

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING  
MINUTES NOVEMBER 2, 2016  
APPROVED**

**BOS Members Present:** John G. Petropoulos, Chair; Joshua A. Degen, Vice Chair; Barry Pease, Clerk; Anna Eliot, Member; Peter S. Cunningham, Member

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

Mr. Petropoulos called the meeting to order at 5:31pm and reviewed the agenda.

**GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

Mr. Haddad said that the Board last week covered Mr. Pease's proposed goals and reviewed what the Board decided to move forward with at their last meeting.

- Mr. Petropoulos asked to re-review the goal of ensuring the accuracy of records. Mr. Petropoulos said he objected to it as it was presented at the last meeting. He said that after giving it further consideration he too shared the concern that data needed to be accurate and the idea behind the goal. He said he was not sure that he took the presentation the way it was meant and wanted to revisit it. Mr. Cunningham asked if Mr. Pease gave any thought to how it could be implemented. Mr. Pease said that it could be as simple as a second set of eyes reviewing documents before they are released to the public. Mr. Pease said that the Town had the talent and skills to be able to look over things. Mr. Petropoulos said he thought there should be consequences for things not being accurate by those putting the information out. He said that this was not a slap on the wrist and thought a benchmark could be that there be no instances where members of the community bring valid objections to what has been put out. He added he was not saying there was inaccurate information being put out there. Mr. Petropoulos suggested that this be done by means of a policy. Mr. Cunningham said he wasn't sure it should a policy but maybe just best practice. Mr. Petropoulos said that that objective could be that they ensure there be no instances of inaccurate data information within a year. Mr. Cunningham asked who would be the arbiter of that and asked if accurate data was important enough to include as an objective. Mr. Pease said he understood where Mr. Petropoulos was coming from and that having it as a goal made them consider the validity of that point of view. Mr. Degen said he thought it was a great objective adding that the goal could be to put out statistically accurate data but did not think there was a way to validate that theoretically. Ms. Eliot asked if they were the arbitrators or if it the department heads were. Mr. Degen said that if it is was under their purview then they were the arbitrator, but those under the Town Manager should be under his purview. Mr. Haddad said he would draft something.
- Mr. Cunningham said that he would like to see them establish responsibilities. He said that no individual member should be giving the Town Manager individual direction. Mr. Pease asked if this was covered in the charter. Mr. Cunningham said it was but had not always been followed. Mr. Petropoulos suggested that they revisit their policies adding that a goal could be to incur no instances. Mr. Cunningham said another goal would be that they act together as a Board. Mr. Degen said he agreed with this on major decisions but sometimes they saw things as individuals and needed to be able to discuss that one on one with the Town Manager. Mr. Cunningham said it was more about the day to day administration where things were being done unilaterally. Mr. Petropoulos said that the objective would be to establish the boundary. Mr. Cunningham said that the goal would be that there be no instance of unilateral conversation directing the Town Manager to do something without talking as a Board. Mr. Degen said that they should also reference the charter.
- Mr. Cunningham said that they should continue to work on their relationship and working as a team. Mr. Haddad said that they could continue last year's goal. Mr. Degen agreed. Mr. Cunningham also suggested a post-mortem. Mr. Petropoulos said that they could hold at least two team building events. Mr. Degen suggested one with the option for an additional if required. The Board was in agreement.

