

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING
MINUTES MARCH 7, 2016
APPROVED**

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

Absent: Stuart M. Schulman, Clerk

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

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mr. Petropoulos said that it had been brought to their attention that some municipalities were tracking performance based metrics. He said that the City of Boston was one that was doing this. He said that they had someone come in from the City to show Groton what this was all about.

Mr. Petropoulos said that the school budget would be discussed on Wednesday evening. Mr. Cunningham added that the School Committee would also be taking a vote on it at that time.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Mr. Petropoulos said that a couple of people had written in adding he wanted to read their emails. The first letter he read said:

Dear BOS,

As taxpayers, concerned parents & grandparents of a G-D student we are asking you to show strong leadership and advocate for not only our town needs but our School needs by collectively and publicly supporting the GDRSD's approved budget and an override, if needed. Support by both the BoS and FinCom will help to ensure both our school and town needs are met as we work on solving the sustainability of same as we move forward.

Respectfully and collectively, My daughter, son-in-law and I ask the BOS to consider the following wording of an override should one be needed:

Shall the Town of Groton be allowed to assess an additional (Insert final figure here) in real estate and personal property taxes for the purpose of funding the Groton Municipal budget and the Town's share of operating the Groton Dunstable Regional Public Schools for the fiscal year beginning July first two thousand sixteen.

Thank You

Mr. Petropoulos also read an email from email from Ms. Ellen Baxendale.

Miss Ellen, Main Street.

Last Monday a women spoke to say, we should think of the override for the town, NOT just the schools.

I believe, after careful consideration, her idea is correct. When I think of the override for the town, I am more inclined to vote for the override. I believe this attitude of an override for the town is a good attitude, and one for the selectmen to have and to take.

I know the municipal employees work just as hard if not harder than the teachers, police and fire, and they should be given equal understanding and benefits. To ask the town employees to help pay for the towns needs is, I don't know, pick a sad word to insert.

I want the municipal employees to keep their good attitude and their good service. I'm afraid, if the town needs are imposed on them, our service will suffer and will be lacking, and because we are lacking resources, we will be lacking the quick and nice service we have.

On a more personal note. I use the senior center and the senior van. To think these benefits will be shut down for a day each week because of proposed cuts, again, I lack the appropriate disparaging word.

The schools from 2010 census have about 2,700 children (0-18), adults (18+) about 7,300. The school population which has been declining, get approximately half our taxes, and the children don't vote. While the adult population has been increasing, and they do vote,

So please have the attitude this is town and reinstate the original budget as prepared by the town manager. And ask for a town override.'

I appreciate the consideration, all the time and effort you give to and have for the town.

*peace be with U,
Ellen*

Mr. Petropoulos said that this should not be thought of as a school override but a Town override. Ms. Sartini asked who the author of the first letter was. Mr. Petropoulos said that he didn't have permission to give out the authors name yet.

LIBRARY TRUSTEES VACANCY

Mr. Haddad said that there was a vacancy on the Library Board of Trustees because of the recent resignation of Barbara Lamont. He said that they received three interested parties adding that the Library Trustees were recommending that Marilyn Dabritz be appointed to fill the vacancy. He said that this was a joint appointment and would be in placed until the spring election adding Ms. Dabritz could run for the unexpired term at that should which was to end in 2017. Ms. Jane Allen said that Ms. Dabritz had already taken out papers. Mr. Cunningham asked Ms. Dabritz if she had any information she wanted to share and asked why she wanted to be a trustee Ms. Dabritz started by saying she goes by the nickname MiMi and had been a Groton resident for 91/2 years. She said that she was an avid reader and uses the library often adding she would like to help shape the future of the library.

Mr. Cunningham moved to nominate Marilyn "MiMi" Dabritz as a new library trustee with a term to expire at the 2016 spring election.

