

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
MINUTES DECEMBER 17, 2007  
APPROVED**

**Present:** George Dillon, Jr., Chairman; Stuart Schulman, Clerk; Peter Cunningham; Mihran Keoseian

**Absent:** Joshua A. Degen, Vice Chairman

**Also Present:** Jeff Ritter, Interim Administrative Officer; April Iannacone, Office Assistant

*Mr. Dillon called the regular meeting of the Board to Order at 7:00 p.m. and reviewed the agenda for the public.*

Rena Swezey was present to give the Board of Selectmen (BOS) and the public and update on the tax classification. There was a slight change in one form that had to be sent to the Department of Revenue (DOR) which caused a slight change in the tax rate. The rate set at the hearing was 13.83 and the new rate will be 13.87 which has been certified. During the hearing the BOS took a vote on the tax rate, however the Bureau Chief of the DOR states that the Selectmen only need to vote on classification, split rate for commercial and residential, not the rate itself.

**Donald Palma, Chief of Police and Joe Bosselait, Fire Chief, RE: Update on recent home explosion**

Mr. Dillon stated that both the Fire Chief and the Police Chief were present to update the Board and the public regarding the home explosion, owned by David and Valerie Fitzgerald, on Tuesday the 11<sup>th</sup>. David is a volunteer on the Fire Department. A debriefing was held last Friday regarding the on sight activities. The command and control were exceptional, and both Chief's worked well together. Chief Joe did a professional job in responses to the media. Mr. Dillon then thanked all who helped out including other Town Departments, neighboring towns for mutual aid and the State's Fire Marshal. The Fire and EMS departments recognized that the Fitzgerald's were left with nothing and helped out immediately. A fund has been set up for them at Bank of America.

Chief Joe stated that this was a difficult day, however no one was injured or died and their 2 cats have been found alive. The investigation on the fire end has been completed. The cause of the explosion was a subcontractor probing for a reported gas leak. The probing creates holes in the ground to identify where the strongest grade is. The subcontractor accidentally probed the service line going into the house which hit a pilot on one of the gas appliances in the house. They have confirmed that there are no other leaks in the area. The utilities are investigating the procedures and protocols for a situation like this. He cannot say enough about the Police Chief and all agencies that showed up and worked together. He thanked Tom Delaney and his workers for showing up quickly with the barricades to divert the traffic.

Chief Palma stated that the police end of the investigation is almost complete. They need to complete one more preliminary interview of the subcontractors. There is no criminal action being taken, they are just providing technical assistance. He will have his final report completed shortly.

Mr. Cunningham asked if Chief Joe knew of any other situations where there was a gas buildup in a home or business that caused an explosion like this one, and if there was any advice he could give people to help prevent something like this. Chief Joe responded that this was the first time the Fire Marshal has had a probe cause an explosion like this. It usually tends to happen with the excavation of a yard or ditch, and that mismarked pipes are most common. The pipes are plastic so they do not rot underground. He stated that you would be able to smell the gas a lot sooner than it will explode. He urged people to make the call as soon as possible to the Fire Department first. The Fire Department can meter and then they can report the findings to Keyspan directly.

The BOS thanked Chief Joe and Chief Palma again for their hard work and for coming in with the update.

**Attorney's Melissa Robbins & Douglas Deschenes, RE: Status Report on Jenkins Road/Pineridge Affordable Housing Project**

Doug informed the Board that he and Melissa were present to give them a quick update. Initially the project was proposed as a 40B project, however in working with the Town they agreed to do the project under Affordable Housing. The original development agreement was for 21 units with 8 affordable giving the town 39% as affordable housing. The existing home located on the property would be used to develop a group home with the Department of Mental Retardation (DMR). It was discovered that within the site there was an endangered species of salamanders protected by Natural Heritage that were possibly using a piece of the property. This caused a

significant restriction that left them with only about half of the property for use. The current proposal is for 14 new units, 7 duplex buildings. The existing home that was planned as a group home has been determined by the DMR to be unsuitable for a group home because it is a split level. The Corporation for Independent Living (CIL) has expressed interest in building a new group home in the place of the existing home. They generally build 4 to 5 bedroom group homes that are fully handicap accessible. The new project is proposing 6 affordable units for 40%, but if a 5 bedroom group home can be built it would bring it up to a 47% range of affordable. They are meeting their intent and goals and feel that smaller is better due to less sewerage, public safety and highway department impacts. The DMR must determine that there is a need in this community for a group home and that it is a good location. Once they do then CIL can go ahead and start. The DMR was impressed with the location and he feels confident they will hear from them by the end of the week and all should go well. There would be new filings with the ZBA and Planning Board and the 40B would be withdrawn.

