

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING
MINUTES APRIL 21, 2015
APPROVED**

Present: Joshua A. Degen, Chair; Anna Eliot, Vice Chair; Peter S. Cunningham, Member; John G. Petropoulos, Member

Absent: Stuart M. Schulman, Clerk

Also Present: Mark W. Haddad, Town Manager; Dawn Dunbar, Executive Assistant; Members of the Finance Committee – Gary Green, David Manugian, Mark Bacon, Barry Pease, Robert Hargraves, Bud Robertson, Art Prest; Patricia Dufresne, Town Accountant

Mr. Degen called the meeting to order at 6:00pm.

The Finance Committee called their meeting to order.

TEE BOX REPAIRS

Mr. Haddad said that he was approached by Jim Hanlon of the Groton Golf Association on April 15th and sent the Board an email on this. He said that the Groton Golf Association would like to spend \$5K on repairs to the Driving Range project and on tee box repairs on a couple of holes. Mr. Haddad said that the quote received by Mr. Hanlon included tee box repairs to hole 2 (approximately \$7K) which posed safety risks, and holes 7 & 8 (approximately \$6K total) for a grand total of \$12,850. The company would provide a discount of \$2,285 if all three holes were done at the same time for a total cost to the Town of \$8,065. Mr. Haddad apologized for the late notice and last minute request adding that Mr. Cunningham asked that this meeting be held to discuss this.

Mr. Petropoulos said that he was concerned about the process but didn't deny that this was needed. He said that he was also concerned that the vendor was someone outside of Groton adding he thought they would support local vendors. Mr. Degen said that he and Mr. Cunningham viewed the holes in question that day. He thought based on his estimates that the quote seemed very comparable. He said he did have an issue with the lack of specifics listed in the quote (height of concrete blocks as an example). Mr. Green asked if they would obtain quotes. Mr. Haddad said that anything under \$10K didn't require them to obtain bids but that they would obtain quotes and look at local businesses first. Mr. Cunningham said that with the golf season on the verge of starting, they would need to get this started quickly adding there were safety issues. Mr. Degen said there was no question that hole #2 was an issue adding that holes 7&8 would be wet for some time still. Mr. Haddad said that hole #2 was the one that concerned him the most adding that holes 7&8 were included because of the reduction in price. Mr. Haddad asked Ms. Dufresne if they could encumber the money until the fall. Ms. Dufresne said that they could. Mr. Degen said that hole #2 should have been fixed years ago and asked that Mr. Haddad work with Mr. Delaney to get other local bids. Mr. Delaney said that the only way you can use local only is for local produce and municipal schools according to the Inspector General. Mr. Haddad said that he would be looking to transfer \$8,100 and would look for local quotes and encumber funds until the fall.

Mr. Degen said that another issue was the retaining wall project behind the Function Hall. Mr. Degen said that the DPW had undertaken the project to include removal of some trees which were causing moisture behind the building. He said that the DPW had done a great job and saved a lot of money doing it. He said that there was no line item under the capital plan or within the Country Club budget. He said other work being done to the Country Club was work on the Tavern, locker rooms and a proposed deck, using town supplies. He said that they had been trying to make the Club revenue neutral and needed a true and accurate representation of the actual budget. He said that the DPW was using its resources that could be used on various projects adding that a plan needed to be brought forward for future projects. Mr. Cunningham thought that was fair adding that a lot was going on there. He said that there had been years of neglect but that they had a good chance of making it profitable but that they needed to do upkeep. He suggested placing work like this under the municipal building line item. Mr. Degen said that if you added up all the expenditures, it was a big number that was not included in the capital budget. Mr. Cunningham said that they would hopefully see an offset but that they had to spend money to provide services.

