

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

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

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

Mr. Petropoulos called the meeting to order at 6:00pm and reviewed the agenda.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mr. Haddad said that he had been working in conjunction with Mr. Degen and the Sargisson Beach Committee to have a new dedication of the beach for recent work that had been completed. Mr. Haddad said that the dedication would be on October 5th at 5pm.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

1. Mr. Haddad said that the Board met and interviewed three candidates for Town Counsel last Thursday. He said that one of the firms interviewed does not offer labor counsel. He said that he had been asked by Mr. Degen to do an analysis on what they had spent on Town Counsel services and what impact there would be if they decided to use the firm of Blatman, Bobrowski, Mead and Talerman. He said that under Kopelman and Paige's proposal, the Town pays a \$2,500 retainer for basis counsel services and \$170/hour for labor. He said that Blatman, Bobrowski, Mead and Talerman would charge a \$6,000 flat fee monthly and the Town would have to hire outside labor. He said that the total of the FY15 invoices from Kopelman and Paige was \$83K and the same services with Blatman, Bobrowski, Mead and Talerman would be \$106K. He said that he thought this was a great exercise and wanted to share it with the Board.

Mr. Haddad said that the only labor bid they received was at a rate of \$200/hour. They were currently paying \$170/hour with Kopelman and Paige. Mr. Degen said that the Blatman proposal included litigation whereas K&P was charging them for litigation outside of the retainer. Mr. Haddad said that his exercise showed the past two year history where they would still be paying less if they stayed with Kopelman and Paige. Mr. Petropoulos said it would be \$18K less to stay with Kopelman and Paige. Mr. Haddad asked when they would like to schedule this on an agenda. The Board decided to discuss it further at their next meeting on Tuesday, September 29th.

CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE VACANCY INTERVIEWS

Mr. Haddad said that two candidates had withdrawn their names which left two candidates for the Board to interview - Michael McCoy and Thomas Hartnett.

Mr. Hartnett said that he thought he could help in some capacity. He said that he had served the Town of Groton for 28 years in many different capacities. He was a tax collector, a selectman, a sewer commissioner, a member of the LRTA, and a member of the trust funds. He said that he had made tough decisions and done things he had to do. He said that he was on the last three member Board of Selectmen and on the first five member board. He said that he gets along with people. He said that he was part of the decision to acquire the Country Club with no money to pay for it, but came up with a plan to borrow money short term to purchase it. He said that he had lived in Groton since he was seven and thought he could contribute a lot to the Committee.

Mr. Cunningham said that Mr. Hartnett had had an opportunity to see town government worked and asked if there were any general observations he could make. Mr. Hartnett said that he thought it was the individual that counted. Mr. Degen asked Mr. Hartnett if had read the charter. Mr. Hartnett said that he had not. Mr. Degen

asked what problems he thought existed. Mr. Hartnett said that he did not have any ideas but would be quick to learn. Mr. Eliot asked if he would be around this winter. Mr. Hartnett said he would.

Mr. McCoy said that he attended law school but was not practicing and had been a technical writer for 30 years and was currently a business analyst. He said that he didn't have Mr. Hartnett's experience but had served on a committee that worked to provide Groton Dunstable with ethernet capability. He said that he had served on the board at the UU church, and served on the Rehoboth Finance Committee. He said that he was a little alarmed that people keep dropping out. Mr. Schulman said it had all been for personal reasons. Mr. McCoy said that the Charter was foundational to the Town while said it was not a political issue and should be done objectively. He said that they wanted a document that was based on voter empowerment and government transparency and though the Charter did a good job with that now.

Mr. Cunningham asked if he had any general perspective on Town governance. Mr. McCoy said that he thought the Town Manager position was the right way to go and thought it was comparable to how a company with a Board of Director's worked. He said that the executive team was responsible for implementation and it was not the Board of Selectmen's responsibility to administer day to day operations. Mr. Degen asked if he had read the charter. Mr. McCoy said that he had. Mr. Degen asked if he would make any improvements. Mr. McCoy said that there were some grammatical errors he would like to see changed and thought that the Town Manager's review and the summary were quite puzzling. He said that he had no position on the Town Manager but thought he seemed to be doing a good job. He said he was not sure why the summary was a public record and not the review itself. He thought a summary seemed inefficient and puts them in a position to decide what a summary should include. He thought there ought to be more guidance on what a summary should say.