Mr. Keoseian asked what the radius of the area was for the DMR and what towns were considered a part of the Groton community. Melissa replied that she did not know what the DMR was considering as part of this area but that they were always in need of more group homes. The County Officer was stretched across a large area and it would be someone from Springfield coming here to investigate and figure out if there is a need.

Mr. Schulman asked if the group home was counted as 4 affordable units. Doug replied that it was because each bedroom in the group home counts as an affordable house unit. Then there would be 2 additional units out of the 14 that would be affordable.

Mr. Cunningham asked if the design of the new home would be consistent with the others being built on Pineridge Court. Doug replied that some of the exterior would be similar, but that it would be one level and the other units will be 2 levels.

The Selectmen then gave thanks to Doug and Melissa for coming in.

#### **Owen Shuman, Library Director, RE: Request to Fill Young Adult Librarian Position**

Mr. Dillon thanked Owen for coming in. Owen reminded the Board that the position was approved at town meeting in 2006 and has been working for a year and a half. Gaye Kulvete was hired as Administrative Assistant. She tried to make the time to work with the teens. It took the Library 4 or 5 years to get the position created and approved. Use of this program is up 110% in last 3 years, and they have 330 kids enrolled in the summer reading program. Gay has resigned to become the new director of the Hollis, NH Library. She informed the Board that she needed to fill this position as soon as possible. She understands the process of the needs justifications analysis, but they have a busy schedule set up already. They have 3 groups of teens that meet and 10 half day programs. She requested to have someone in the role temporarily until the position has been approved.

Mr. Schulman asked Owen if the temporary person hired for this position needed to be someone who has skills working with teenagers. Owen replied that they would have to know how to relate to them. She called the organization to find either a children's librarian or teen librarian.

Mr. Dillon asked Owen how she would go about hiring someone and she replied that she would have to advertise.

Mr. Cunningham asked what the timeline for the needs analysis would be. Mr. Ritter replied that it would take a couple of weeks. Mr. Cunningham then stated that he would like to see things happen quickly since all information was fresh due to the previous Town Meeting approval.

The Selectmen then thanked Owen for her time and information.

#### **Donald Palma, Chief of Police, RE: Request to appoint Edward Bushnoe (Reserve Police Officer) and Regina Beausoleil as Police Matron**

Chief Palma informed the Board that he was there to present 2 requests to the Board. He would like to appoint Regina, the Office Assistant, as Police Matron in addition to Kathy Newell who was just appointed. He believed that there has been little cross training and that there are resources that have been under utilized in the past. The training that she would require would be minimal but the benefit is there. The second request is to appoint Ed Bushnoe as Reserve Officer. Ed has completed the Police Academy Training on his own at his own expense and is willing to make the commitment necessary. He would like to see Ed appointed so that he could start field training as soon as possible. Ed would be replacing a part time officer that had to give up this duty due to time conflicts. Chief Palma explained that a Reserve Officer works in the same capacity of the full time officers. The position is similar to an on call fire fighter that does all of the duties of a regular officer as needed.

*Mr. Schulman moved to appoint Edward Bushnoe as Reserve Police Officer for a one year term, term to expire June 30, 2008. Mr. Cunningham seconded. Unanimous vote.*

*Mr. Schulman moved to appoint Regina Beausoleil as Police Matron for a one year term, term to expire June 30, 2008. Mr. Cunningham seconded. Unanimous vote.*

**Onorina Maloney, Town Clerk, RE: Historic Record Preservation Agreement**

Onorina Maloney and Bob DeGroot were both present to update the Board about the Historic Record Preservation Agreement. Onorina informed the Board that she had given them a copy of the contract for their review and that this was the second phase of the project. She stated that the quote from Brown's River came in under the estimated amount. Should the Board approve the agreement, they are ready to pick up the volumes this Friday, and will have them for about 15 weeks. She would like to get this wrapped up as soon as possible before she leaves.

Mr. Dillon thanked Onorina, Bob and the CPC for all of their efforts in this project. He then asked Onorina if the transportation back and forth was the responsibility of Brown's River and she stated that it was. He also asked her about section 6 about the Governing Law. Onorina replied that it would be governed by the laws of the State of Massachusetts. Mr. Dillon then stated that he felt the work that Brown's River had done on the previous set of volumes looked great.

Mr. Schulman asked if the volumes would be available for the public to view once complete and Onorina replied that they would.

Mr. Keoseian asked Onorina how many years she felt were left for this project. She replied that there are many more volumes that are left to be restored. Their initial identification of the volumes in the most need was planned as 3 years, but she hoped that should there be the funds down the road all of the volumes could be completed.

Mr. Cunningham asked Onorina if this was similar to the last contract and she replied that it was similar and a lot less complicated.

