

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MINUTES MARCH 31, 2010
APPROVED**

Present: Peter Cunningham, Chairman; George Dillon, Jr., Vice Chairman; Anna Eliot, Clerk; Stuart M. Schulman; Joshua A. Degen

Also Present: Mark W. Haddad, Town Manager; Patrice Garvin, Executive Assistant, James Frey, Chairman of the Groton Dunstable Regional School Committee, Alan Genovese, Superintendent of Schools, Claire Jeannotte, School Business Manager, Valerie Jenkins, Town Accountant, Jay Prager, Chairman of the Finance Committee

Mr. Cunningham called the meeting of the Board to Order at 6:00 p.m. and reviewed the agenda for the public.

FINALIZE FY 2011 PROPOSED TOWN OPERATING BUDGET

Mr. Haddad reported that the proposed legislation approved at the 2009 Fall Town Meeting authorizing the Town to use sewer revenues to repay the General Fund for the original construction of the downtown sewer system had been approved by the legislature and signed into law by the Governor. To that end, the Town has two options with the revenues. They can either use the revenues (\$93k in FY 2011) to offset excluded debt and provide a tax break for the residents, or let the funds flow to surplus revenue. Mr. Haddad and Town Accountant Valerie Jenkins are recommending using the funds over the next two years to offset excluded debt.

Mr. Dillon moved to use the Sewer Revenues over the next two fiscal years to offset excluded debt. Ms. Eliot seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Haddad informed the Board that the Town of Dunstable would be considering increasing their FY 2011 contribution to the Groton-Dunstable Regional School System by approximately \$33K, bringing their contribution to \$85k. In order to meet Dunstable's appropriation, the Town of Groton would need to increase its proposed contribution by \$109k, bringing the FY 2011 increase in the assessment to \$464k. Since Mr. Haddad's proposed budget is \$174k under the levy limit, the Town can meet this increase without an override.

Mr. Haddad distributed a revised municipal operating budget with and without an override, which included the \$109k increase to the Groton-Dunstable School District. If an override does not pass the average tax bill (home valued at 400k) would increase by \$64. The override request from the School is for \$931,366. This would cause the average tax bill to increase by \$320. Mr. Haddad stated that this would make the total levy increase by \$1.718 million dollars.

Mr. Degen asked the School representatives to elaborate on their override request. Ms. Claire Jeannotte, Business Manager for the District distributed documents that explained the need for the override. Mr. James Frey, Chairman of the Regional School Committee explained that the Committee is working with the Teacher's Union on concessions to help alleviate budget pressures. The Teacher's Union has tentatively agreed to one unpaid day that would save approximately \$74k. Mr. Frey added that the Committee will continue to work with the Teacher's Union to look for ways to save money. If the override does not pass a list of prioritized cuts will be reviewed.

Mr. Degen was concerned with using Excess and Deficiency to fund the budget, leaving an extremely low balance to deal with emergencies. Superintendent Alan Genovese stated that if there was a major capital expense needed it could be bonded. Mr. Cunningham felt that a lowered E&D number would be fine.

Mr. Dillon asked about the process for next year and the possibilities of another override for FY12 and FY13. Mr. Frey stated that work would start earlier next year and that labor contracts would be up for renegotiation. Mr. Frey added that the new superintendent was aware of the needs moving forward.

Mr. Dillon moved to agree to commit \$109,307 increase in the Town Manager's proposed budget to the schools. Mr. Schulman seconded the motion. Motion carried 4-0-1 (Ms. Eliot abstaining).

Mr. Schulman wanted to hear the Finance Committees opinion on the \$109k. Mr. Jay Prager, Finance Committee Chair recognized the Teachers concession of a furlough day but stated it was not enough. Mr. Prager noted that the Finance Committee has not discussed the \$109k and will be meeting next week.

Mr. Dillon moved, pursuant to Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 59, Section 21C, to place a question on the May 18, 2010 Town Election Ballot seeking a general override of Proposition 2½, so-called, in the amount of \$931, 336. Mr. Degen seconded the motion. Motion carried 4-0-1 (Ms. Eliot abstaining.)