Mr. Hartnett said that he was impressed by Mr. McCoy's presentation and thought the Board should pick him to serve on the Committee. Ms. Eliot asked Mr. Hartnett if he was withdrawing his name. Mr. Hartnett said that he was withdrawing his application.

Mr. Schulman moved to nominate Mr. McCoy to be a member of the Charter Review Committee. Mr. Degen seconded the motion. Ms. Eliot thanked Mr. Hartnett for his service and dedication to the Town. The motion carried unanimously.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT – CONT.

2. Mr. Haddad said that as part of the application for the MassWorks Grant and in an effort to improve their grant application, the Town applied for and received approval for a Community Compact with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. He said that a Community Compact was a voluntary, mutual agreement entered into between the Baker/Polito Administration and individual cities and town of the Commonwealth. He said that a community would agree to implement at least one best practice that they select from a variety of areas. He said that after consultation with various Department Heads and a study of the area, they decided to enter into a compact for Financial Management "Budget Documents" and Information Technology "Cyber Security" Best Practices. He said that the Governor's Office and Division of Local Services approved these areas and authorized the Town to enter into a Compact with the Town. Mr. Haddad said that once authorized by the Board, The Chairman on behalf of the Town will need to sign the Compact with the Lt. Governor. He said that the Town, over a two year period, will implement the best practice for the categories chosen. He said that certain grants, like the MassWorks Grant are incentives for participation in the project. He said that he would be working with the Finance Team and the IT Department to implement these Best Practices over the next two years. He said that the Lt. Governor would be in Groton on Friday, October 2nd at 1:30pm to sign the Compact and respectfully requested that the Board authorize the Chairman to sign on behalf of the Town. He said they would be the 24th community to sign a Compact.

Mr. Cunningham asked in choosing the two areas if they were areas they were pretty close in attaining the best practice. Mr. Haddad said that there was always room for improvement in their budget presentation. He said that cyber security was something they needed to work on. He said that Mr. Chiasson had been looking into this. Mr. Cunningham asked if the Commonwealth would provide guidance. Mr. Haddad said that they would and already had begun to.

Mr. Cunningham moved to authorize the Chair to sign the Community Compact with Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Mr. Schulman seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

3. Mr. Haddad said that he had provided the Board with a Report from their Actuary updating the Town's OPEB Liability in last week's correspondence. He said that Ms. DuFresne provided a copy to the Finance Committee also. He said that Mr. Petropoulos had asked him to provide the Board with a "High Level" take away from the report and place it on this week's Agenda for their review and discussion.

He said that the Town of Groton was required to conduct an actuarial valuation on their Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) every three years to comply with GASB 45. The last valuation was conducted in 2011. In 2011, the Town's Liability was \$7,150,656, with an annual contribution of \$917,899 to meet this liability. Based on this year's valuation, their liability had increased to \$8,135,213 with an annual contribution of \$1,086,092. He said that the Town had established the Trust in FY 2016 with an annual contribution of \$200,000. Some of the reasons for the increase were:

- A 12.5% increase in the active population on Health Insurance from 96 in 2011 to 108 in 2014, however the annual average salary of employees has actually decreased from \$63,940 in 2011 to \$63,780 in 2014. Please note that this does mean we added 12 new employees. It means that 12 benefit eligible employees started taking Health Insurance (some of which may be new).
- A change in the mortality tables led to an increase in the Town's liability of roughly 2.5%.
- The Town is carrying four retirees on Family Plans.
- Individual's eligible for retirement has increased from 12 in 2011 to 13 in 2014.
- Number of retirees on our health insurance plans has increased from 36 in 2011 to 40 in 2014.
- Average life expectancy has increased from 71 in 2011 to 72.1 in 2014.
- Surviving spouse average life expectancy has increased from 73.8 in 2011 to 75.3 in 2014.

Mr. Petropoulos said that it was a lengthy document and something they needed to understand. He said it was something they needed to start figuring out how to manage.