- Mr. Cunningham said that they needed to be looking at their infrastructure and specifically the needs of their aging senior population adding that their current senior center was inadequate. Mr. Degen said he wasn't sure he was going to be in favor of building a new center but would like to hear more about renovating. Mr. Pease said that he felt like this was asking them to adopt an opinion and was not comfortable with that. Mr. Pease said he would not favor one population over another. Mr. Cunningham said he was just asking that the significant need be recognized. Mr. Haddad said that they could have a similar goal made to what he was given as one of his goals last year. Mr. Pease said that he was fine with the goal but it was the objective that he was not comfortable with. Mr. Haddad said he would come up with an objective for the Board to review. Mr. Degen said that it was not just that the seniors have needs but that the current center was inadequate and needed to be looked at.
- Mr. Cunningham said he would like to see recommendations of the Budget Sustainability Committee added as goals. Mr. Degen said that they should also add the results of the operational audit and implementation of it.
- Ms. Eliot said that she would like to see them initiate a zero-based budget. General direction would be how to better spend any new revenue increases. BP – zero based budget – start with nothing and add up what you need. MH – that's how we do it today. I ask Departments for justification. Only difference is to what BP said is that we don't start at zero. Mr. Haddad used the Town Clerk's budget as an example of zero based budgeting. He accounts for every penny.
- Ms. Eliot said that she would like to see a goal be collaboration with the school district. Mr. Degen said he had spoken with two members of the School Committee about having quarterly meetings to talk about municipal and school issues. He said that he had not heard back from them as to whether it was something their Committee would like to do but thought it was an important goal. Mr. Petropoulos said that they could develop a policy or working agreement for administrative interactions. Mr. Cunningham said he was not sure it could be done with an agreement. Mr. Degen agreed adding they were autonomous.
- Ms. Eliot said she would like them to look at the fulfillment of services. Mr. Degen said he was not sure there is a problem. Mr. Haddad said that this was what they do on a daily basis adding if there was a problem they could handle it. Mr. Pease said that they could articulate and define the public satisfaction for customer service through a rating. Mr. Pease said that the challenge was measuring it. Mr. Haddad asked how they would measure it. Mr. Petropoulos said that was for Mr. Haddad to figure out adding that measurements could be developed. Mr. Cunningham said that there needed to be a definition so that the departments could understand what was being measured. Mr. Degen agreed with Mr. Cunningham adding he was not sure it should be a goal. Mr. Petropoulos said that surveys were used all the time to improve customer satisfaction. Mr. Cunningham suggested that Mr. Haddad talk to the department heads about how they feel something like this could be implemented adding he thought the Board needed to hear their feedback.
- Ms. Eliot said that she would like to promote citizen participation. Mr. Cunningham said that they needed to encourage others to be involved that were not involved now. Mr. Petropoulos said that their objective could be to see 10 new volunteer forms.
- Ms. Eliot said that she thought there were better ways to access public information. Mr. Haddad said that this was one of the IT Director's goals this year. Mr. Pease said that the goal could be to increase public awareness of what's available in town and an objective could be to hold one or more public sessions. Mr. Degen said that they could ask IT to hold a public session on how to operate the website as an example. Ms. Eliot said she would like to include cable too.

- Mr. Petropoulos said that they should develop a long-term capital plan. Ms. Eliot cited ways in which this had been done in the past such as when they planned to build a new public safety building. Mr. Haddad said that he thought this would fall under Mr. Pease's goal for a strategic plan of the town.
- Mr. Petropoulos said that they should implement a more top down goal setting program. He said that the goal would be implement an objectives program where all goals were related throughout the org chart.
- Mr. Petropoulos said he would like to see a reduction in the use of sick time. Mr. Pease said that a reduction in sick time could be defined in many ways. He said he encouraged that sick time be used when appropriate but thought they could certainly do other things to encourage a healthy workplace. Mr. Haddad said that they already do some of this through the HR department. He said that they have a wellness coordinator that comes in periodically and thought this goal was in place at the department head level. Mr. Cunningham said he was not convinced they had a problem.
- Mr. Petropoulos said that their capital plan item replacement program may not be best practice. Mr. Haddad said he thought the operational audit would help with this. Mr. Petropoulos said it shouldn't be an outcome of the operational audit. He said that he wanted as an objective a rational goal for capital replacement.
- Mr. Petropoulos said he would like to see a plan for OPEB funding. Mr. Pease said he would like to be less prescriptive in the number adding he was not sure it was something they needed to commit to. Mr. Petropoulos said they should not commit to a goal if they didn't believe in OPEB. Mr. Cunningham suggested that this be incorporated in their financial policies and not as a goal. Mr. Pease agreed. Ms. Eliot agreed adding she didn't want to see it as a goal without Finance Committee making it one of their goals also. Mr. Cunningham suggested a work session with Finance Committee to work on this.

