

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING
MINUTES FEBRUARY 27, 2017
APPROVED**

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

Members Absent: Joshua A. Degen

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

Mr. Pease said that this year's Groton Reads book was "The Big Burn." He encouraged people to pick up a copy of the book at the library as well as a pamphlet for events related to the book.

Chief Palma described an event on January 31st where a young lady became lost jogging in the woods off 225. He said that they were fortunate to have a positive conclusion due to extraordinary efforts by Lt. Tyler Shute, Officer Nick Beltz and Lola. Chief Palma said that the young lady had been missing for a number of hours and was on a day where the weather was deteriorating quickly. He said that Lt. Shute notified Chief McCurdy of the problem when the call came in and both quickly established command. He said that they notified their dog along with units from Littleton and Lunenburg. He said that Lt. Shute had institutional knowledge of the woods and could anticipate where she might end up. Lola took a piece of clothing with her scent on it and between them, they were able to locate the jogger. Lt. and Officer Casey from Littleton, carried the jogger out of the woods where she was transported to the local hospital. Chief Palma said that he and Chief McCurdy would like to recognize Lt. Shute, Officer Beltz and Lola for life saving efforts.

Chief Palma said that he also wanted to recognize Chief McCurdy. He said that the Chief took it upon himself, knowing that he (Chief Palma) was 45 minutes out to get things rolling. Chief Palma said that they had worked through these types of situations and really appreciated everything the Chief did. Chief McCurdy said that this was a giant team effort adding that they may have different jobs in general but Groton's Police and Fire Departments would always come together. He said that he too was very proud of Lt. Shute getting everything set up and getting the wheels in motion that night.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

1. Mr. Haddad said that Ms. Bonavita, Land Use Director/Town Planner had resigned and would be returning to her old job in Millbury. He said that they had started a new search and planned to use the same process as last time. He said that they were very fortunate to have someone that lived in town that knew the job better than anyone adding he had appointed Michelle Collette as Interim Land Use Director/Town Planner effective March 13th and asked the Board to ratify the appointment.

Mr. Cunningham moved to affirm the appointment of Michelle Collette as Interim Land Use Director/Town Planner effective March 13th. Mr. Pease seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

2. Mr. Haddad said that Ms. Iannacone had worked in Town for many years in many different capacities most recently as the Water Sewer Business Manager. He said that she had moved on to another opportunity and after advertising for the position, they received 30 applicants and interviewed 6. He said that he brought a finalist, Lauren Crory, to the Water and Sewer Commissioners who unanimously supported her appointment. He asked the Board to consider ratifying the appointment.

Mr. Cunningham moved to affirm the appointment of Lauren Crory as Water Sewer Business Manager effective February 28th. Ms. Eliot seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

3. Mr. Haddad said that Michael Macgregor, a former Groton Firefighter had moved on to another fire position but that the Chief wanted to retain him as a Relief Dispatcher. Mr. Haddad asked the Board to consider ratifying his appointment effective that night.

Mr. Pease moved to ratify the appointment. Mr. Cunningham seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

4. Mr. Haddad said that three people had come forward interested in the Groton Green Energy Committee. He said that each of them had outstanding backgrounds in energy conservation. Mr. Haddad asked the Board to consider appointing Fay Raynor, Jim O'Reilly and Gregg Yanchenko to the Committee along with Michelle Collette as an interim member.

Ms. Eliot moved to appoint Fay Raynor, Jim O'Reilly and Gregg Yanchenko to the Groton Green Energy Committee. Mr. Cunningham seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Pease moved to appoint Michelle Collette to the Committee on interim basis until a permanent Land Use Director was appointed. Mr. Cunningham seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

7:15PM – PUBLIC HEARING – FEES

Mr. Haddad said that at the recommendation of the Budget Sustainably Committee they looked to increase fees in various departments. Mr. Haddad said that there had not been an increase in fees at the Transfer Station in 10 years. He said that after a review of the Transfer Station, they found that they were within \$6-7K annually of making the transfer station self-sufficient, even including capital. Mr. Haddad reviewed some of the proposed fee increases (bags, stickers and misc. white items) and the proposed revenues. He said that based on the last 12 months income, he was anticipating that they would generate an additional \$20K annually. Mr. Haddad said that they had learned that hiring a private hauler to remove trash and recycling cost the tax payer upwards of \$500/year. These increases would cost a homeowner a little over \$200/year.

Mr. Cunningham suggested imposing a late fee for those that didn't get their stickers by a deadline. Mr. Delaney explained how they offer residents a little bit of a grace period, typically 2-3 weeks after July 1st to get their stickers adding he didn't know if he would be in favor of imposing a late fee. Mr. Cunningham said that people knew ahead of time that their stickers were due to expire adding that it puts extra work on the staff having to spend time paying close attention to stickers that are expired. Mr. Petropoulos asked how many people bought their stickers late. Mr. Delaney said maybe 20 or 30 but wasn't sure he had ever asked that question. Mr. Bouchard said that people were not entitled to use the Transfer Station unless they had a permit. He said that no matter when after July 1 you buy your sticker, you were paying a full year's fee. He asked how they would determine if someone was getting one for the first time. Mr. Cunningham asked if they kept a log. Mr. Delaney said that they did. Mr. Delaney said that if they wanted to impose a late fee, that they do so after 35 days. Mr. Bouchard said that having a list might be difficult to track. Mr. Cunningham removed his suggestion.