*Mr. Schulman moved to approve and allow the Chairman of the Board to sign the contract between Brown's River Bindery, Inc. d/b/a Brown's River Records Preservation Services and the Town of Groton. Mr. Cunningham seconded. Unanimous vote.*

**Michelle Collette, Town Planner/Building Committee, RE: Squannacook Hall Project Update**

Mr. Dillon stated that he and Michelle had gone before the Executive Office of Housing and Business Development to present the 43D funding application that was submitted. Michelle was very well prepared and she did a super job on the presentation. The Town was approved immediately and was awarded \$97,000 which could take up to 60 days to receive. Michelle stated that the Planning Board was forming a committee in January to help comply with the 120 day report deadline.

Michelle then stated that she was there as Co-Chair of the Building Committee to discuss with the Board a contract draft between the Town of Groton and Kang Associates and to request that they to sign the contract. This is a form for special projects and has been sent to town counsel to review and change. The Building Committee did their due diligence. They received 20 RFP's and of that 8 were submitted. They conducted 4 interviews and have chosen Kang Associates. They held a Public Hearing that was well attended and the community has been well informed along the decision making process.

Mr. Dillon asked if any changes had been requested from Town Counsel. Michelle replied that David Doneski had recommended some changes and that they will be incorporated.

Mr. Cunningham asked Michelle if Kang Associates offered something that the others didn't, or what caused the Building Committee to select them. Michelle replied that they had a good record of working with towns and communities on community based projects and they had excellent reference checks. They seemed willing to work with the Town and the Committee as a more interactive process of discussions and negotiations.

Mr. Keoseian asked how much time they will spend on site. Michelle replied that originally they were planned to be there from November through April spending 4 to 5 months on site, but a revised schedule will be forwarded since they would be starting later than expected. She also stated that the terms were negotiated so that all of their out of pocket expenses would be part of the \$20,000.

The Selectmen all gave thanks to Michelle for her information and time.

*Mr. Schulman moved to approve and authorize the Chair of the Board to sign the contract between the Town of Groton and Kang Associates, Inc. Mr. Cunningham seconded. Unanimous vote.*

**OTHER BUSINESS**

**Cultural Council Appointment, Madeline Walsh**

Mr. Dillon stated that this appointment was due to a resignation from Chris Borge. They have received an interest form from Madeline Walsh whose background is in teaching and has been recommended by the Chair. The Selectmen thanked Chris and Mr. Schulman stated that he would be missed.

*Mr. Schulman moved to appoint Madeline Walsh to the Local Cultural Council for the unexpired six year term, term to expire June 30, 2010. Mr. Cunningham seconded. Unanimous vote.*

**Sunday Entertainment License**

Mr. Ritter informed the Board that they were awaiting payment, all inspections have been done, all conditions have been met and the insurance is up to date. The renewals are for the Groton Stage Coach Inn and the Groton Country Club. The fees for renewal are \$175 to the State and \$24 to the Town.

*Mr. Schulman moved to approve the renewal of licenses for Public Entertainment on Sundays to the Groton Stage Coach Inn and Groton Country Club contingent upon receipt of appropriate payment. Mr. Cunningham seconded. Unanimous vote.*

**REPORT OF THE INTERIM ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER**

Mr. Ritter stated that he had attended a meeting with the Board of Health in Worcester today. The Mass. DEP recognized Groton as the highest recyclers in central Mass. with a recycling rate of over 50% at 1500 pounds per year. They received another certificate because the Town of Groton recycles more per household than any other town in Mass. The Town Hall will be open on December 24<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> however several offices will have reduced staffing. Fran and Jay will meet with department heads on January 2nd at 9:00 a.m. to go over the FY09 budget. The School Department is requesting a BOS representative for teacher talks on January 17<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> at 3:45. The next BOS meeting will be January 2<sup>nd</sup>. The Affordable Housing Consultant and Town Counsel RFP's are due December 27. He will be working on the budgets over the next 2 weeks. Lastly, he wished everyone Happy Holidays.

**SELECTMAN LIAISON REPORTS**

Mr. Dillon reminded the Selectmen that though they would not be meeting they still needed to come in to review and sign the warrants. Mr. Keoseian asked if the warrants were ready on Friday mornings and Mr. Ritter replied that they were prepared for Monday afternoon but he would send an email out to all when they were ready. Mr. Dillon then stated that the employees had decorated their doors for the holiday. He encouraged people to come in to take a look at them. All departments did good job, they look nice and he congratulated everyone. Mr. Cunningham complimented Elizabeth and Patrice for a job well done on the Employee Newsletter.

**MINUTES**

*Mr. Schulman moved to approve the regular session meeting minutes of November 13, 2007 as amended. Mr. Cunningham seconded. Unanimous vote.*

**ADJOURN**

*Mr. Schulman moved to adjourn at 8:17 p.m. Mr. Cunningham seconded. Unanimous vote.*

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_  
Stuart Schulman, Clerk

\_\_\_\_\_ respectfully submitted,  
April Iannacone  
Office Assistant

Date Approved: February 19, 2007