

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING
MINUTES NOVEMBER 21, 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 7:00pm and reviewed the agenda.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Ms. Eliot said that the Groton Community Dinner would be held on Friday at 5:45pm at First Parish Church. She said that the dinner was free and would be a pasta dinner.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Ms. Ellen Baxendale said that she attended Budget Sustainability meetings on Thursday mornings. She said that they had talked about not adding more people in the Police and Fire departments. She said that with the Town growing, were they planning on having a 24/7 department at any time. Mr. Petropoulos said that they had Police on duty 24/7 and Fire and EMS were on call 24/7. He said that the population was not growing that quickly but that the demographics were changing. Mr. Haddad said that the Fire Chief was coming to a Board meeting sometime in December to discuss this issue.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

1. Mr. Haddad said that the Board had received a request from Salt and Light Café for a one day beer and wine license for a public event on Saturday, December 3, 2016 from 6-9pm that he asked the Board to consider approving.

Ms. Eliot moved to approve the request from Salt and Light for a beer and wine license for a private event on Saturday, December 3rd from 6-9pm. Mr. Cunningham seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

2. Mr. Haddad said that he had updated the Board's goals and objectives based on their last discussion and asked the Board to consider approving them as their final goals for calendar year 2017. Mr. Haddad said that the Chair had also asked the Board to consider assigning individual selectmen to lead the accomplishment of individual goals. The Board decided to assign accomplishment of individual goals to individual Selectmen.

Mr. Cunningham moved to approve the goals and objectives for the Groton Board of Selectmen for calendar year 2017. Ms. Eliot seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Pease said that he needed to see a viable solution to the article on the Senior Center. Mr. Petropoulos said that they had had a sizable discussion about the deadline and made sure the Town Meeting Review Committee was going to be able to come back to the Board by that time. Mr. Degen said that he understood Mr. Pease's concern but said that not all goals and objectives were achievable although they would like them to be. He said he was okay with leaving the goal adding they could lengthen it if they needed to.

The Board assigned the following goal leaders:

Mr. Pease: Goals 1A, 1C, 3C, 1F

Mr. Cunningham: Goal IIA

Mr. Degen: Goals 1D, 1E, 1I

Ms. Eliot: Goals 1G, 1H

Mr. Petropoulos: Goals 3A, 3B, 3D

All Selectmen: Goal 1B (after goal 1A is completed)

MUNICIPAL AUDIT COMMITTEE INTERVIEWS

Mr. Haddad said that the Board had four (4) individuals interested in three (3) seats. Mr. Petropoulos said he thought it was wonderful they had this much interest.

Ms. An-Hee Foley introduced herself adding that she was fairly new to the town having moved here almost a year ago. She said then after moving here it was evident that there was a lot going on in the small town. She said she had decided that she would like to be more involved in how the Town was managed. Mr. Cunningham asked how she understood the charge of the Committee. Ms. Foley said that she thought the Committee would look at how the Town was managed and how the operations of the accounts worked. She said that she had some background in looking at how things run adding she had done audit selections before. Mr. Pease asked her to define efficient. Ms. Foley said that it was something that worked well and that it was done well and in a non-wasteful manner. Mr. Pease asked her to define done well. Ms. Foley said to be done thoroughly where you were not left asking more questions. She said they should see if the Town was running the way it should be run and if not how could they do it better. Ms. Eliot asked if she would be available time wise to do this. Ms. Foley said that she currently worked part time but noted that she had younger children that she had to balance life with but was available to meet.

Mr. John Kane said that he was very aware of the issues within the Town and Schools and understood this to be an audit of the entire Town. He said that he had a lot of experience with proposal preparation and awards. He said that he thought he could find strengths in proposals and could get more out of the price. Mr. Cunningham made note that the audit was just being done on the municipal side adding that the schools were doing their own. Mr. Cunningham said that it appeared that Mr. Kane had a lot of experience professionally. Mr. Kane said that he was a finance major and had been involved in the final recommendations of audits. He said that an audit was a good thing to do especially by an outside firm. Mr. Degen said he was familiar with Mr. Kane's background adding that his experiences were of major value. Ms. Eliot asked Mr. Kane if he would be available for meetings. Mr. Kane said he would. Mr. Petropoulos thanked Mr. Kane for coming back after not being chosen for another Committee earlier in the year.