The nomination carried unanimously by both the Board of Selectmen and present Library Trustee members.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

1. Mr. Haddad said that the Budget Sustainability Committee was made up of nine members adding that they had five applicants including a member of the school committee interested in the seats. He said that they had two open seats to fill. Mr. Degen said that in terms of the charge of committee, he moved to reconsider having town employees who were not residents on the committee. He said that even though they may bring forward a tremendous amount of knowledge, it was a budget sustainability committee –and he thought it was a huge conflict of interest having them on it as voting members. Mr. Degen proposed changing the makeup of the Committee to only include taxpayers and residents. Ms. Eliot said that they had already discussed and voted on this at their last meeting. She pointed out that because the vote had not gone in Mr. Degen's favor he wanted to change it. Mr. Petropoulos said that Mr. Degen voted against it and was looking to have it reconsidered. Mr. Degen said that was correct.

Mr. Cunningham said that at the end of the day they needed to look at the core of sustainability. He felt as though there was enough offset on the committee adding that the Town Accountant was a resident. He didn't have concerns over non-taxpayers being on the Committee and thought that the discussion would be around factors that make up the budget. He said that some discussion would impact bargaining units and this team would be part of this Committee. Mr. Degen said he wouldn't have a problem with those non-resident employees being part of the Committee, just as non-voting. Mr. Cunningham said that the end product would be a recommendation as it was an advisory committee to the Board. Mr. Petropoulos said that he understood Mr. Degen's comments adding that when he first envisioned this committee, he envisioned employees being on it. He said that they need the expertise of certain people but that the expertise was point expertise and didn't require those to be part of the committee. He said that he too wanted members to be taxpayers; those who have a skin in the game. Mr. Cunningham said he hoped they had a diversity of opinion on the Committee but dismissed the notion that just because someone worked for the town and was not a resident did not mean they didn't care about the Town. He said they knew that was not the case. He said he was not concerned with those people coming to the table adding that the majority of members were taxpayers. Mr. Petropoulos said that it had nothing to do with the individuals; it was about the makeup of the Committee and about best practice. Mr. Degen said that he didn't question the current way of the committee and didn't think the non-residents wouldn't act in the best interest of the Town but felt as though it was a conflict of interest. He thought this should have taxpayer involvement and non-taxpayers should be ex-officio members. Ms. Eliot said that they had already discussed this adding no new information had been mentioned. She said that this was an advisory committee adding that the input was critical as much as the expertise was critical. She said that the Town Manager was responsible for the budget as specified in the Charter adding he should be a part of that committee as a voting member of it. Mr. Cunningham said that there were potential conflicts of interest everywhere adding that if they were to consider a change, they should have the full Board present but thought they could make some of their appointments tonight.

Ms. Alison Manugian said that she thought having a School Committee member on the Committee was worthy of considering. She said that she thought it was difficult to have so many employees and no one from the schools and suggested they also think about involving the Superintendent and Finance Manager. Mr. Petropoulos said that those were reasonable comments adding that the original focus was the municipal budget. He said he liked the idea of it being a look at the municipal side but saw both sides. Mr. Cunningham said that they have others who have actively participated in advocating for the schools. Mr. Petropoulos said that it was his belief that they will find out if they are sustainable but how they get there. Mr. Degen said he thought that the Committee should include a member of the school committee and suggested they make it a ten or seven member committee if they decide to go that way. Mr. Haddad said that under Mr. Degen's logic, because he, Mr. Hartnett and Ms. Doig do not live in town, they shouldn't be involved in putting together the original proposed budget. He asked how not being a taxpayer in the Town affected that. He said that the Superintendent was also not a resident in Town and was very active in the budget. He said that there was no residency requirement in their charter and didn't think it was necessary. Mr. Haddad said that also under the Charter, the Town Manager has the right at Town Meeting to amend the budget on the floor. He said that they were making it sound like he didn't care about the Town which was not the case at all.