Mr. Schulman asked how many employees were eligible for insurance but don't take it. Ms. Dufresne said that they had 152 employees on the plan right now with 61 of them being retirees. She said that she contacted the actuary and people who could participate were not included in their numbers. Mr. Cunningham asked what the drop dead date was. Mr. Haddad said they hadn't provided one yet. He said that he was going to recommend contributing towards the fund like last year.

Mr. Degen said that the numbers were based on insurance cost splits of 65/35 and 80/20 with an average of 10% health insurance increases per year. Mr. Degen said that a \$20,000 plan with 10% increase means an additional \$2,000 per year increase and thought it should be part of collective bargaining and suggested that they look at a 7.5% increase yearly until they reach a 50/50 match. He thought that the expenses on health insurance have to be born across the Board. He added that the Town of Concord had achieved a 50/50 share.

Mr. Petropoulos said that they needed to make sure they understood the implications of this. Ms. Dufresne said that they could contribute what they wanted to year to year. Mr. Degen said that they might to consider throwing more money towards it. Mr. Robertson said that he though they needed to take it this into consideration with all benefits and look at what areas they could attack and how. Mr. Haddad said that at this time he would not be recommending an increase in their contribution for the FY17 budget.

WARRANT PUBLIC HEARING

Mr. Schulman announced that he was going to be recusing himself from any discussion and action on Article 10 as he had a close family member who was the Executive Director of Indian Hill Music.

Mr. Green called the meeting of the Finance Committee to order at 7:05pm.

Mr. Degen moved to open the public hearing on the Fall Town Meeting warrant. Ms. Eliot seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Haddad said that when they put the operating budget together in April, they were \$100K under the levy limit. He said that revenue numbers came in \$43K higher, which put them \$143K under the levy limit. He said that with the actual values falling \$4M the tax rate right is \$18.88. Mr. Haddad said that when values drop the tax rate goes up and vice versa. He said that free cash had been certified at \$1M adding that he was suggesting they use some of the free cash on some of the articles on the warrant and doing this would not impact the tax rate.

- Article #1 – Prior Year Bills – Mr. Haddad said that they know of one bill for \$5K from Turf Unlimited for Park Commission work. He said that the bill came in after July 1. He said that there were two other potential bills that may come up at Town Meeting. He said that they were National Grid bills for the public safety building. He said that there was an issue with the meter being broken and thus the Town was not billed correctly. He said that National Grid had been giving the Town estimated bills and were looking to bill us \$14K in back charges. He said that they had turned back \$15K in municipal buildings last year to free cash. Mr. Delaney said that they were pulling old invoices to get an actual estimate. He said that they were in the process of negotiating with them. Mr. Haddad asked them to defer taking action.
- Article #2 – Mr. Haddad said that Article 2 was requesting \$76,400. He said that the Board of Selectmen needed an additional \$4,500 for the regional school agreement review and \$3,500 for the Prescott update the Board agreed to. He said that the Police Department had requested an additional \$40,000. \$25,000 was needed to complete the renovations to the Public Safety Building and \$15,000 was needed for building security. Chief Palma said that the money was needed to finish the renovations on the portion of the building where the Fire Department used to be. He said that during the renovations, they had encountered some serious electrical issues and they needed to spend a lot of money on electrical equipment and panels in order to bring the 20 year old building up to code. He said that this \$15,000 was something that did not expect. Mr. Chiasson said that in 2014 they had committed to a multiyear security update. He said that they were on year two of that plan and we found that they required more hardware than expected at the Public Safety Building and Town Hall. Mr. Cunningham asked if there were grant opportunities available for the 911 dispatch center. Chief Palma said there was and added that the grant criteria would not be released until sometime after Oct 1st. Mr. Petropoulos asked if the overruns were in a variety of areas. Chief Palma said that the overruns were caused by the unknown electrical issues.

