

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN**  
**MARCH 29, 2004**  
**REGULAR SESSION MINUTES**  
**“APPROVED”**

**Present:** Thomas D. Hartnett, Chair; George F. Dillon, Jr., Vice Chair; John L. Saball, Clerk; Peter S. Cunningham, Member; Virginia C. Wood, Member and Administrative Officer Jean E. Kitchen and Kathleen Newell, Office Assistant

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 p.m.

**Joint Public Hearing with finance Committee to Review Town Meeting Articles**

Finance Committee Chairman Robert W. Nordblom, Chairman; and members Mike Flynn; Ann Walsh; Steve Webber; Jeff Wilson; Garrett Boles and Town Accountant Ms. Valerie Jenkins were present for this portion of the meeting.

*Mr. Cunningham moved to open the Hearing at 7:03 p.m. Seconded by Mr. Dillon. Unanimous vote.*

Mr. Hartnett read the legal notice.

Mr. Hartnett reviewed the financial articles (enclosed herein).

Finance Committee Chairman Win Nordblom reviewed Article 5 Budget (enclosed herein).

Postage & Copying - Ms. Kitchen stated a copier would be leased instead of purchased.

Police Budget - Chief of Police Robert Mulhern stated he would like to clear up a misconception regarding his budget as reported incorrectly in the newspaper as running a deficit. Chief Mulhern stated the Police budget was on target. Chief Mulhern stated he would like to discuss the \$18,000 cut from the overtime budget. Chief Mulhern stated \$18,000 was a significant cut but he will make do. Chief Mulhern stated there have been big cuts in the state budget; previously his department received \$26,000 for community policing projects and now receives \$10,000 and the D.A.R.E. program has been cut completely. Chief Mulhern stated the Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee had given him the authority to make decisions on the cuts. Chief Mulhern stated he will probably cut minor capital, possibly communications and may have to entertain layoff of clerical staff. Chief Mulhern stated he appreciated the support he and his department get from the citizens and the Boards within the Town.

Fire Budget - Fire Chief Joseph Bosselait stated the Fire Department was not running a deficit as had been reported. Chief Bosselait stated the wage increase was due to step increases. Chief Bosselait stated the potential merger expenses had been separated from the budget and should be decided if that is the area to cut. Chief Bosselait stated his department had taken a \$12,000 reduction and absorbed \$20,000 of budget towards the first full-time Fire/EMT position. Mr. Webber stated there is another proposal to cover one (1) paid shift by transferring funds from EMS funds, the proposal is still in the works.

Water Fire Protection - Mr. Hartnett stated the Water Commissioners had eliminated the increase in fees this year due to the tight budget.

School Budgets - Mr. Chuck McKinney stated the school had not certified the budget. Mr. Dillon stated Nashoba Valley Regional Technical High School had not submitted a budget. Mr. Cunningham stated there would be a Budget Hearing on Saturday, April 3, 2004 at 10:00 a.m. at the Black Box Theater to discuss the budget with the Boards of Selectmen from Groton and Dunstable and the Finance Committees from both towns.

Library - Owen Shuman stated the general growth of the Library has increased 75%, the Library is open 41 hours per week and requested the Sunday hours be kept in the budget. Mr. Caleb Brown of Willowdale Road spoke in favor of the Sunday hours as being convenient and a benefit to the townspeople. Mr. Brian Mullens, Library Trustee stated they might be asking for the Sunday hours to be brought on Town Meeting floor so the public may decide. Ms. Kitchen stated the Sunday hours had not been cut, the Library hours had been level funded, and the Library is free to choose the hours of operation. Ms. Jenkins expressed concern regarding the funding source was being designated from free cash, Ms. Jenkins emphatically stated there was no free cash.

