was charged with finding a location for Precincts 2 & 3 to vote at. Prescott School had been used for the past year or so. He said that the criteria the Committee looked at was accessibility, as permanent a location as possible, trying to keep both precincts together, parking, minimal impact on traffic, minimum security risk and costs associated with startup and future costs. Mr. Schulman said that the Committee looked at both private property and public property. He said that as far as the private sites went, he thanked Grotonwood and the Baptist Church for allowing them to consider them. ADA issues made both those sites

ineligible. The Committee recommended the Groton Pool & Golf Center as the new location for Precincts 2 & 3. He said that additional ADA parking spaces would need to be provided, the side door would need some work, a dumpster would need to be moved, and the bathrooms required some modifications. Mr. Schulman said that the estimated cost to make these upgrades would cost about \$2,700 in materials and about 6.5 hours in labor.

Mr. Cunningham said that he would like to entertain a motion. Mr. Petropoulos asked if action needed to be taken that day or if they could allow time for feedback. Mr. Haddad said that because the Board was not meeting again until March 24th timing was an issue. If the Board voted to adopt the recommendation of the Committee work on the compliance issues would need to start immediately in order to be ready for the May election.

Mr. Degen moved to adopt the recommendation of the Polling Relocation Committee to use the Groton Pool & Golf center as the polling location for Precincts 2 & 3 effective at the annual election in May 2014. Ms. Eliot seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

FY15 BUDGET

Mr. Haddad said that the GD Regional School Committee voted on their budget and provided Groton with its FY15 proposed assessment. The assessment was \$1.4M. He said that he had a 2 ½ hour meeting with the district that day and thought it was time well spent. Mr. Cunningham said that he also attended that meeting adding that a draft of the special audit had been done and they should have it by the end of the week. He added that the district was also going to work on the projections and requests they had made. Mr. Haddad said that with the \$300K in cuts to the municipal budget, \$402K in unexpended tax capacity, \$378K (or 2 ½%) that was set aside in the proposed budget and if the \$448K fire station debt exclusion passed the override vote, the Town would be able to contribute \$1.5M to the school budget deficit. Mr. Haddad said that the schools needed \$127K less than what Groton could give them. He said that they would also have to look at their snow and ice budget as the winter had not been kind to them. Mr. Haddad said that the overall tax increase would be approximately \$412 on the average tax bill with an estimated tax rate of \$18.41.

Mr. Haddad said that they would be \$71K under the levy limit in FY15 adding that the 5-year projection showed that they would be dangerously close to the levy limit if they continued this way. Mr. Schulman said that until they received the schools projections they were not even sure if they could live within the 2 ½% allocated each year. Mr. Cunningham said that indications at the meeting that day were that they could not live within that limit. Mr. Haddad said that if the debt exclusion vote failed on April 1st, the Board had a few options. They could cut the municipal budget by another \$380K or pass a contingent budget subject to a general override at the May 20th election. Mr. Haddad said that Town Clerk, Mike Bouchard and Selectmen Petropoulos were going to be holding informational sessions to help people understand the debt exclusion.

SPRING TOWN MEETING WARRANT OVERVIEW

Mr. Haddad said that the joint public hearing with the Finance Committee was scheduled for Monday, March 24th at 7:15pm. Mr. Haddad read through the draft warrant articles. Mr. Degen asked if because there were still so many contingencies when it came to articles 4-6 relative to the budget, if they should consider holding off on hiring a new HR Director. Mr. Schulman said that they should probably look at putting together a contingency budget now in case the debt exclusion vote does not pass on April 1st. Mr. Haddad said that he understood Mr. Degen's concerns adding that he would rather not see anyone have to be laid off to fill a vacant position. Mr. Cunningham said that with regard to the articles on the Wetlands bylaw and Vehicles, Unregistered, he suggested holding a public hearing on these bylaw changes on March 24th also in conjunction with the hearing on the warrant.

Mr. Haddad said that the sale or lease of Prescott School was article 23 and the sale or lease of the Center Fire Station was article 24. He said that by the end of the following week, they would hopefully be receiving bids for those 2 buildings. He thanked the Board for re-advertising the Fire Station RFP as it had generated huge interest.

Mr. Haddad said that the Board also needed to know that the school district would be vacating the Prescott School on July 1. He said that if and when proposals come in for Prescott School and the Center Fire Station he would like to have a small sub-committee to review the proposals. Berta Erickson said she thought it would be a good idea to have someone from the general public involved. She said that as a citizen of the Town she had very strong feelings that the Prescott School should remain a public building. She thought it would be a big mistake for them to sell it now instead of making it into a community use center. Mr. Schulman said that while Ms. Erickson was speaking as a citizen you were a member of the Re-Use Committee. He said that she was making an emotional argument that night. Ms. Eliot said that she also served on the Re-Use Committee where years' worth of work had been done. She said that due to the significant budget constraints, she highly doubted they would be able to put money into a community center. She said that the responses to the questionnaire that was sent out were in favor of mixed-use. Mr. Degen said that the appraisal would be important adding that the RFP allowed them to sell or lease the building. Mr. Haddad said they wouldn't know anything until they received a bid(s).

Mr. Haddad added that the Town Moderator was also working on a consent agenda whereas articles that didn't generate debate could be lumped together to save time at Town Meeting. He would talk about that at the public hearing on March 24th.

LIASION REPORTS

Mr. Petropoulos said that he attended the Planning Board meeting on the Nate Nutting solar project proposed by GELD. He said that the initial plans for the temple were also presented and went smoothly.

Mr. Degen moved to adjourn at 8:55pm. Mr. Schulman seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Approved: _____

Anna Eliot, Clerk

Date Approved: 3/31/14

respectfully *submitted*,
Dawn Dunbar, Executive Assistant