Mr. Haddad said that he would put the list together for the Board to review adding they want to refine the list as they had discussed about 30 goals.

## **7:00 PM - REGULAR MEETING**

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Mr. Haddad said that next Tuesday was Election Day adding the Town Clerk's office had seen 21% turnout so far. He said that the Clerk's office would be closed to the public on November 9<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Petropoulos said that the Groton Garden Club in conjunction with the Fire Department would be hosting Smokey Bear and Woodsy Owl at an open house on Saturday, November 19<sup>th</sup> from 10-noon at the Center Fire Station.

Mr. Pease said that the Charter Review Committee had opened up their review period again and would be accepting original submissions that have not been considered yet.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD**

Ms. Ellen Baxendale said that the Senior Center ambulance was a nice thing adding she didn't want to see the Center end up at the school. She asked if she was able to "move the question" if she felt as though they were talking too much. Mr. Degen said that she could certainly ask.

Mr. Michael Manugian said that he had attended a lot of meetings in the second floor meeting room and thanked the Board for speaking loudly. He asked if they had considered fixing the room to make it more sound proof. Mr. Haddad said that there was a proposal to do that when the Town Hall was renovated but the Building Commissioner rejected it. He said that with the Board's permission he would look into it. The Board agreed.

A resident asked about the Board mapping their goals to master plan. Mr. Degen said that the Master Plan was different than goals and objectives. He said that they have to work with the Town Manager on guiding the Town adding it was not tied to the Master Plan. Mr. Cunningham said that it might not be a bad idea to work with the Planning Board on where things might overlap. Mr. Haddad said he would coordinate a meeting.

### **TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT**

1. Mr. Haddad said that at the last meeting, the Board asked him to obtain an opinion from Town Counsel on the status of the Committee authorized by Town Meeting and what rights the Board of Selectmen had to direct the Committee. He said that he met with Mr. Keoseian, Mr. Cunningham and Mr. Sheldon last week and drafted a charge. He said that the Feasibility Oversight Committee met last week and they were in favor of the charge drafted. Mr. Haddad said that Counsels opinion was that the Town Manager was the coordinating Town official for this committee. He said that the Board had the right to accept or reject appointment's but he was required to carry out the vote of Town Meeting. Mr. Petropoulos said that they could not change the makeup of the committee but they could appoint an additional committee. Mr. Haddad read the following motion made by Town Meeting into record adding they had included it in the Committee Charge:

*"Moved that the Town vote to transfer the sum of \$20,000 from the Excess and Deficiency Fund (Free Cash), in addition to the amount appropriated under Article 7 of the 2016 Spring Town Meeting, to be expended by the Town Manager, for the purpose of retaining a consultant(s) who will work with a seven member committee appointed by the Town Manager consisting of three members of the prior Municipal Building Committee for Prescott School and four members of the Council on Aging's Feasibility Oversight Committee, to conduct a feasibility/assessment study to determine the future needs of the Groton Senior Center, including whether a new facility is needed, and all costs associated and related thereto."*