Ms. Mary Jennings said that this audit was coming at a time when sustainability recommendations were coming in adding it was an important time to take stock. She said that as a member of the Personnel Board, she had advocated that they look at the structure of town hall. Mr. Cunningham asked Ms. Jennings how her experiences could lend itself to this committee. Ms. Jennings said that she had been retired for five (5) years as an educator. She said that she ran audits while serving as Superintendent for accreditations needed every 10 years. Ms. Eliot said that with her vast experience with schools if she would be able to apply the same principals. Ms. Jennings said she thought so adding she had been involved in various committees and had an understanding of how the Town worked.

Mr. Kevin Brogan said that what got him interested in this was from his time serving on the Sustainable Budget Committee. He said he had been working with a good group of people working on more macro issues. He said that this audit group would dig a little deeper adding he could bring sustainability knowledge to this area. Mr. Cunningham said that his skillset was in human resources in the private sector and asked what skills would lend themselves to an audit. Mr. Brogan said that he worked with benefits and compensations and thought that those areas would be of value. Mr. Pease asked what Mr. Brogan learned that may have surprised him while serving on the Sustainable Budget Committee. Mr. Brogan said that he went in thinking there were easy answers but turned out there were not. He said that the challenges were complex and there were no easy solutions. He said that Mr. Haddad and his team did an exceptional job adding he questioned the need for the committee at one point. He said that the Town had dedicated employees.

The Board, by ballot vote, voted the following: Foley - 5 votes; Brogan - 5 votes; Kane - 3 votes; Jennings - 1 vote

Mr. Cunningham said that he voted for Ms. Foley, Mr. Brogan and Mr. Kane. He said it was a difficult decision as all candidates brought a lot to the table. Mr. Pease said that he voted that same as Mr. Cunningham. He said that he liked having new people with new perspectives. Mr. Degen said that he too voted the same. He thought that having the perspective of new members was important. He said that Dr. Jennings had been around the Town for a long time

and her time was appreciated. Ms. Eliot said she voted for Mr. Brogan and Ms. Foley and appreciated their willingness to participate. She said that she did not make a third pick adding she thought both Mr. Kane and Ms. Jennings would bring a great deal to the Committee. Mr. Petropoulos said that he voted for all four (4) originally and then removed Mr. Kane. He said that he liked the operational experience Dr. Jennings had. Mr. Haddad said that with the Committee now full, he would work to set up a meeting.

CONSERVATION COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT

Mr. Peter Morrison called the Conservation Commission meeting to order.

Mr. Morrison said that the Commission in 2016 will have held 22 open meetings, 87 public hearings, received 14 Notice of Intents, and 33 Requests for Determination, performed 100 site walks, approved a notice for the weeds down at Baddacook Pond and also reviewed and supported three (3) eagle scout projects. The Commission had also reviewed agricultural licenses, were currently working on the Surrenden Farm management plan and forester plan updates and were working with the Invasive Species Committee on controlling invasive plants. Mr. Morrison said that they had also accepted a donation of two (2) acres and a conservation restriction off Dale Lane. He said that they welcomed Olin Lathrop in 2016 as a new member of the Commission.

Mr. Cunningham said that the management plan for Rocky Hill was still outstanding and had been overdue for two (2) years. Mr. Tada said that he and the Chair had discussed a plan moving forward to arrange a potential meeting with Mass Audubon. He said that part of that plan was to have in-depth conversations with the Fire Department and District Warden, put those discussions in writing and provide them with a prompt to Mass Audubon to come to the table. Mr. Cunningham said that he would speak to the Chairman again adding that he was disappointed that this process had taken so long. He said that they needed to work to get everyone to the table adding that the back and forth had not worked. Mr. Morrison suggested using Town Counsel to help get a response. Mr. Tada asked Mr. Petropoulos for permission to access Town Counsel. Mr. Petropoulos suggested having the Commission back in six (6) weeks or so for an update on this. Mr. Cunningham noted that Mr. Tada had gone above and beyond to try to obtain communication from Mass Audubon. He thought it would be best for the Commission to consider this collectively and draft a letter to Audubon adding he didn't like the idea of having to get Town Counsel involved to get a response. Ms. Eliot asked if there was anything they could do to help him. Mr. Morrison said they would take one more shot at this and come back to update the Board in six (6) weeks.

Mr. Degen thanked Mr. Morrison for his many years of service adding he had always been very committee to saving land. Mr. Degen asked how much land was enough adding he would like to see the Commission get a better handle on properties they had before coming to the Town for more land or more money for more land. Mr. Degen suggested that they might look into putting a limited 40B project on brown loaf land the Town owns adding it might be a way to spin a profit for land management. He suggested speaking to the Affordable Housing Trust and Board on how that could be done. Mr. Morrison said he thought that was an interesting idea and wanted to find out more information. He said that all of their land management as of 2011 had been funded by forestry rights through a revolving fund. He said that they had spent the last two (2) years taking a comprehensive inventory of properties.

