

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MINUTES
SEPTEMBER 11, 2006
'APPROVED'**

Present: Peter S. Cunningham, Chair; George F. Dillon, Jr., Vice Chair; John L. Saball, Clerk; Mihran Keoseian, Member; Jeff Ritter, Interim Administrative Officer; Maria Casey, Administrative Assistant; and Kathleen Newell, Office Assistant
The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

Moment of Silence in Remembrance

A moment of silence was observed in remembrance of the events of September 11, 2001.

Jane Bouvier, Vice President of the Groton Business Association RE: Grotonfest 2006

Ms. Bouvier outlined the schedule and events planned for Grotonfest. The rain date is September 17, 2006 and should it appear to be inclement weather for both days the event will be moved inside to the Groton Dunstable Middle School.

Valerie Jenkins, Town Accountant and Christine Collins, Treasurer/Tax Collector RE: Quarterly Financial Updates.

Ms. Collins reviewed her quarterly report (enclosed herein). Ms. Collins noted that the last scheduled payment in lieu of taxes (PILOT) from the American Baptist Association was scheduled in 2007 and she suggested that the Board of Selectmen may wish to contact them regarding future PILOTs. Ms. Collins also stated that payments could now be made via Unipay for real estate, excise and water bills. Ms. Collins clarified that the Town does not receive any fees from the use of credit cards, those fees are charged and received by the credit card companies. Ms. Collins emphasized that the first order of business should be to move the free cash to the stabilization fund. Mr. Dillon stated that he could not have said it better and the Town's financial policy is to keep the Capital Stabilization Fund and the Stabilization Fund a the minimum of 5% of the budget. Ms. Collins noted that the account had made \$53,000 in interest. Mr. Cunningham stated that was a concrete example of why it is worthy to put money into the capital stabilization funds. The Board members thanked Ms. Collins.

Ms. Jenkins reviewed her quarterly report (enclosed herein). Ms. Jenkins stated that the Department of Revenue (DOR) had certified the free cash at \$904,466. Ms. Jenkins explained that 'free cash' was neither free nor cash but in actuality the portion of retained earnings you are allowed to appropriate for other purposes and it means that you either under spent or had received excess revenue. Ms. Jenkins stated that there has been good financial management across the board and every department has turned back money. Ms. Jenkins did note that we need to be sensitive to the fact that department heads are budgeting a full 18 months in advance. Ms. Jenkins stated that she supported Ms. Collins in paying the savings accounts first. The Board thanked Ms. Jenkins.

Mr. Keoseian commended Ms. Jenkins and Ms. Collins by stating that collectively there is good management and oversight and good financial management and we need to keep that balance in continuing years.

Mr. Cunningham offered Ms. Jenkins an opportunity to respond to a letter to the editor regarding retiree benefits. Ms. Jenkins stated that there had been a letter which had intimated a change in benefits for retirees. Ms. Jenkins clarified some of the misinformation and stated that the Town does have a wrap around policy to cover the gaps in coverage from Medicare. Ms. Jenkins stated that she encourages all retirees when they reach the age of 65 to seek their rights under Medicare. Ms. Jenkins stated that Section 18 of 32B, Medicare has instituted penalties and if we do not encourage employees and retirees 65 and older and assist them to get their rights under Social Security the Town could be held responsible to pay a portion of the penalties. Mr. Dillon thanked Ms. Jenkins for an excellent job explaining the situation and keeping on top of the matter.

Blue Ribbon Town Governance Committee Appointments and Designate a Convening Chairman to Call the First Meeting.

Mr. Cunningham stated that he had contacted some people and would like to submit former Selectman and business owner Ed Strand as well as Virginia Wood, former Selectwoman and restaurant owner. Mr. Dillon stated that he would like to submit Mr. Cunningham as Board of Selectmen representative as well as Don Kennedy (served on the Fire Hydrant Study Committee). Mr. Dillon stated that the School Committee had chosen Alberta Erickson as its representative and Jay Prager was selected as the Finance Committee Representative.

Mr. Keoseian asked if they were hoping to solidify the appointments or reviewing the names for a future date, because he required full transparency and had not received any committee interest forms.

Mr. Saball stated that he had also had some inquires from interested parties.

Mr. Dillon asked if a list could be prepared for next weeks meeting; noting that the Board did have committee recommendation for the Finance Committee, School Committee and BOS. Mr. Keoseian stated that he could support those recommendations.

Mr. Cunningham asked if there could be packets ready for those appointees and he would submit a list of information to include.