Mr. Haddad said that they had originally requested and received \$60,000 for the renovations. He said that the need \$85,000 for the project. He said that the electrical costs were not anticipated and not in the original \$60,000. Mr. Schulman asked if any of the money left over from the Fire Station project could be used. Mr. Haddad said that they used some to fund the capital budget. He said that any use of that money would need to be voted on at Town Meeting because it would need to be re-appropriated adding that he would like to leave it there for things that may come up at Fire Station. Mr. Haddad said that several of the officers had volunteered their time to paint and move furniture which he felt was an important thing to mention. Mr. Petropoulos said that having a 40% cost overrun was not something they signed up for. Mr. Haddad said that he remembered telling the Board that the request for \$60,000 was a best guess good faith estimate and wouldn't characterize it as a 40% cost overrun. He said that if they had hired an engineer and gone out to bid to receive quotes it would have been higher. Mr. Degen said that it was obviously something that had to be done. He said that he didn't see it as an oversight and sort of recalled the discussion of a best guess estimate at the time. He said that they were fortunate that the Fire Department had new headquarters and that the Police Station was going back to what it was designed for. Mr. Haddad said that these were all one-time expenses and was going to suggest taking it out of free cash. Mr. Hargraves said that he supported the Chief's request 100%. Mr. Pease asked if he could get an itemized list of security equipment needed.

Mr. Haddad said that there was also a request from the Fire Chief for \$20,000 to run an on-call recruit class training. Chief McCurdy said that he wanted to run an on-call recruit program. He said that this was not something that was planned during the budget process last fall. He said that they have received a lot of interest from the Town and have had a few people leave for things like moving out of town. He said that they currently have 39 on-call members but said that their target should be in the mid-40s. He added that a majority of the recruits would also go on to be EMT's. Mr. Cunningham asked if this was for training materials and turnout gear. Chief McCurdy said that is was adding that was a majority of the cost. He said that they had a lot of their spare equipment expire over the last year. Mr. Petropoulos asked how many recruits the Chief expected to get out of this class. Chief McCurdy said maybe 6-8 with a potential for 10. Mr. Petropoulos asked if this was going to be something placed in the budget moving forward. The Chief said that it was something they should plan for moving forward. Mr. Degen said that he supported this adding that turnout gear was a large part of the Chief's capital budget.

Mr. Haddad said that he had also received a request from the DPW Director for \$8,500 additional in municipal building wages in order to fill some voids in a couple of areas. He explained that The DPW Director initiated a solution during the summer months and needs to make it a permanent solution for the Department. The major areas of deficiency are the Transfer Station and in custodial work. At the transfer station, a checker is needed so that the other two employees can continue to do the larger work without interruption. The Department loses minor amounts of revenue when a checker is not available when people dump items without proper bags or in the wrong place. The use of a checker will cut down on these losses. While this issue does not generate enough revenue to fund an employee, it will, however, improve the efficiencies of the operations. There are a couple of areas where additional custodial support is needed. It includes more coverage in the Highway Garage, vacation coverage, learning the complexities of the new fire station, locker rooms at the Country Club on a more frequent basis, the bathroom at Transfer Station, Legion Hall and the new Electric Light Building. This past summer, the Department utilized a contractor who has been working at the Club for almost two years to fill these voids. This position will provide coverage during vacations as well as provide the coverage listed above. To fund this position, funding will come from the Electric Light Department, Country Club and Building Maintenance Wages. The amount requested is the Building Maintenance share of the new position. He said that he had both employees from Transfer Station come and ask him if they could get more help.

Mr. Degen asked how many hours a week they were requesting. Mr. Delaney said it would be a 40 hour position. Mr. Degen said that he could not support creating another new full-time position when they just talked about health insurance. Mr. Delaney said that he had asked for help the last two budget cycles and had been denied both times. He said that there were six weeks of vacations per year between the two employees he currently had and needed help during those times also. He said that they had been using senior volunteers at the Transfer Station but they rotate out so quickly that there is constant training which was efficient. He said that it was even hard to find consistency with part time people. Mr. Degen said that he understand the need but thought a part-time checker position could be created and a part time custodial position created. He said that GELD as an enterprise fund could always hire their own custodial help. Mr. Cunningham said that there was a need at the Transfer Station adding that it was also a source of revenue for them and had probably lost opportunities because they can't do it all. He said that they needed to support this in some way. He said that as they grow as a town they need to still maintain their buildings and facilities. Mr. Degen said that he did support this he just didn't support the structure.

Mr. Petropoulos asked if the need was evident this past summer. Mr. Delaney said that the need had been present during the last two budget cycles but had been denied. Mr. Petropoulos pointed out that this was the lowest increasing department. Mr. Petropoulos said that he was concerned about all the labor this summer at the Country Club. Mr. Haddad said that he would like to see the \$8,500 to finish out the FY and they could work out how to deal with this in the next budget cycle. He added that the Country Club was already budgeted for this.