Mr. Degen said that he heard the Club had a good weekend. Mr. Haddad said that they signed seven new members. Mr. Pease said that he understood that money needed to be spent on emergencies but added that they should itemize everything they are spending and report it to Town Meeting so that they can make an educated decision about the budget. He said he didn't like line item transfers and thought the money should roll back to free cash. Mr. Haddad said that he understood adding that the locker room renovations and pro shop renovations were included in the Country Club's budget. He said that the chairs he was requesting for the pool were part of the line item transfers and something that Town Meeting has the opportunity to vote on. Mr. Haddad said that the Finance Committee's plan for the Country Club was something that was done over the last eight months. He said that they were able to lease out the Function Hall and hire a General Manager/Head Professional all as suggested by the report done by Bill Gustas. He said that the lease to purchase equipment was all part of the capital plan and would all be paid off in a couple of years. He said that he wanted to do what they could to provide Shawn Campbell and Luke Kenney what they needed to succeed

Mr. Green wondered from the consultant's report what was suggested as far as how to account for revenue and expenses. Ms. Dufresne said "offset receipt." Mr. Haddad said that they were not ready for an enterprise fund adding that they had discussed it. Mr. Green asked if an enterprise fund would show what they were looking for. Mr. Haddad said that it would adding that it would have to support itself and the general fund would not be able to supplement it.

Mr. Petropoulos said that the materials on hand cost them something adding he would like to see those costs. He said he would be willing to spend tax money to offset the Club. Mr. Cunningham said that they should update the Club's capital plan. Mr. Haddad reminded the Board that there was no GM there for this past budget cycle adding that they would see a capital plan next year. Mr. Pease said that he would like to see the new GM put together a 3-5 year plan including what the club needs. He said that he should look at everything to make it a safe and attractive club. Mr. Degen said that they were all saying the same things adding that the budget doesn't always contain everything it really needs.

Mr. Delaney said that he agreed with what had been said. He said that there was no maintenance line item in any of the budgets for the Club. He said that this was now under his purview. He said that he couldn't commit himself every spring to project like the wall and stairs but happened to have some down time where he could place a few guys there. He said that he averaged three men for about three weeks. He said that the blocks were purchased last June which cost about \$5,200. He used \$1,000 in stone, \$700 in pipe and filter fabric, \$7,000 for asphalt paving and \$300 in fuel. He said the real cost savings was in labor adding that a project like this would fall under minor capital. Mr. Delaney said that he was also a taxpayer and felt that you should do the job right the first time. Mr. Haddad said that the Club had been neglected for many years and was just trying to make it safe and a good product. Mr. Degen asked if Mr. Haddad was looking to put money in the FY16 budget. Mr. Haddad said no adding that he was comfortable with the budget as it was. He said his goal for now was to watch the revenues coming in and expenses going out at the Club over the next fiscal year. Mr. Green said that they had been very vocal about the strategy. He said that they now have a plan moving forward with the new budget numbers for FY16. He said that they needed to make the Club safe and not half done adding that they needed to make a run at it.

Mr. Cunningham moved to approve the plan to fix the tees as presented this evening with the repairs to the tee boxes not to exceed \$8,100.

Mr. Degen said he was concerned that the staggered approach would cost them more money. Mr. Haddad asked if they could increase the expense limit to \$10,000.

Mr. Cunningham amended his motion with an expense not to exceed \$10,000. Ms. Eliot seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Petropoulos asked that they request an opinion from Town Counsel on the local option.

TOWN MEETING RELATED BUSINESS

Mr. Haddad said that the Board had deferred votes on a few Articles.

1. Article 4 – Citizen’s Petition - currently 2-1-2 – Mr. Petropoulos said that he would stay deferred. Ms. Eliot said that she would stay deferred.
2. Article 11 – Lost Lake Fire Protection – Currently 2-1-2 – Mr. Petropoulos said he was opposed. Ms. Eliot said that she was in favor of this adding that they had promised this to those in Lost Lake.

Mr. Prest said that he surveyed 30 people who lived in the area described. He said that 95% of them were against having drinking water also provided by the water lines adding that they were happy with their wells. Mr. Degen said that the cost per home (betterments) were inaccurate he was against the project.