Mr. Cunningham said he thought they should move onto filling the vacancies. Mr. Petropoulos asked if they should extend the Committee to include a School Committee member. Mr. Haddad suggested that since they had a member of Human Resources and the Personnel Board, that they consider removing the HR Director and make it a School Committee member. Mr. Petropoulos said that it accomplished some of the objectives. Mr. Degen said he was not ready to discount anyone that night.

He thought they needed to resolve the make-up of the Committee first or it would be unfair. Mr. Degen said that he liked having a committee of nine and liked negating the HR Director but didn't want to eliminate any of the candidates that night. Mr. Cunningham said that he was in favor of a school committee member and would be in favor of Ms. Manugian adding he felt comfortable moving forward that night. Ms. Eliot said that she was sensing a thrust that the schools needed as much input in this as possible adding she didn't have the original charge in front of her. She asked what their ultimate objective was. Mr. Degen said it was to have nine taxpayers on the Committee. Mr. Petropoulos said that he shared the objective.

Mr. Degen said that he withdrew his original motion to reconsider to wait for a full Board to be present. I withdraw my motion to reconsider to wait for a full board.

Mr. Cunningham moved to substitute the seat of the HR Director with that of a School Committee member. Ms. Eliot seconded the motion. The motion carried 3-0-1 in favor with Mr. Degen abstaining because there was not a full Board present.

Mr. Cunningham said that what Mr. Degen was looking for and the reason he (Mr. Cunningham) thought a full Board needed to be present was more substantive than the makeup of the Committee and the reason he made the motion. Mr. Petropoulos said that he agreed with Mr. Cunningham.

Mr. Cunningham moved to place Alison Manugian as the School Committee representative. Ms. Manugian asked if the Board asked other committees to appoint representatives. Mr. Haddad said that they did. Ms. Eliot seconded the motion.

Ms. Baxendale asked what the purpose of committee was adding she thought it was to look at the municipal budget. Mr. Petropoulos said that anything that the municipality did on its side affected the schools. Ms. Baxendale said that she was opposed to having someone from the school committee on this. Mr. Petropoulos said that they already discussed this and voted on it. Mr. Cunningham added that taxpayers support both budgets.

The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Petropoulos asked if the Board was interested in interviewing the candidates. Mr. Cunningham and Ms. Eliot said that they were. Mr. Degen said he was not adding he wanted to ask the candidates to come back when they had a full Board present. Mr. Petropoulos said it was not fair to ask people if they would be willing to come back or not. Ms. Eliot said that she would like to hear what they had to offer adding they had already given up their night.

Mr. Kevin Forsmo said that he had been following town fiscal matters since 2012 adding he had been trying to attend all meetings over the past three months to educate himself. He said that his entire professional career was working around numbers and why this interested him. He said that this was a complex problem and of interest to him.

Mr. Kevin Brogan said that he had moved to town a year ago and worked in HR in Westford. He said that he had 30 years of experience in employee compensation and benefits administration. He said that he was interested in serving in a volunteer capacity and had done so in the past. He said that this was a very important issue and the reason he wanted to volunteer. Mr. Petropoulos asked what size organizations and HR specialties he had worked with. Mr. Brogan said that he worked with 1,200

employees at one point and smaller companies also. He said another client had 2,400 employees who were represented by SEIU adding he also had involvement with union negotiations.

Mr. Kevin Lindemer said that he would bring his experience with the light department and success they have with a great group of people. He said that he had been managing groups of 45 with significant budgets with people on two continents at the same time. He said that his interest stemmed from his efforts with Mr. Petropoulos and Mr. Robertson on the original benchmarking. He said that he would like to see continued use of that with more details added.

Mr. Stephen Lane said that he had lived in town for over 30 years and had served as the chair of Capital Planning Committee and Country Club committee. He said that he had been an entrepreneur for many years and a corporate turnaround specialist for 20 years adding he thought he could bring outside the box thinking.

Mr. Petropoulos said that they have an opportunity to appoint two people. Mr. Cunningham said he would be okay with that. Mr. Degen asked that they don't dismiss anyone pending the makeup of the Committee. Mr. Petropoulos said that he had no objections. He said they could announce the two individuals and those receiving the most votes would be selected.