Mr. Petropoulos asked what the annual cost for this was. Mr. Haddad said that they would not know until they find out if the employee would require benefits. He said that the annual salary would be around \$41,000 plus benefits of either \$16,000 or \$4,500 which was a family vs individual plan. Mr. Cunningham said that they needed to look at the bigger picture and not allow benefits to be a sole determiner for not doing something. Ms. Eliot said that she would like to hear from Finance Committee members also. Mr. Green said that they had not met or discussed any of the articles as of yet. He said he couldn't speak for the committee but his only comment would be that he would hate to see them go back to where they were a couple of years ago with full-time vs. part-time positions. He said that Mr. Delaney's budget was tight and if he needed help he would tend to give him the benefit of the doubt adding it seemed like a no brainer at this point. He said that he would like to see the fully loaded costs if they decide to go this route so that the voters know it's not just an \$8,000 request.

Mr. Haddad said that his recommendation for this article would be that they take \$76,500 out of free cash after tonight's discussion. Mr. Petropoulos said that most of them were one-time expenses and should not be done in mid-cycle. Mr. Haddad said that these were all items they would see proposed in his FY17 budget.

- Article #3 – Mr. Haddad said that Capital Stabilization Fund had \$129,000 in it right now. He said that his recommendation would be to \$425,000 to achieve and maintain their goal balance adding he was recommending it come from free cash. The Board was unanimous in its support of this.
- Article #4 – Mr. Haddad said that in order to reach as balance of \$1.6M they would need to add \$50,000 from free cash. Mr. Pease asked at what point did they stop saying the balance should be 5% of the total annual budget. Mr. Haddad said that the Town's Financial Management Plan says 5% of

total operating budget. He said that they were a AAA bond rated community because of their management policies. The Board was unanimous in its support of this.

- Article #5 – Mr. Haddad said that if they fully funded the previous articles, they would be left with a free cash balance of \$452,500. He said that the Accountant likes to keep \$200,000 in free cash and he liked to keep \$400,000 in free cash. Mr. Haddad suggested taking \$100,000 and putting it towards offsetting the tax rate. Mr. Degen suggested taking \$200,000 out of free cash to offset the tax rate. Mr. Green said that in past the Board had asked them to debate this as well and make an official position. Mr. Degen asked that the Finance Committee consider \$200,000.
- Article #6 – Ms. Eliot said that they needed to clarify that this revision was to include the over 55 housing already approved by Planning Board. Mr. Haddad added that the developer was paying entire cost to connect. Ms. Eliot said that she would like to arrange a meeting with the neighborhood adding how much this benefited their grant application to have this multi-use included. The Board was unanimous in its support of this.
- Article #7 – Mr. Cunningham said that they had a meeting that night and decided to suggest that because there was currently no impact to Groton that the committee goes dormant for now. He said that they also discussed intervener status which could potentially cost a lot of money and if it was possible for it to be borne by a number of entities. Mr. Petropoulos said that this article was to decide if they should recommend putting together a few dollars in case we need it for legal fees, etc. Mr. Schulman added that an expenditure of the funds would require a 4/5ths vote of the BOS. He said that he didn't see a lot of risk in it and didn't think it was unnecessary at this point. He asked if they could vote to create the fund and not fund it until a subsequent town meeting. Mr. Haddad suggested that they pull the article adding that they had a legal budget they could use if they needed and another town meeting in 6 months should the need arise. He said that the Finance Committee could also approve a transfer as another option available to them.

Mr. Degen moved that they withdraw Article 7. Mr. Cunningham seconded the motion. The motion carried 4-0-1 with Mr. Schulman abstaining.