Mr. Petropoulos asked if the Commission had set goals and objectives for the year. Mr. Morrison said that a lot of their time was taken up by how busy the Town was. He said that Notice of Intents can take multiple meetings and administration takes a lot of time. He said that he hated to see them make a list of lofty goals and not be able to get to them. Mr. Petropoulos said that he found goals to be helpful and thought that the Board should ask all their boards and committees to set goals. Mr. Petropoulos said that Conservation had changed over the last five (5) years and asked if they had seen a change with their interface in the community. Mr. Morrison said that they were looked at better now than 10 years ago, adding that public education had helped.

Mr. Olin Lathrop agreed that they could do a better job of managing their lands but thought that grabbing up land when it became available was independent of that. Mr. Degen said that it was important you keep the list of possible acquisitions on the forefront but didn't mean they always need to purchase them.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

1. Mr. Haddad said that he, Tom Delaney and Chief Palma met with a representative of Indian Hill to look at a traffic solution for the intersection of 119 at Old Ayer Road. He said that they floated the idea of a one way onto Old Ayer Road from 119 if you were traveling East and a three-lane intersection turning onto 119 from Old Ayer Road either going East or West. To turn onto Old Ayer Road if you were traveling West on 119, you would utilize that third lane near the Mobil Station. He said that the Police Chief was not in favor of a traffic light but liked the idea of being able to manually control some sort of a light when detail officers were used for larger events. He said that they also talked about making Peabody Street a more formal intersection to make it safer. He said they also discussed Article 97 what they meant for Prescott Common at 119 and Old Ayer Road. He said that open areas from construction of a roadway were exempt from Article 97. Her said that Planning Board member, Russ Burke provided him with information obtained from the Attorney General. Mr. Haddad also talked about the idea of "no net loss" something covered by Article 97 adding that if they reduced the common on one side they would have room to add more common property on the other side.

Mr. Cunningham said that this was still at the working level as evidenced by the traffic engineer at the last Planning Board meeting. He said that any changes would need to come before them. He suggested that Mr. Degen as the liaison to Public Works might sit in on those meetings. Mr. Degen said he would like to sit in on them adding he wasn't aware of the last meeting. Mr. Pease said he would like to see them try to keep traffic off of Peabody Street as there were a lot of kids who lived on that narrow road. Mr. Degen said that they needed to remember that they as a board control the roads and need to have a much input as possible. He said he would like to see them send a letter to the Planning Board to not close the public hearing until such time the applicant has negotiated a traffic mitigation plan for Old Ayer Road and Peabody Street. He also thought that having the applicant in before them was important. Ms. Eliot said that the intersection of 119 and Old Ayer Road had been on their radar for years. She agreed that they had jurisdiction over the roads but thought the Planning Board was doing their job and meeting quite regularly on this plan. She said that they were the ones paying the engineers to review the plans and details. Mr. Degen said that they could work in concert with the Planning Board but wanted to make sure they didn't close the public hearing until this had been worked out. Mr. Petropoulos asked if having the applicant into one of their meetings was appropriate. Mr. Haddad said that if they were going to be making changes to their roads they should be meeting with the Planning Board first, not the applicant. Mr. Pease asked if they could come up with collaborative guidelines. Mr. Petropoulos suggested that Ms. Eliot as the Planning Board liaison could approach them about working with the Board. Mr. Degen said he would like them to send a requesting a joint meeting. Mr. Petropoulos asked Mr. Haddad to arrange a joint meeting.

Mr. Petropoulos said that they had received some traffic statistics on that intersection and that there was on average 2.2 accident per year. He said it was an awkward intersection but not a dangerous one. He said he was not interested in making this a priority when it was not a huge problem. Mr. Cunningham said that the applicant was interested in helping the Town with the intersection. Mr. Petropoulos said he was not interested in having mitigation done at the Town's expense. Mr. Degen said that they should be taking advantage of what the applicant was proposing for mitigation so it didn't cost the Town more.

2. Mr. Haddad said that he would be holding his budget meetings with the departments next Monday through Wednesday and would take Thursday to work toward putting together a balanced budget. Mr. Petropoulos asked if a balanced budget could include an override if they decide that's what they wanted to do. Mr. Haddad said that the Board could make that call with the Finance Committee.