Ms. Eliot said that he had a problem discussing this that night adding she wanted to give seniors an opportunity to participate. Mr. Cunningham said that he saw an opportunity for that to occur as the Committee meets. He said that members of the COA were involved and could communicate with the seniors. Mr. Degen said he had an issue with a traffic light and didn't want to see one there. Mr. Petropoulos said he thought the charge was too prescriptive. He said the group should be looking at all resources and thought this group needed to start with a clean slate. He thought they should leverage what had been done but start with a clean slate. He also wanted to prescribe that the Committee consider multiple objectives the Town has such as the Country Club, Prescott School and what they were doing with them. Mr. Haddad said that the previous reports and recommendations were in there as things to review. He said that if he remembered correctly the debate and warrant article was to specifically look at Prescott School. Debate at town meeting talked about Prescott school. Mr. Petropoulos said that if they failed to consider the other sites this could potentially blow up again. Mr. Cunningham said that the RFP specified three sites adding this was a further refinement of that. He said that people involved were mindful of those sites and how they were evaluated. Mr. Cunningham said that he believed that this group would look at some of these things and would not be so narrow minded. Mr. Pease said that he planned to challenge the Committee to see if they looked at other sites such as Flo Ro, a green field, etc. Mr. Degen said that until the school committee made a determination on their long-term plan and capital expenditures they wouldn't know if Flo Ro would be in the mix. Mr. Degen said that he supported looking at the three original sites.

Mr. Robertson asked if \$20K covered what needed to be done. Mr. Haddad said that the Committee could decide based on the vote of Town Meeting. Mr. Petropoulos said he didn't hear support for the charge being far less prescriptive.

*Mr. Cunningham moved to adopt the charge for the Town Meeting Senior Center Review Committee. Mr. Degen seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

2. Mr. Haddad said that he was bringing the following appointments to the Town Meeting Senior Center Review Committee forward for consideration and asked the Board to consider ratifying them:

Peter Cunningham, Mihran Keoseian, Gary Green, John Amaral, Greg Sheldon, Halsey Platt and Annika Nilsson-Ripps.

*Mr. Degen made the motion to ratify the appointments. Mr. Cunningham seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

3. Mr. Haddad said that they received one proposal to the RFP for Prescott School. He said that he provided the Board with a memorandum and wanted to review it. Mr. Haddad said that he, Greg Sheldon and Annika Nilsson-Ripps reviewed the proposal from the Friends of Prescott (Friends) and felt as though it met the requirements of being considered responsive. He said their overall proposal was deemed highly advantageous but there were some issues they wanted to bring to the Board's attention before you take any action.

Mr. Haddad said that the Board may want to wait until the senior center study was completed before agreeing to a long-term lease adding the Friends asked for a 5-year lease. Mr. Degen agreed adding he also didn't want to see them enter into a 1-year lease. He thought that the work within the charge just approved would be ready for the Spring Town Meeting and therefore thought they should hold off on this for the time being. Ms. Eliot also agreed. Ms. Jennings said that the Friends would need approximately 6 months in order to get programming set and time to be able to advertise (bringing them to April 2017 for a September start). Mr. Petropoulos asked what the harm was in executing a 1-year lease. Mr. Degen answered that they would put rent out space to someone and then take it away for a senior center use. Mr. Cunningham said he understood the need for time to ramp up. Ms. Jennings said that they were not bringing long term tenants in during the first 5 years adding most of their proposal for was creating space for community use; not tenants in the sense of a business but short term activities. Mr. Petropoulos said he heard Friends would be running programs including the senior center programs. Ms. Jennings said that they had no intention of monitoring the senior center activities.

Mr. Haddad suggested that the Board ask the Friends of Prescott to extend bid through April 1<sup>st</sup>. Mr. Pease talked about finalizing the regional school agreement and what could or could not be charged by law. He said that it was his understanding that they could not charge the district rent because it was a town-owned building unless it was specified in the regional agreement. Mr. Haddad said he heard that if was an outside third party the lease would be with them not the Town. Mr. Pease said that he was against raising money to subsidize the operating costs of a town-owned building. Ms. Eliot agreed. Mr. Petropoulos said that extending this to April 1st would not get them through the Spring Town Meeting. Mr. Degen agreed and added the date should be pushed out beyond the Spring Town Meeting.