- Article #11 - Mr. Haddad said that the Board of Health was present and asked that mosquito control be placed on the warrant for reconsideration. Mr. Haddad said that the expenditure would show up on their cherry sheet assessment for the next three years at a cost of \$73,000 yearly. Ms. Susan Horowitz said that they had proposed this a couple of times and provided the Board with the history. She said that they had been asked by the Sargisson Beach Committee to push this forward again. She said that since EEE and WNV had been found in Westford and Tyngsboro they would like to know what their mosquito pool is. She said that this was not a town-wide spraying program and residents could opt out. She said that the biggest attractant for them was the support the Highway Department would receive. They would have help with culverts and breeding areas. She said it was important to know what they have in town. Mr. Degen thought this was a much needed service adding that these illnesses could kill you. He felt it was important to bring this back to town meeting for them to decide. Ms. Eliot said that she supported this but wanted to see some sort of tick prevention also. Ms. Horowitz said that the State would probably have to go down the road of tick prevention eventually. Mr. Delaney said that it would benefit them adding that mosquitoes don't breed in moving water. He said that the Control Project has special permission to go into wetlands and get the water moving. Mr. Petropoulos requested factual information in the form of statistics. He said that voters needed this information. Mr. Pease said that he looked at this as an insurance policy adding that he was not sure he could sleep at night knowing that they could have helped prevent the death of one person by funding

this. Mr. Degen, Mr. Cunningham and Ms. Eliot were in favor of this. Mr. Petropoulos and Mr. Schulman deferred their decision until Town Meeting.

Mr. Haddad said that Town Clerk was not going to be at Town Meeting on October 19th. He said that Town Meeting would need to elect, by ballot, the Clerk for the meeting. He said that he would like to suggest that Marlene Kenney, Asst. Town Clerk, be nominated by the Board of Selectmen to perform the job of Town Clerk. He said that if she was the only nomination, then the Chair could submit a single ballot vote to satisfy the requirement. He asked the Board to consider Marlene Kenney as Town Clerk for the meeting. Mr. Degen asked who would count the ballots if someone else was nominated. Mr. Haddad said that the Board of Selectmen would. He said that this opinion was from Town Counsel. He said that if there was more than one nominee they would be ready for a ballot vote and added that it could take about 30-45 minutes at the beginning of Town Meeting to complete.

Mr. Degen moved to suspend the public hearing. Mr. Cunningham seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Degen moved that they extend Kopelman and Paige's Town Counsel services contract through Oct 15, 2015. Ms. Eliot seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Degen moved to reconvene the public hearing on the warrant. Mr. Schulman seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Degen had to leave the meeting at this point.

- Article 8 – Mr. Haddad said that the Water Commissioners had requested a transfer of money into their Water Enterprise Fund in order to upgrade the Whitney Pond Well Pump. Mr. Orcutt said that he would have a number at Town meeting. The Board supported this unanimously.
- Article 9 – Mr. Haddad said that the Sewer Commission wanted to make some updates to their Center Sewer Plan. Mr. Orcutt said that these were housekeeping items. The Board supported this unanimously.
- Article 10 – Mr. Schulman said that he was recusing himself. Mr. Haddad said that Thomas More College had sold to Indian Hill Music and because the original Town Meeting vote for the sewer extension was for Thomas More College, they needed to revote the extension. Ms. Susan Randazzo said that they closed on the property in August and were still in the beginning stages of planning and putting together their team. She said that having this possibility would make it easier for them to plan. Mr. Cunningham asked if the capacity was being proposed. Mr. Orcutt said that it was the same capacity. He added that the Sewer Commission had not taken a position yet but would. Mr. Petropoulos asked if there would be no impact to the tax payers. Mr. Haddad said that the cost would be borne by Indian Hill. Ms. Eliot said she thought this was a great use. The Board was 3-0-1 in support with Mr. Schulman abstaining.
- Articles 11-15 – Mr. Haddad said that he would bring these back for discussion once the Planning Board held their public hearing.
- Article 16 – Mr. Haddad said that this article was to make amendments to the Sign Bylaw. He said that they had been working with the current version for five years adding that the bylaw works well as written; it just needed some clean-up. He said that the Sign Committee had used the unique and

special circumstances a couple of times. Ms. Collette said that the HDC and Planning Board had seen these proposed revisions and added that she had just come from the Park Commission meeting tonight where only minor edits were provided. Mr. Cunningham asked about the international dark sky reference. Ms. Collette said that the Planning Board had used it for many years now and was an accepted national standard.