Mr. Degen said that the Schools E&D had come in just north of \$1M. He said that this gave them a lot of stability if something were to come up. Mr. Haddad said that if their E&D had been certified greater than 5% of their total budget they could have to return it to the towns.

3. Mr. Haddad said that he provided the Board with a proposed meeting schedule through the end of the calendar year. He said that he and Mr. Degen had talked about 6pm meeting start times during the winter a few weeks ago, and wanted to put that back on the table if the Board was willing to discuss it. Ms. Eliot said that she liked the 6pm start time for a variety of reasons. Mr. Degen said he liked 7pm but adding that they did speak about earlier start times for the winter. He said he could live with 6pm but his preference was 7pm. Mr. Pease said that he had changed his work schedule to accommodate a 6pm start time so he was okay with it. Mr. Petropoulos said that he had difficulty making it to meetings at 7pm as well as those wanting to attend. He didn't think they should be shifting back and forth because of daylight. Mr. Cunningham said he was fine with what accommodated other members. Ms. Judy Anderson asked about a 6:30pm compromise. Ms. Ellen Baxendale said that she liked 6pm start times.

Mr. Cunningham moved to change the start time of Board meetings to 6:30pm. Ms. Eliot seconded the motion. The motion failed 2-3 with Pease, Petropoulos and Degen voting against.

OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Petropoulos asked the Board to consider requesting that a report on the recent property assessment process of Assessors be done adding that it be limited to no more than two (2) pages long. Mr. Cunningham said he was concerned that they were injecting themselves adding that the Assessors had a distinct role spelled out by MGL. Mr. Petropoulos said that the municipal employee under the Town Manger involved in the process had relevance. Mr. Degen said that he did not understand how assessments were done adding that one Assessor raised concerns about how things were being done in that office. He said that what he did know was that the Board of Selectmen needed to certify the tax rate in December adding he was concerned how the two (2) ideologies came about. Mr. Degen thought that instead of airing out dirty laundry he thought that a writeup by the Town Manager would help reassure him and the public that the Assessors were performing their functions under DOR regulations and guidelines. Mr. Degen said that he would ask the questions at the tax classification hearing if it was decided that a letter not be done. Mr. Petropoulos agreed that he too would not certify these numbers until he had answers about the concerns raised. Ms. Eliot said that she wanted the public to know that both sides agreed they were following State statue and following what should have been done. Mr. Haddad said that the State had to certify the numbers. He said that numbers were being changed by the State right now because of how they were submitted. Mr. Pease said that he felt this was a big deal adding that he had run into something he should have known about last Wednesday. He asked the Town Manager to make sure he was kept in the loop adding he felt sidelined having to read about this in the newspaper. Mr. Pease said that he felt like the report that was being requested was like the GELD report that was done when they had their permitting challenges and if that was the case, he supported this. Mr. Cunningham felt as though they needed to tread very careful as Selectmen on this. Mr. Petropoulos asked Mr. Haddad to provide a quick report. Mr. Degen asked that it be concise and vetted by the Assessors.

Mr. Degen moved that they move forward with this report. Mr. Pease seconded the motion. Move we do that. BP-second. Mr. Haddad said that if this was his report, he had a problem with it being vetted by the Assessors.

Mr. Degen amended his motion to include that the report be provided to them a week before tax class hearing. Mr. Pease seconded the amendment. The motion carried unanimously.

LIAISON REPORTS

Mr. Petropoulos said that the Light Department was reviewing the one proposal they received in response to their RFP that night. He said that no decisions would be made. He said that they should expect to hear from them soon on this.

Mr. Cunningham gave a shout out to the Public Safety Departments and Gibbet Hill for the Thanksgiving Dinner they provided for the Seniors at Gibbet Hill. He said that it was a great affair and a real positive thing for the Seniors.

Ms. Eliot said that Secretary Jay Ash and several elected officials were present on the 18th to award a MassWorks grant for Four Corners Sewer initiative.

Ms. Sartini said that she on behalf of the Groton Garden Club wanted to thank the Groton Fire Department for their Open House. She said it was a terrific success.

MINUTES

Ms. Eliot moved to approve the Regular Session meeting minutes of November 2, 2016. Mr. Pease seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Petropoulos adjourned the meeting at 9:30pm.

Approved: _____
Barry Pease, Clerk

_____ respectfully submitted,
Dawn Dunbar, Executive Assistant

Date Approved: 12/12/16