*Mr. Degen moved that they ask the Friends of Prescott to extend their proposal till May 1, 2017. Ms. Eliot seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

*Mr. Degen moved to amend the charge to add that the Committee report back to Town Meeting not later than the April 2017 Town Meeting and that an article be placed on the warrant. Ms. Eliot seconded the motion.*

Mr. Keoseian said that they would make the timeline fit no matter what. Mr. Petropoulos said that he thought this was a recipe for disaster and didn't think they should set this timeline in this charge. Mr. Cunningham said that his takeaway from Town Meeting was that this committee would report back to the annual town meeting in the spring. Ms. Eliot said that she would like to see a time element in place adding that the Feasibility Committee should continue with what they were doing. Mr. Cunningham said he thought Mr. Degen's amendment was a friendly amendment. Mr. Keoseian said that they had a lot of intelligent, dedicated people involved in the new Committee and had no doubt they would get this work done and done right. Mr. Petropoulos said that he had not heard whether the group felt the same. Mr. Keoseian said that Mr. Petropoulos had not been at the meetings adding they would get it done. Mr.

Sheldon said that it was his intention to work just as hard as Mr. Keoseian to get ready for Town Meeting adding it behooved them all to work together to get it done. Mr. Jennings said that their proposal had certain assumptions and asked if they were to change their proposal. Mr. Haddad said that he was asking that they keep the proposal submitted in play until May 1, 2017.

*The motion made by Mr. Degen, seconded by Ms. Eliot was carried unanimously.*

4. Mr. Haddad said that one of his goals for this year was to come up with an OPEB funding strategy. He said that he was planning on presenting this strategy during his budget presentation but given the fact that Town Meeting rejected the proposal to utilize Free Cash to offset the Tax Rate, he wanted to discuss the idea of using a portion of Free Cash each year to go into the OPEB Trust Fund. Mr. Degen said he was not okay with taking money that should be given back to the taxpayers and putting it toward something that's not required but thought that they could certainly look at it on a year by year basis. Mr. Haddad said that they could adjust the level every year if they so choose. Mr. Degen said he would not oppose it if they could look at it on a year to year basis. Mr. Cunningham said he didn't disagree with it but suggested they talk to the Finance Committee about it too.

Mr. Haddad said that it would be a formal policy, something he and Mr. Pease could work on as he mentioned doing this also if the Board was okay with that. Mr. Cunningham said he would like to see the Finance Committee weigh in on it also. Mr. Pease said he knows that the Finance Committee would be interested in weighing in. Mr. Robertson said that the Town financial policies should be reviewed yearly by December 31<sup>st</sup> adding that \$200K was in the policy as the annual contribution. Mr. Haddad said he was suggesting that a portion of Free Cash be used to increase what they should be contributing every year.

3. Mr. Haddad said that the Sustainable Budget Committee had been working over the last several months reviewing the various issues impacting the Town's budget and its future sustainability. One of the items identified as an issue was the Town's long-term pension obligations. He said that the Committee was recommending that the Board send a letter to the Middlesex County Retirement Board asking them to consider extending the period over which the unfunded liability would be amortized as an offset to the impact of the lower interest rate assumptions. He said that only the legislature could extend the time you could pay off debt which was set at 2040 right now adding that Middlesex County Retirement was at 2035 right now. He said that \$900K went toward unfunded pension liability every year. And interest rates and interest rate assumptions were based on the market.

*Mr. Pease moved that they authorize the Town Manager to send the letter and ask that the Chair sign it. Mr. Cunningham seconded the motion.*

Ms. Eliot asked if other towns were doing this. Mr. Petropoulos said that they did not do this because other towns were doing it. Mr. Hartnett said that they talk about this amongst themselves adding that a mix of towns are not in same financial struggles and so opinions vary.

*The motion carried unanimously.*

4. Mr. Haddad said that Mr. Pease asked that he be removed from the Audit Review Committee. Mr. Pease said that he wanted to recommend that he be replaced by a third citizen at large. He said that the intent after the last meeting was that the Board as a whole not vet this alone and he didn't feel that was being achieved by having three members sit on the Committee. Mr. Haddad said that they had received no citizen at large interest as of yet.