Mr. Haddad said that they also looked at the Town Clerk's fees adding it had been about 10 years since they were increased also. He said that after looking at the surrounding towns fees, they were still lower or on average with those other towns. Mr. Pease said he reviewed the fees and didn't think any of them were egregious adding they were mostly onetime events. Mr. Cunningham asked about the increase in at home births. Mr. Bouchard said that with at home births, they had to put together a package which takes about 3 hours to do one. He said it was also the same process when creating a death certificate when a funeral home director is not involved. Ms. Eliot asked about a possible fee reduction for seniors. Mr. Bouchard said he didn't think about that. Ms. Eliot asked about the increase in doing business as certificates. Mr. Bouchard said that of the nine surrounding towns, Groton would be the highest. He said that the certificate was good for 4 years. Mr. Pease said that that averaged \$15 per year to do business as. Mr. Bouchard said he picked \$60 (\$15 a year) adding he thought it was a fair amount.

Mr. Cunningham moved to decrease business certificates down to \$50 for 4 years. Ms. Eliot seconded the motion. Mr. Bouchard said he had no objection to that. The motion carried 3-0-1 with Mr. Pease abstaining.

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

Ms. Eliot moved to accept the Transfer Station fees and Town Clerks fees as amended. Mr. Cunningham seconded the motion. Mr. Haddad said that they would be effective July 1, 2017. The motion carried unanimously.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

5. Mr. Haddad said that he had been asked to draft a charge for a Memorial Day Committee which he had done. He said that Don Black had come to him and would like to see the Park Commission responsible for this, not the Board adding that Bob Johnson would like to work with the Commission on this. Ms. Eliot said that the Park Commission had done this when Mr. Black was part of the Commission. She said she brought this forward because she was approached by Bob Johnson and another person looking for help. She said if the Park Commission was willing to discuss taking it over, they could wait to hear from them. Mr. Cunningham said he agreed adding there needed to be a nexus in working on activities like this. Mr. Haddad said he would reach out to the Park Commission.
6. Mr. Haddad said that he reached out to National Grid about the gas leaks list. He said that gas leaks were graded on a scale of 1-3 adding that all grade 3 leaks were shown on a map and were not considered a safety hazard. He said that National Grid knew that the Town was concerned about them and would monitor them. Mr. Pease said he was glad there were no safety issues but didn't think that leaky pipes made sense especially if natural gas was needed in the area. Mr. Petropoulos said that he was looking to get an answer for a resident on how they could get the gas company to come out sooner rather than later. Ms. Eliot asked if they could put a time limit on grade 3's. Mr. Haddad said they could talk to them again.
7. Mr. Haddad said that First Parish Church had requested a One Day Beer and Wine license for Poetry Night to be held on Saturday, March 4, 2017 from 6:30pm to 9:30pm. He asked the Board to consider approving the request.

Ms. Eliot moved to approve the license request. Mr. Cunningham seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

8. Mr. Haddad said that the Nashoba Valley Chamber of Commerce had requested a One Day All Alcohol license for their Annual Taste of Nashoba to be held on Tuesday, March 21, 2017 5:30pm to 8:00pm. He asked the Board to consider approving the request.

Ms. Eliot moved to approve the license request. Mr. Pease seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

9. Mr. Haddad said that the Groton History Center had requested a One Day Liquor License for a Wine Tasting Fundraiser be held on Saturday, March 11, 2017 7:00pm to 10:00pm. He asked the Board to consider approving the request.

Mr. Pease moved to approve the license request. Mr. Cunningham seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

10. Mr. Haddad said that there had been some adjustments to the budget since he submitted his proposed budget on December 31st. He said they had determined that Groton Dunstable wouldn't require an appropriation of \$775K according to Superintendent's budget. They had reduced the amount of the operating assessment due to a shift in student population between Groton and Dunstable and included some

capital items in their assessment. He said that when they take into consideration the proposed increase in assessment by the Superintendent and add Groton's share of the proposed capital items (High School Technology, Boutwell HVAC and High School HVAC), the total increase was \$547,492. In addition, they would be requesting a \$100,000 appropriation to make various improvements to the FloRo Elementary School and parking area, bringing their total anticipated increase in FY 2018 to \$647,492. In addition to that, Mr. Haddad said he had added \$27,000 to the Selectman's budget to cover the cost of Groton's share to the Pepperell SRF, and \$9,518 had been added to the Debt Service Budget to cover the increase in interest payments, as well as \$25,257 to the Water Safety Budget to cover the lifeguards at Sargisson Beach. Mr. Haddad said that he would also like them to consider using taxation to cover the Fire Department Pilot Program, instead of Free Cash but was fine with whatever the Board and Finance Committee wanted to do to fund these.