Mr. Haddad said that Mr. Brogan received 4 votes, Mr. Forsmo received 3 votes and Mr. Lindemer received 1 vote.

Mr. Cunningham said that he voted for Mr. Forsmo as he had been spending a lot of time at the meetings. He was impressed with his demeanor and presentation and thought he would address the schools concerns. He said he also voted for Mr. Brogan as he had benefits and HR experience and thought that would be one of the areas the Committee would have to look at carefully.

Mr. Degen said that he voted for Mr. Forsmo and Mr. Brogan. He said he liked the concept of HR experience and innovative ways of saving money along with the collective bargaining aspect. He said that Mr. Forsmo was a newcomer to their meetings adding he had demonstrated a thoughtful attitude toward the process.

Ms. Eliot said that she voted for Mr. Brogan and Mr. Forsmo for similar reasons as her colleagues. She said that she welcomed new volunteers and was impressed with their backgrounds.

Mr. Petropoulos started by thanking Mr. Lane and Mr. Lindemer adding he voted for Mr. Brogan and Mr. Lindemer. He said he met Mr. Brogan that morning and was blown away. He said he liked the fact that Mr. Lindemer was an economist.

2. Mr. Haddad said that he wanted to briefly present the first draft of the warrant to the Board.
 - Article 1 - standard reports from Board and Committees. He said that he had not heard from anyone yet. Mr. Degen said that the Affordable Housing Trust wanted to provide an update on Boynton Meadows. Mr. Petropoulos said that the non-profits would also be providing a report.
 - Article 2 - elected officials compensation.
 - Article 3 – wage and classification schedule for bylaw employees.
 - Article 4 – annual operating budget
 - Art 5 – OPEB trust.
 - Art 6 – Capital budget.

Articles 7-16 dealt with FY16 business.

- Article 7 was to request money for a feasibility study for the Senior Center. He said that they received nine proposals on Friday and would be making a recommendation to the Board after they interviewed the firms. Mr. Petropoulos asked if there was a range in cost. Mr. Haddad said that they had not opened to price bids up yet adding they rank them on their technical ability first.
- Article 8 - extend the sewer for Indian Hill Music on Old Ayer Road. Mr. Degen asked if this was for the exclusive use of property. Mr. Haddad said it was. Mr. Cunningham asked what the capacity being requested was. Mr. Haddad said he thought 8,500-10,000 gallons but he was not 100% sure.
- Article 9 - playground equipment. Mr. Haddad said it was less expensive for the Park Commission to purchase new equipment for Cutler Field rather than moving the equipment behind Prescott School. He said that they would be re-appropriating last year's funds to achieve this.
- Article 10 – fix the retaining wall at Library that was failing.
- Article 11 – transfer money amongst departments. Mr. Haddad said that he was aware of three as of that moment. He said that there were going to be shortfalls in police and fire due to a couple of substantial fires and illnesses this past winter. He said that the Police budget was going to need about \$12-15K and the fire budget was going to need about \$20K. Mr. Haddad said that he was also looking to the Board to receive their direction on whether or not he can open the Country Club on April 1st instead of the 15th because the weather has been so good. He said that the GM figures they will need about \$2,500 to open early and is estimating bringing in about \$5-7K. He said that this was not something that was budgeted for and wanted to hear from the Board. Mr. Degen asked this this be floated by the Finance Committee first.
- Article 12 – Mr. Haddad said that this will probably be taken off but wanted to talk about it with the budget. Mr. Degen asked if they could use that money to fund another department. Mr. Haddad said no adding he wanted Mr. Delaney to fill the sheds.
- Articles 13-16 were standard articles.
- Article 17 – TREAD program for senior citizens
- Article 18 – CPC buckets
- Article 19 – recommended CPC projects.
- Article 20 – Sister cities article. Mr. Haddad said that he and Mr. Petropoulos met with a civics class at Groton-Dunstable who was interested in making Saipan a sister city. The cost would be \$415 to join and participate. The class would be presenting the article at Town Meeting. Mr. Petropoulos said that the goal was to have them get involved and see what's involved in Town Meeting.
- Article 21 – zoning change from Planning Board. Mr. Burke said that this cleans up a piece of their zoning as it relates to a recent court case with regard to protocol for growth limitation.
- Article 22 – The Planning Board and ZBA had worked to clean up “non-use” from the zoning bylaw.
- Article 24 – Intervenor status. Mr. Petropoulos said that he asked for this to be on the warrant. He said that this was doing nothing more than asking Town Meeting for permission to act as intervenors. He said that the last Town Meeting where this was voted on was because the pipeline was strictly going through Groton.