Mr. Petropoulos said that he had received some complaints about the sign bylaw and the impacts it has on businesses such as electronic open signs. He said that he understood the desire to not have neon signs. Mr. Schulman said that neon signs had not been in the bylaw for many years. Mr. Petropoulos also questioned how permits go from Board of Selectmen to Town Manager. Ms. Collette said that it was a present practice now that they have a Town Manager. Mr. Petropoulos said that he also heard that fees were exorbitant. Ms. Collette disagreed adding that the Town Manager sets the fees and adding that she didn't believe fees for signs had changed in a long time. Ms. Collette said that Town Counsel had reviewed and approved this version. She said that Town Counsel had also made sure they were in compliance with recent Supreme Court decisions as it relates to religious signs and political signs. She said that was where a lot of the inconsistencies were. The Board was unanimous in its support.

Mr. Harris said that in looking over the sign bylaw he noticed that the Town Manager was on the Sign Committee. He said that it was stated that the Board appoints Town Manager because there had been no interest from residents. He said that the open seat was not on list of vacancies. He asked if it was an open appointment. Mr. Haddad said that he had been a member of the Sign Committee since 2010. Mr. Cunningham agreed adding that it was what they had done historically. He said that there were also other members of the Committee. Ms. Eliot said that this made it simpler for the applicant. She said that they attend a meeting and because the Town Manager is on the Committee the process can occur quickly. Mr. Schulman said that once you were on a committee you were typically on there until someone else comes forward with a good reason. Mr. Harris said it was the only exception he could see with all the committees. Mr. Petropoulos said that was a matter of convenience and strategy and a benefit to have the Town Manager on there. Ms. Collette said that Mr. Haddad was the longest standing member and in addition to him Carolyn Perkins, an elected member of the Planning Board and also an elected member of the Park Commission, Gineane Haberlin, were on the Committee. She said it was a very good working group which convenes as necessary. She said that the Committee worked with many business owners and was able to accommodate them.

Mr. Cunningham moved to close the public hearing for the warrant. Ms. Eliot seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT - CONT.

4. Mr. Haddad said that there had been a discussion on whether or not to request a Land Conservation Plan from the Conservation Commission and looked to the Board for direction. Mr. Petropoulos said that they funded the Commission's fund well every year and said that there had to be a point where they had bought enough land. He said that he would like them to ask the Commission to provide them with their strategy. Ms. Eliot said that this discussion should include the Commission. Mr. Petropoulos said that it was just the initial discussion. Mr. Cunningham said that if they were to ask them for a plan, potential parcels would be out there and could affect land costs, etc. Ms. Eliot said that she still felt uncomfortable having this discussion without the Commission present. Mr. Schulman said that it could be counterproductive adding if he knew his land was on their list, he might up his price. He said he would be interested in hearing what their criteria was but not knowing what their land plans were. Mr. Haddad suggesting inviting the Commission into a future meeting.

5. Mr. Haddad asked the Board to consider appointing John Giger to the Regional School Agreement Review Committee as Groton's Citizen at Large.

Ms. Eliot made the motion to appoint John Giger to the Regional School Agreement Review Committee as Groton's Citizen at Large. Mr. Cunningham seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

6. Mr. Haddad said that the Board had discussed the idea of issuing a monthly or quarterly newsletter to the public providing residents with information and news out of the Selectmen's Office/Town Hall. He said that Mr. Orcutt had recommended what we consider having various department heads take turns in developing the newsletter. He said that Mr. Orcutt, Ms. Collette and Ms. Dunbar had put together the first edition and provided the Board with a copy of it. He said that he would like to send it out with light bills but missed the Oct 1st bill. He said that the annual cost to do this would be \$2,000 or they could put it on the town website and push it out. He said that if the Board liked the idea he looked to them for direction. Ms. Eliot said that she thought it looked great but wasn't sure about spending \$2,000 per year. She said she would like to try it online and have it avail that way. Mr. Haddad said that the Groton Herald could also distribute it if they were still willing. Ms. Eliot asked about Nashoba Publications also. Mr. Cunningham supported the newsletter. Mr. Petropoulos supported the concept and was not opposed to spending money to put it in the GELD bills.

7. Mr. Haddad asked the Board to ratify his appointment of Leslie Lathrop to the Municipal Building Committee for Prescott School to fill Alison Manugian's recent vacancy.