3. Articles 12-14 – Four Corners Sewer – Mr. Haddad said that he spoke to Mr. Wong who would not speak against the project the way the article was written; tying it to the receipt of the Mass Works grant. He said that Mr. Catalano was traveling and had not been able to reach him yet and there was still not response from Shaw’s. Mr. Cunningham said that the decision at Town Meeting would basically be for the engineering costs. Ms. Eliot asked what would happen if the Mass Works grant came in for less than 100%. Mr. Haddad said that they would have to go back to the fall town meeting. Ms. Sartini asked who would pay for the stub to the Groton line. Mr. Haddad said that it would be part of their construction costs. Ms. Eliot said that the details would be worked out through the engineering. Mr. Manugian said that the IA agreement would define all of that. Mr. Pease asked if it was within the IA agreement that they could articulate reimbursement from Ayer should someone in Ayer tie-in. Mr. Haddad said that they could negotiate anything. Mr. Degen said that they have been saying for months they need this in order to stimulate economic development in that area but they only had buy-in from one of the corners at this time. He said that it wouldn’t affect him to have to wait until the fall or next spring to bring this forward at that time. He said it was a gamble right now and thought they should postpone. Mr. Cunningham said that there was no harm in moving forward like this for now. Ms. Eliot said that it was a risk but that they needed the project shovel ready in order to be considered for the grant. She said the risk to not bring it forward was great as well. Mr. Petropoulos said that he agreed with Mr. Degen.

Mr. Hargraves asked why he thought he read that the businesses in Ayer were driving this project. Mr. Degen said that the driver was the Board of Selectmen adding it was in their goals and objectives. He said that the Town Manager was asked to do this. Ms. Eliot said that they couldn’t add more businesses than what the Inter Basin Transfer allowed. Mr. Prest said that the Economic Development Committee voted unanimously to support this as well as the Groton Board of Trade. Mr. Degen said that he didn’t want to see the project get shot down at Town Meeting. Mr. Green said that the answer was to get it passed adding that the voters look to them for their opinions. He said that as a resident of the Four Corners area he hated spending money up front but thought they should do something. He said that this was a good risk adding that they had someone on the Finance Committee who had applied for and received one of these grants.

Ms. Eliot and Mr. Cunningham supported these articles. Mr. Petropoulos was not in support of it. Mr. Degen said he would like to give it six more days.

4. Article 18 – Parking lot behind Town Hall – Mr. Haddad said that he had been working with Mr. Webber and Mr. McElroy to negotiate a deal for the purchase of the lot. Mr. Webber was willing to sell for \$200K. Mr. Haddad said that Mr. McElroy had offered to partner with us and buy the lot and pay for the improvements if the DPW did the work. He would then grant the Town an easement for the use of it. Mr. Haddad said that this was a great deal for the Town. He said that Mr. Webber and Mr. McElroy had really stepped up to partner to support the Town and thank them. Ms. Eliot thanked them for the Board also.
5. Article 17 – Mr. Degen was in support of this.
6. Article 30 – Conservation Commission request for CPA funds – Mr. Degen and Mr. Cunningham were against the request. Mr. Petropoulos was at Town Meeting.

7. Articles 27 & 28 – Tarbell School – Mr. Haddad said that the Planning Board had voted unanimously to support the rezone of the Tarbell School property from P to RA. He said that they had received two bids. One from Mr. Brooks Lyman to rezone the property to B-1 and one from Mr. Kevin McGoniagle who wanted to convert the building to three condo units and have it zoned RA. Mr. Haddad said that he emailed one of the residents the proposals and asked her to share them with the neighbors. Mr. Haddad said that the Board authorized the sale of the building for not less than \$35K. Mr. Degen said that the Board had made it a priority to sell the building. He said that they had vetted this out for so long adding that selling it would put it back on the tax role. Mr. Cunningham agreed adding this was their last best chance. Mr. Petropoulos asked if there was a TIF requested. Mr. Haddad said there was not.

Mr. Haddad said that the Board wanted to conduct Charter Review Committee interviews but one person could not attend and one person had withdrawn. He said that the Committee has to start within 30 days after Town Meeting and asked the Board if they would like to defer until May 11th or May 18th. Mr. Degen suggested scheduling them for May 18th.

The Finance Committee moved to adjourn. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Cunningham moved to adjourn. The motion carried unanimously.

Approved: _____

Stuart Schulman, Clerk

respectfully *submitted*,

Dawn Dunbar, Executive Assistant

Date Approved: 6/9/15