Mr. Haddad said that the remainder of the agenda was the consent agenda which had been instituted two years ago. He said that one vote takes care of all the articles under the consent agenda. Mr. Haddad added that the warrant hearing was March 21st in joint session.

3. Mr. Haddad said that he provided the Board with different five year projections. He said that there were 12 different scenarios altogether; original budget, carry over, 2.2% and 0% budget and those were based on 3% and 4.7% growth rates for the schools along with overrides also. He said that FY18 salaries on the municipal side called for 3% growth in salaries and 1% growth in expenses while FY19 called for 2 % growth in salaries and 1% growth in expenses.

Mr. Haddad reviewed the spreadsheets and showed where the Town could sustain and where overrides would be necessary. He said that school increases at 4.7% became unsustainable according to the numbers and would only show sustainability if the schools kept to somewhere around 3% growth.

Mr. Haddad said that the Board was posted for tomorrow night at the Finance Committee meeting adding that many decision would be made over the next couple of weeks. He said that he was happy to answer any questions. Mr. Petropoulos said that they were looking at significant bumps in taxes. Mr. Degen said that he was traveling the week before adding he thought Mr. Haddad had produced documents that met the fashion of request and Board. He said that that he did want to question how it was done and offered a counter proposal. (see attached)

Mr. Haddad said that they could not use the Housing Coordinator for other duties as she was paid for out of the housing buckler by CPA funds. He said that he took real exception to picking cuts to polarize people. Mr. Haddad said that he was told to not affect response times adding that the SRO did not affect response times. He said that he tried to spread out the reductions and thought long and hard about potential cuts and prioritized them. He said that he was afraid that when he represented various budgets that they would be cherry picked. Mr. Haddad said that he was not in favor of any cuts especially at the 2.2% and 0% budget levels. He said that the projections showed that no matter what, they could not sustain a 4.7% annual increase in the school budget.

Mr. Cunningham said that he took exception as being characterized as irresponsible adding that they needed to represent all residents including citizen services and schools. Mr. Degen said that based on the input the Board received they had made a quick judgement. He said earlier that night, Mr. Cunningham thought it was important to have all five members present but not the week before. Mr. Cunningham said that the week before, they needed to move forward in order to provide direction to the Finance Committee. He said he took exception to Mr. Degen characterizing their decision. He said that they were asked to give their knee jerk reaction to the proposal adding these were a work in progress. Mr. Cunningham said that they were all working hard to see if an override was manageable, doable and sustainable. He said that they may all win in this if they have a well thought out mutually respectful process. He said that he was finding it hard to sit there and say they needed to get rid of Town employees while adding 49 new employees at the schools. He said that they were not in a financial crisis and firmly believed that the Town Manager and School Superintendent knew the numbers and what could be added and taken away. Mr. Petropoulos argued that it was their prerogative to cherry pick adding Mr. Haddad had admonished the Board. Mr. Haddad said he did not say that adding he was in no position to do that. He said he simply asked that they not cherry pick. Mr. Petropoulos said it was legitimate for them to pick what they think is important. He said that the idea of holding salary growth to 2.2% was important. He said that the idea that they got to carry over budget by getting rid of increases says that they came into the budget with growth. He said he was disappointed that they had to send this back to him. Mr. Haddad said that no specific direction had