Mr. Pease said that at the last Town Meeting they had some warrant articles to return money to the tax payers. He said that was rejected on principal that they wanted free cash for things that may come up. He said he would prefer, in principal, to be as far under the levy as possible. Mr. Cunningham asked Mr. Haddad where they left their free cash. Mr. Haddad said that their policy states they would like to be between \$200-300K adding they would end up right there. Mr. Robertson said that he too thought they should build up their free cash adding that Mr. Haddad was looking at excluded debt for the next few years. He said that monitoring that would allow them to stay steady and thought they should make sure that the debt analysis was done first to make sure they were covered. Mr. Pease said he thought Mr. Robertson's idea to conserve and potentially not bond was a great idea. He said that they really needed to have the discussion on a free cash policy.

OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Haddad said that the Charter Review Committee would like to meet with the Board to discuss their warrant article and present their changes. Mr. Haddad suggested putting the Committee on the Board's March 13th agenda. Mr. Cunningham said he was not going to be at that meeting and asked to have it scheduled at a different time. Mr. Petropoulos suggested that it be at one of the Committee's meetings where that was the sole discussion. Mr. Haddad said he would reach out to Charter Review Committee.

Mr. Haddad said that there was going to be a vacancy on the School Committee effective March 10th. He said that in order to get the remainder of the term, 1 year, on the ballot the Board would have to vote by March 13th to do that in order to notify the Town Clerk to add it to the ballot. Mr. Haddad said that the Board could then vote to fill the vacancy until the May election adding that it would be done in joint session with the School Committee. Mr. Cunningham said he would like to get feedback from the School Committee on whether they think the two-month appointment was necessary. Mr. Pease said it might be worth reaching out to the resigning individual as another option to see if they want to be appointed to sit on that board for two more months. Mr. Haddad said if that member was willing to serve until the election, he could schedule the School Committee for the meeting 13th if the Board wanted. Mr. Petropoulos said that if this option was approved by both Boards and the resigning member was willing to do this, this would be a better option than having an incumbent have a leg up at the election.

Mr. Haddad said that the Planning Board had submitted 3 zoning articles, one of them being an amendment on where one could place marijuana facilities. Mr. Petropoulos said that this was for the Planning Board to manage and the public to be aware of. Ms. Eliot asked if they were able to prohibit this until the State promulgated the laws rather than putting in place a zoning accommodation for it. Mr. Haddad said he would agree for recreational use but medical use was allowed already. Mr. Pease asked if they would have a license issue also. Mr. Cunningham said that the law had been passed but that the CMR was not in place yet. He thought this was a discussion they needed to have with the Planning Board.

Mr. Haddad said that one of their goals was to review the Municipal Modernization Act. Mr. Pease said he would be bringing several updates to the Board at a future meeting. He said there was one thing he felt they should start with at this Spring Town Meeting; adopting a section of MGL that gives the Town to the ability to force direct deposit. He

recommended that this be placed on the Spring Town Meeting warrant for adoption. Mr. Haddad said it would be accepted as a local option and the reason it would need a Town Meeting vote. Mr. Cunningham asked who this would apply to. Mr. Pease said employees and elected officials. Mr. Cunningham thought it made great sense. Mr. Haddad asked the Board to open the warrant, authorize placement of the article and close the warrant.

Mr. Cunningham moved to open the warrant. Mr. Pease seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Cunningham moved to put an article on warrant to accept a local option for the Town to require direct deposit for payroll. Ms. Eliot seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Cunningham moved to close the warrant. Mr. Pease seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Petropoulos said that Mr. Haddad's review had been completed adding it was back with Mr. Haddad who had 10 days to review it.

LIAISON REPORTS

Mr. Cunningham said that the Senior Center forum was this past weekend and had been very well attended. He thanked June Johnson for moderating it.

Mr. Cunningham said that the Complete Street Committee had met last week and established their priority list. He said that one project that topped the list was a sidewalk down to CVS, which could not be included in their program as that was a MassDot program. He suggested that the Board send a letter to Representative Harrington and Senator Donoghue to ask for help in moving this along. Mr. Haddad said he would draft a letter for the Board to vote on.

Mr. Pease said that a lot of the changes in the Mass Modernization Act involved day to day minutia for their employees adding there were several things that may benefit them as a town.

MINUTES

Mr. Cunningham moved to approve the Regular Session meeting minutes of January 30, 2017. Ms. Eliot seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Petropoulos adjourned the meeting at 8:38pm.

Approved: _____
Barry Pease, Clerk

_____ respectfully submitted,
Dawn Dunbar, Executive Assistant

Date Approved: 3/20/17