Mr. Dillon moved to appoint the following representatives to the Blue Ribbon Governance Committee: Peter S. Cunningham as Board of Selectmen Representative, Jay Prager as Finance Committee Representative, and Alberta Erickson as School Committee Member Representative, terms to expire June 30, 2007. Seconded by Mr. Saball. 3 in favor, 1 abstention (Cunningham).

Groton Country Club RE: Letter of Support for CPA Application for Tennis Courts

Ms. Valerie Spencer was present for this portion of the meeting.

Ms. Spencer stated that the CPC had requested a letter of support from the Board of Selectmen to be included in the CPA application. Ms. Spencer stated that the Groton Country Club was applying for funds to repair the existing tennis courts. Ms. Spencer stated that the courts are used by the public at no fee as well as a tennis program during the summer.

Mr. Keoseian stated that he was in total agreement that the tennis courts needed work, but he asked if any of the experts had suggested replacing the courts as opposed to repairs. Ms. Spencer stated that the courts would be resurfaced. Mr. Keoseian stated that he had worked on tennis court projects before and the longevity of that approach was questionable and best avoided. Mr. Dillon agreed with Mr. Keoseian and further stated that there were questions about the drainage and whether resurfacing would fix the problems. Mr. Cunningham stated that Groton Country Club was a town asset and he would support the project. Mr. Keoseian stated that he would not support the project as proposed because it was a band-aid approach. Mr. Saball asked what the life expectancy of the repair would be and stated he would not support the project.

Ms. Spencer stated that she would consult with the three vendors and ask for their opinion and forward the results. She further stated that she did not want the repairs to be ineffective.

OTHER BUSINESS

CPA Letters of Support Williams Barn, Sawtell School Fund Association; Parks Department

The Williams Barn Committee had submitted a letter withdrawing its CPA application.

Sawtell School Fund Association Mr. Keoseian stated that he commended the group for an impressive application and the work that they are achieving, but he felt the CPA monies could be better spent elsewhere. Mr. Saball stated that the rich history of Groton was a great asset and he would support the project. Mr. Dillon stated that it was a difficult decision, but he would defer until a later date and encourage the committee to seek private donations. Mr. Cunningham stated that the Board was at an impasse. Mr. Keoseian and Mr. Dillon stated that they would not change their minds.

Parks Commission Basketball Courts at Lost Lake Fire Station The Board withheld support due to a lack of backup information. This application will be reviewed at the next meeting.

Road Closure Wintergreen Lane

Mr. Dillon moved to approve the closing of Wintergreen Lane on September 23, 2006 from the hours of 2:00 p.m. to dusk for the purpose of a neighborhood block party with the following conditions:

- 1. Approval from residents of closed section.*
- 2. Roadway shall be posted at both ends with signage stating 'resident and emergency vehicle access only'.*
- 3. Lane must be left open for emergency vehicles at all times.*

INTERIM ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICERS REPORT

Mr. Ritter reviewed the following:

- The Town Hall employees had observed a moment of silence on the front steps.
- Meetings attended
- Scheduled meeting with Dr. Genovese and non-department heads
- Submitted a form for Board approval to streamline the annual and special town meeting warrant articles.
- He will pursue the insurance company regarding the lawn mower which had caught fire.

SELECTMEN LIAISON REPORT

Mr. Cunningham stated that there would be a site visit on the Surrenden Farm property on Monday, September 18, 2006 at 7:00 a.m.

Mr. Keoseian stated that he would be meeting the following day with Mr. Ritter, Ms. Jenkins and Mr. Prager (FinCom) regarding drafting a budget schedule.

Mr. Saball thanked Mr. Ritter for the written memorandum, as he had found it very helpful.

Mr. Dillon stated that there would be a negotiating meeting on Thursday with the SEIU, Local 888 union. And on 9/17/06 the descendents of Matthais Farnsworth who had come to Groton in 1646 would be having a memorial service at the cemetery.

Mr. Dillon stated that there had been a lot of work done by the TPL Steering Committee and asked if at some point more detail could be given.

Mr. Dillon moved to enter into Executive Session at 9:08 p.m. in accordance with MGL Chapter 39, Section 23B, for the purpose of discussing strategy with respect to litigation and Will Not reconvene in Open Session. Seconded by Mr. Saball. Roll Call Vote: Keoseian yes; Saball yes; Dillon yes; Cunningham yes.

Approved: _____ respectfully *submitted*,

Kathleen Newell

Office Assistant

Date Approved: September 18, 2006

Enclosures: Quarterly Reports Treasurer/Collector and Town Accountant