Ms. Eliot made the motion. Mr. Cunningham seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Haddad asked the Board to ratify his appointment of Steve Henderson to the Trails Committee.

AE made the motion. Mr. Schulman seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

8. Mr. Haddad said that now that Michelle Collette has notified the Town of her intention to retire effective February 26, 2016, he would like to discuss with the Board and seek their input on his proposed search process. He said that he was also reaching out to the Planning Board for their input, support and participation in the search. He said that he wanted to start out first by saying that he was extremely sad that Michelle had decided to retire. Replacing her was going to be very difficult. She has served this Town extremely well for almost 33 years and that kind of experience was impossible to replace. She will be truly missed as an employee, but he was very lucky to be able to call her his friend. He said that as they were aware, pursuant to Section 4-2(c) of the Groton Charter, it was his responsibility as Town Manager to appoint the Land Use Director/Town Planner, subject to ratification by the Board of Selectmen. That said, he wanted this to be as collaborative a process as possible. He would like the Planning Board to play a prominent role in the Search and help make the final decision. To that end, he was proposing the following process. First, he was planning on meeting with all Land Use Department Staff (Building Commissioner, Conservation Administrator, Land Use Administrative Assistant, Interdepartmental Administrative Assistant, Zoning Administrative Assistant and Housing Coordinator) in the next week or so to get their input on developing the hiring criteria. He thought it was important to hear from the Staff as they work the most closely with this position. Based on this, he would work with the Human Resources Director to draft a job advertisement. He would then like to provide the Planning Board with the proposed advertisement and have them approve the final wording. He would like to advertise the position in the MMA Beacon, Nashoba Valley Communications (which posts it on Monster as well) and the Massachusetts Planning Administrators List Serve. He said that he would like to establish a Search Committee made up of himself, the Human Resources

Director, Building Commissioner, a member of the Personnel Board (Bud Robertson), a Selectman (Anna Eliot as Planning Board Liaison) and two members of the Planning Board (their choice). They would then conduct preliminary interviews and narrow the list down to two or three finalists who will then be interviewed by the full Planning Board at a meeting and Town Department Heads at their monthly Staff Meeting. He would then take those recommendations and make a final decision that will then be brought to the Board of Selectmen for ratification. He said that he believed this was a very thorough hiring process and have asked the Planning Board to review and approve this process. He said that he would like input from the Board of Selectmen as well.

Mr. Cunningham said that he echoed all Mr. Haddad's thoughts on Ms. Collette. He said that he had known her since the beginning and how she offered a rare historical perspective. He thought this was a good process. Ms. Eliot said that there is no replacement for Ms. Collette adding that she had been an emotional guide for the town. She said that her work ethic and moral was an inspiration to the rest of town personnel. She said that she has exhibited the traits that have made this town the quality place it is. Mr. Petropoulos said that he liked the process and echo the others thoughts. Mr. Schulman said that he too echoed the compliments adding she had been a nearly perfect town employee and it would be impossible to replace her. He said that he liked the process and was confident the Department Heads will choose the right person.

9. Mr. Haddad said that he needed to Board to reaffirm their vote on the voting machines. He said that Mr. Bouchard only had a certain number of days to notify the Commonwealth and because he was on vacation, he didn't meet the deadline.

Mr. Schulman move to approve the use of the new voting machines and discontinue use of the old voting machines effective at the next election. Ms. Eliot seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

LIAISON REPORTS

Ms. Eliot said that the Planning Board has almost approved old Fire Station review and the hearing on the Tarbell School had been postponed but told it would go forward still.

Mr. Schulman said that he attended Groton fest this weekend and gave kudos to Jane Bouvier. He said that everything just goes on and was like a well-oiled machine.

MINUTES

Ms. Eliot moved to approve the Regular Session meeting minutes of August 25, 2015. Mr. Cunningham seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Eliot moved to approve the Regular Session meeting minutes of August 31, 2015. Mr. Cunningham seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Schulman moved to adjourn at 9:28pm. The motion carried unanimously.

Approved: _____

Stuart Schulman, Clerk

_____ respectfully submitted,
Dawn Dunbar, Executive Assistant

Date Approved: 10/26/15