been given to him on how to get there. Mr. Cunningham said that people in the community expect a certain level of services. He said that they needed to consider the collateral impact to the dedicated Town employees they have who work to save the Town money. He said that there had been examples of that at the Police Department when they renovated their building last year. He said they couldn't keep hammering away at them. Mr. Cunningham said that the direction given was to maintain services. Ms. Eliot asked how they could justify cutting town employees when looking to add 40 new positions in the schools. Mr. Degen asked how they could justify asking the schools to cut their drama program. Ms. Eliot said that there had to be a more equitable medium. She said that education was important to her but measurable decreases on the municipal side were not equitable. Mr. Degen said that his proposal only eliminated one position. Mr. Petropoulos said that current services could be rolled into a new position. Mr. Degen said that every nickel they could save on the municipal side was less they would have to override. Mr. Haddad argued that they did not willy-nilly spend money on the municipal side adding that was what it sounded like people thought. Mr. Petropoulos said that for every cut there would be a loss adding that was part of the job they were elected for and had to accept that. Mr. Cunningham said that he disagreed adding that they benefit as a Town benefit from the moral of employees. He said that there was a number associated with that and thought they lose that when they start doing some of these things. Mr. Petropoulos said that if they lose the benefit of goodwill of employees when making tough choices that was taboo against making hard decisions. Mr. Cunningham said that they make decisions as they come up. Mr. Petropoulos said that this was a hard discussion and topic and thought they should do it respectfully. Mr. Cunningham asked that people refrain from characterizations adding they had not taken a vote on the budgets presented the week before. Mr. Degen said that they may not have taken a formal vote but specifically a few of them said that they preferred the carry over budget. Mr. Petropoulos said that he took responsibility for that.

Ms. Angela Donohue requested that the Board look at the budget for themselves and how it impacts them as a municipality and not what is being added or taken away from the school side. She said that she knew it wasn't easy but thought pitting school vs. towns should not be the way. Mr. Petropoulos said that it was not that easy adding that there was only a certain amount of revenue. He said there was no ignoring school growth of 4.7% adding they were making choices they had to make. Ms. Marlina Gilbert said that when the town budget was being developed she thought it was important to go to department heads as their input was crucial. Ms. Gilbert said that she didn't believe the department head was asked about the SRO. Mr. Cunningham said that there was constant communication between the Town Manager and the department heads adding that the last position in was the first cut. Mr. Petropoulos agreed there was tremendous communication.

OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Haddad read a proposed resolution that the school committee requested be proclaimed and sent to Groton's representatives.

Mr. Degen moved to accept this. Mr. Cunningham seconded the motion. Ms. Eliot said that she read this and had a problem with one paragraph. The motion carried 3-0-1 with Ms. Eliot voting present.

Mr. Cunningham said that he also wanted them to draft a letter regarding the funding formula to be sent to Representative Harrington and Senator Donoghue. Mr. Haddad was asked to draft this for Board approval.

LIAISON REPORTS

Ms. Eliot said that she wanted to welcome Laurie Bonavita the new Land Use Director/Town Planner to Groton adding Ms. Bonavita had her first Planning Board meeting the previous Thursday night.

Mr. Degen said that the Finance Committee was meeting the next night to discuss the budget and Wednesday was the School Committee's meeting where they would vote their budget.

MINUTES

Mr. Degen moved to approve the Workshop Meeting minutes of February 17, 2016. Mr. Cunningham seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Degen moved to approve the Regular Session Meeting minutes of February 18, 2016. Mr. Cunningham seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Degen moved to approve the Joint Session Meeting minutes of February 13, 2016. Mr. Cunningham seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Petropoulos adjourned the meeting at 8:40pm.

Approved: _____

Stuart Schulman, Clerk

respectfully submitted,
Dawn Dunbar, Executive Assistant

Date Approved: 4/4/16