Recreation Department - Commissioners Kerry Strauss and Neil Cotoni and Director Liza Judge were present. Mr. Hartnett explained there have been several meetings with the Recreation Commissioners and Director to discuss the deficit and projected deficits. Mr. Hartnett stated a recommendation had been made to change Recreation from a revolving fund to a town department. Ms. Judge stated the budget has been cut to cover six (6) months of operation. Ms. Judge stated the process has been baffling to the Commissioners as to what the Board wants. Ms. Judge stated

she has run 56 programs with her 30 hours per week, and has 3400 participants in the programs. Ms. Judge stated the Board needs to decide to either fund the program for a year or get rid of it. Ms. Strauss asked what the Board expected from the Commissioners and what the goals are. Mr. Hartnett stated the Recreation Department was here because of a deficit. Mr. Hartnett stated as Town officials the Board cannot allow a deficit and encumber taxpayers to support something they may not want to support.

Mr. Jon Strauss stated there is no indication when the deficits were accrued and asked when the Board wanted the Recreation Department to break even. Mr. Hartnett stated the Board had no desire to eliminate the Recreation Department however the Board cannot sanction a deficit. Mr. Dillon stated the number keeps rising at the last meeting the amount was \$31,000 in deficit. Mr. Dillon stated he had thought it was pretty clear what the objectives were, an audit had been conducted, the Board is asking for good fiscal control. The Commissioners need to know what they are doing and what programs will or will not break even, look at the package and return to the Board of Selectmen with a clear direction. Mr. Cunningham stated the Recreation had received a six (6) month FY05 budget, which is a scaled back version of programs, which make money. Mr. Cotoni stated he believes in six months they should be able to take a look at the program and see what is working. Mr. Hartnett asked "What should we think, Liza is saying fund for a year or get rid of it and Neil is saying ok?" Mr. Wilson asked if the budget had been voted on. Mr. Cotoni stated the Commissioners had not met since the budget was submitted on Friday. Mr. Hartnett stated the Board should look at the proposal and decide whether to keep the department or get rid of it. Mr. Harlan Fitch asked how the department had been writing checks if they didn't have the money. Ms. Kitchen stated the Town Accountant had put a stop to it when she realized they were operating in a budget deficit. Mr. Saball stated the reason for the meetings was to acknowledge the deficit and the department could not continue operating as it had. Mr. Saball stated there was an obligation not to fund a deficit. Mr. Dillon stated the Recreation Department was not just looking at the FY05 budget, but still had three months left in FY04 to demonstrate the direction.

Parks Department - Mr. Don Black reviewed the budget, stating the Parks Department work well with the Highway, Water and Fire Departments. Ms. Wood asked Mr. Black to explain how the \$50,000 is spent. Mr. Black gave the following figures: \$10,000 - fertilization, \$8400 - portable restrooms, \$3600 - irrigation, 1000 to 1200 - electricity, plus replacement of fencing, maintenance and upkeep of soccer and baseball fields etc. Ms. Wood stated some items such as stonewall fencing should be on a different line item. Mr. Webber stated the capital threshold is currently \$10000 and an article is on the warrant to increase to \$25,000.

Ms. Connie Sartini, Groton Herald, addressed the Finance Committee; the largest reductions were Police and Fire so are public safety has taken the biggest hit? Mr. Cunningham stated the Library also was cut. Mr. Hartnett stated he wished to clarify the Fire Department reduction was from a proposed increase not from current coverage and assured the citizenry was not losing current coverage.

Article(s) 8 & 9 - Highway Superintendent Tom Delaney stated these were scheduled replacements of vehicles.

Article 10 - Mr. Hartnett stated the Board was going to try to lower the figure now and the remainder in the fall. Ms. Wood stated \$50,000. Mr. Peter Morrison stated the Conservation Commission would be able to do \$50,000 now and more in the fall. Mr. Hartnett thanked the Commission.