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

1. Mr. Haddad noted the Tarbell School article was being pulled from the warrant due to lack of bids. Mr. Haddad would be bringing the issue back to the Selectmen at their next meeting to decide next steps.
2. Mr. Haddad reported that one of the underground fuel storage tanks at the DPW has failed and needs to be replaced. He has placed an article on the Special Town Meeting Warrant to pay for the removal and installation of new tanks. The price has yet to be determined. Mr. Haddad will provide more information to the Board as it becomes available. In the meantime, the owner of the Groton Exchange has agreed to let the Town use his station for fuel as long as we reimbursed him weekly.
3. Mr. Haddad responded to questions on articles at the last selectmen's meeting. The Conservation Fund has a current balance of \$721,000, with an additional \$95k reimbursement due from a state grant. The Board of Assessors request for conducting a Commercial Real Estate Revaluation was unanimously supported by the Board of Assessors. Mr. Haddad requested that the Board support the Assessors article.
4. Mr. Haddad reported that the Community Preservation Committee public hearing minutes were included in the packet. The hearing determined which projects were being brought forward to Town Meeting for consideration.

5. Mr. Haddad reported that there were four applicants to serve on the Prescott School Redevelopment Committee. Mr. Degen suggested that the Town continue to recruit abutters. Mr. Haddad stated that he would bring all of the applications before the Board at the April 5th meeting.
6. Mr. Haddad referred to a memo from the Human Resource Director regarding the Insurance Advisory Committee's vote in favor of offering AFLAC to town employees. The plan offers Disability Income Protector, Accident Indemnity and Maximum Difference Cancer Indemnity. Mr. Haddad stated that this was an employee only paid plan and is at no cost to the Town of Groton.
7. Mr. Haddad requested the Town Manager/Selectmen's office be relocated upstairs, where IT and HR is currently located. Mr. Haddad noted the lack of space and security in the current space. Ms. Eliot asked what the square footage difference was between the two spaces. Mr. Cunningham suggested meeting earlier on April 5th to tour the new space. A meeting will be posted at 6:30 p.m.

SPRING TOWN MEETING WARRANT

Article 4- Wage Adjustment for Non-Union Employees:

Mr. Haddad requested that the Board vote to not tie non-union employees annual Wage Adjustment to the Social Security Index.

Mr. Dillon moved not to tie the annual Wage Adjustment to the Social Security, as recommended by the Personnel Board. Ms. Eliot seconded the motion. Motion unanimously carried.

Mr. Haddad suggested the approximately \$27k saved from not providing a wage adjustment to non-union employees in FY 2011 be put in the Health Insurance Line. Mr. Cunningham suggested having the Wage Adjustment for non-union employees be 1% instead of the proposed 2%. Mr. Cunningham thought the agreement of the Department Heads to increase their health insurance contribution would enhance the town's position going into the union negotiations next year. Mr. Cunningham added that health insurance costs are the biggest budget concerns for local government. Mr. Dillon cited pension costs as being an almost equal concern. Mr. Dillon updated the Board on which of the 20 non-union employees would receive steps, who would receive longevity and who would not receive any kind of increase. Mr. Degen did not support a 1% Wage Adjustment and recommended that non-union employees receive no Wage Adjustment in FY 2011. Mr. Schulman asked about department heads volunteering to increase their health care cost share from 80-20 split to a 75-25 split. Mr. Haddad explained to the Board that after being informed that there would be no wage adjustment in FY 2011 he went back and asked Department Heads about their voluntary action regarding health insurance. Mr. Haddad reported that five department heads would still volunteer to increase their Health insurance contribution.

Mr. Cunningham moved to recommend a 1% Wage Adjustment for by-law employees. Ms. Eliot seconded the motion. Motion defeated 1-in favor (Cunningham), 4-opposed.

Mr. Degen moved that there be no Wage Adjustment for non-union by-law employees in FY 2011 and to take the savings from this and apply it to the FY 2011 health insurance line item. Mr. Schulman seconded the motion. Motion carried 3-in favor, 2-opposed (Cunningham and Eliot).