*Mr. Degen moved that the new makeup of the Committee be two members of the Board of Selectmen, one member from the Finance Committee, one member of the Sustainable Budget Committee and three citizens at large. Mr. Pease seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

5. Mr. Haddad said that Mr. Degen and Mr. Petropoulos had suggested that the Board consider removing the bump-outs on Main Street at the intersection of Station Ave and return the curbing to the way it was prior. He said that he spoke to General Manager of GELD and he was in favor of bump outs. He said it helped to have good site lines. Mr. Haddad said that Mr. Delaney said he would try to slope the curb. Mr. Cunningham said that bump outs were a tool for traffic calming adding this was something the Complete Streets Committee would be looking at. Mr. Petropoulos said that the Committee was appointed after the bump outs were done adding he still believed they were a bad idea.
6. Mr. Haddad said that the Board developed a policy where they would meet with their appointed committees each year for an update. He reviewed the proposed schedule. Mr. Pease said he would like to have the Complete Streets Committee added. Mr. Degen said he would like to hear from Conductorlab Committee. Mr. Petropoulos asked that the Invasive Species Committee be added.
7. Mr. Haddad said that he and Mr. Petropoulos had been working with the Demographic Study Committee to perform benchmarking on comparable communities. He said that this had proven to be a little bit difficult. He said that between himself and HR they decided to utilize the senior work off program volunteers and asked them to help contact the Towns. He said that they had compiled a lot of information and had given it to IT to try to put together. Mr. Haddad said that Mr. Pease had a concern about the 13 communities that were used. Mr. Pease said that he felt that it was problematic using these communities because they were not something the Board agreed to. He thought that they were leaving out an important component, the consumers. He said that services would be different and could not be measured the same. He said he would prefer a public hearing on this to hear how these towns were selected. Mr. Petropoulos said that this came about before Mr. Pease was elected. He said that he was correct in that Board was not asked what towns they would like but they were chosen based on other demographic similarities. He said it wasn't a random net and encouraged some improvements. Mr. Cunningham said that these were the Towns used by the Personnel Board for salary surveys adding he liked the work that had been done so far.
8. Mr. Haddad asked the Board to consider a one day beer and wine license for Ladies Night at Groton Wellness on Thursday, November 10, 2016 from 6-10pm.

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

9. Mr. Haddad said that his budget kick off meeting was tomorrow and provided the Board with a copy of the guidance he would passing along to the department heads. He encouraged the Board to sit in on as many budget meetings with department heads as they could in the coming weeks.

#### **OTHER BUSINESS**

Mr. Haddad said that they had talked about Town Hall hours the week before. Mr. Petropoulos said that he had heard no feedback.

*Mr. Pease made a motion that Town Hall stay open on Friday till 4pm when there was a Monday holiday. Mr. Cunningham seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

Mr. Degen said that the Town had recently lost a long-time Groton resident, Barney Blood. He said that he was a former Selectman and the defacto mayor of West Groton who left quite a legacy. He offered his condolences to the family. Mr. Cunningham said that visiting hours were on Friday and service were on Saturday.

#### **LIAISON REPORT**

Mr. Cunningham said that Nashua River Rail Trail was a major asset and he had been working with another group on maintenance of it as it had been an issue. He said that he was going to be reaching out to other towns the trail

goes through to address these issues and hoped the Board would support this initiative. Mr. Petropoulos said that this was such a benefit to the Town and thanked Mr. Cunningham for pouring his heart into it.

Mr. Cunningham said that the Planning Board on the 10<sup>th</sup> would be meeting with Indian Hill to discuss traffic. Mr. Degen said that the Selectmen were in control of the roads and thought it was important for them to attend.

#### **MINUTES**

Mr. Cunningham moved to approve the meeting minutes of October 17, 2016 with Mr. Degen's correction. Ms. Eliot seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Petropoulos adjourned the meeting at 9:07pm.

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_  
Barry Pease, Clerk

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respectfully *submitted*,  
Dawn Dunbar, Executive Assistant

Date Approved: 11/21/16