Article 13 - Groton Dunstable Regional School District - Prescott School - Mr. John Estabrook stated he had been asked to get estimates, because of time constraints he will try to have two (2) estimates for roof/window replacement and asbestos. Mr. Dillon stated there had been some estimates from Dr. Jennings. Ms. Karen Riggert stated an updated memo had been submitted detailing the estimates. Mr. Hartnett stated the source of funding would be determined at the Town Meeting.

Article 15 - Treasurer/Collector Christine Collins asked how the billing was going to take place.

Article 19 - Community Preservation Act - (handout enclosed herein)

Article 27 - Mr. Hartnett stated a number would be determined at Town Meeting.

### Non-Financial Articles

Article 1- Ms. Wood asked if the Assessors wanted to be recognized at Town Meeting. Mr. Eddie Kopec stated the he thinks the Townspeople should get information about their tax bill. Mr. Hartnett stated Mr. Kopec should schedule with the Moderator.

Article 14 - Elected Official Health Insurance - Ms. Kitchen stated she had received an opinion this was not a Town Meeting article, the Selectmen need to make a decision.

Article 18 - Personnel - Ms. Kitchen stated it is not on file with the Town Clerk yet.

Article 21 - Sign Illumination - Mr. Karl Johnson stated the by-law has been changed to all and encourage display of American Flags.

Article 23 - Agricultural Definitions - Ms. Wood asked if the by-law impacted the existing Agricultural Signs by-law. Ms. Kitchen stated the agricultural sites in question do not grow 75% of their produce in Groton and would not apply. Ms. Wood stated she would investigate.

Article 24 - Rate of Development - Ms. Wood stated the Planning Board would be meeting on Thursday to have their public hearing.

Article 26- Ms. Kitchen asked Mr. Webber if he would help her write a summary on this article.

Article 29 - Mr. Tim Callahan presented the Article relative to the implementation of the USA Patriot Act. Mr. Jeff Wilson stated the article was defective. Mr. Garrett Boles asked what the number of registered voters was. Ms. Maloney stated approximately 6,000. Mr. Boles stated the number of people who attend Town Meeting would not be an actual presentation of the Town. Ms. Wood stated the Town Meeting is open to all citizens. Mr. Nordblom stated the Board of Selectmen couldn't take an article off the warrant.

*Mr. Cunningham moved to close the hearing at 9:03 p.m. Seconded by Mr. Saball. Unanimous vote.*

### **Historical Commission Appointment**

*Mr. Cunningham moved to appoint Melissa R. Manzi to the Historical Commission to fill the un-expired three-year term to expire June 30, 2006. Seconded by Mr. Dillon. Unanimous vote.*

*Mr. Cunningham moved to appoint Robert G. DeGroot to the Historical Commission to fill the un-expired three-year term to expire June 30, 2004. Seconded by Mr. Dillon. Unanimous vote.*

### **Review Special Town Meeting Articles**

The Board reviewed the Special Town Meeting Warrant Articles (enclosed herein).

Article 7 - Ms. Kitchen stated Attorney Doug Deschenes would need to contact Town Counsel to submit wording.

*Mr. Cunningham moved to adjourn at 9:29 p.m. Seconded by Mr. Dillon. Unanimous vote.*

The Board reconvened at 9:35 p.m. *Mr. Cunningham moved to open the Warrant for the Special Town Meeting on May 3, 2004 to place an Article requiring no quorum at Special Town Meeting and Closed the Warrant. Seconded by Mr. Dillon. Unanimous vote.*

*Mr. Cunningham moved to adjourn at 9:40 p.m. Seconded by Mr. Dillon. Unanimous vote.*

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_  
John L. Saball, Clerk

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Respectfully submitted,*  
Kathleen Newell, Office Assistant

Enclosures (5) - ATM Warrant (3/26/04, 1:31); STM Warrant (3/23/04, 4:54); FY2005 Budget Summary; Community Preservation Act - Basic Facts for Groton; Potential Uses of CPA Funds (November 2002)

Date Approved: April 26, 2004