Article 3-Elected Officials Stipend

Mr. Haddad requested that the Board take a position on Article three that includes the salary for the Town Clerk. After making and withdrawing motions it was decided that the Town Clerk Salary should be 60k, with a no wage adjustment. Mr. Dillon stated that if an exception was made for the Town Clerk, then consideration should be given to the 8 by-law employees who would receive no increase. Mr. Haddad stated that the Finance Committee would vote unanimously in favor of this article if the Town Clerks salary was set at 60K. Ms. Eliot stated that reducing the Town Clerk's Salary from \$62,000 to \$60,000 would be reducing it by more than the 2% wage adjustment reduction.

Mr. Schulman moved to set the Town Clerks salary at 60k. Mr. Degen seconded the motion. Motion carried 4-0-1 (Ms. Eliot abstaining).

Article 5-Town Operating Budget

Mr. Haddad requested that the Board vote on two budgets, one with and one without an override.

Mr. Dillon moved to approve the FY 2011 Annual Operating Budget, a non-override budget. Ms. Eliot seconded the motion. Motion unanimously carried.

Mr. Cunningham moved to approve the contingency budget if an override is approved of \$931,336. Mr. Dillon seconded the motion. Motion unanimously carried.

Article 11-Community Preservation Funding Recommendations

Mr. Prager explained why each article was not supported by the Finance Committee.

1. Proposal A- Allocation to the Conservation Land Fund: Mr. Prager stated that the Finance Committee saw no reason to put more money into the Conservation Fund. Mr. Dillon also saw no need to fund this at this time as the Town has two annual meetings and the fund has approximately \$800k and state contributions remain at a low level.

Ms. Eliot moved to support the CPC's Proposal A- Allocation to the Conservation Land Fund. Mr. Schulman seconded the motion. Motion defeated 1-in favor (Eliot), 4-opposed.

Proposal B-Unkety Brook Well Site: Mr. Prager stated that the Finance Committee's Position is that an Enterprise Fund should pay its own way. Mr. Degen asked Mr. Orcutt, Water Superintendent why the Board should support the proposal. Mr. Orcutt stated that the well was not intended for current customers but future customers and currently the enterprise fund cannot support the purchase of the land. Mr. Dillon stated that he agreed philosophically with the FinCom, but given the G.W.D. did not have the resources to secure the Unkety Brook Site, he would support this proposal, but the G. W. D. needs to anticipate its needs and develop internal funding without town financial assistance.

2.

Mr. Dillon moved to support CPC's Proposal B-Unkety Brook Well Site for 75k. Mr. Schulman seconded the motion. Motion unanimously carried.

3. Proposal C- Community Wide Agricultural Context Inventory: Mr. Prager said that the Finance Committee saw no value in this proposal and thought there were better ways to spend this money.

Mr. Schulman moved to support the CPC's Proposal C- Community Wide Agricultural Context Inventory. Ms. Eliot seconded the motion. Motion defeated 4-opposed, 1 abstention (Eliot).

Article 14-Amendment to Chapter 218 Zoning-Town Operations.

Mr. Haddad stated that this was sponsored by the Planning Board and it was a simple word change to correlate with the charter.

Mr. Degen moved to support Article 14. Mr. Schulman seconded the motion. Motion unanimously carried.

Article 15-Amendments to Chapter 218 Zoning-Flood Plain Maps

Mr. Haddad asked that the Board support this article and noted all the maps were currently available. *Ms. Eliot moved to support Article 15. Mr. Schulman seconded the motion. Motion carried. 3-yes, 1 abstention (Eliot), 1 At Town Meeting (Degen).*

Special Town Meeting Warrant

Article 5-Commercial Property Revaluation

Mr. Degen moved to support Article 5 of the Special Town Meeting Warrant. Mr. Schulman seconded the motion. Motion unanimously carried.

Article 6 and 7 required more information before the Board voted to support.

MINUTES

Mr. Degen moved to approve the March 1, 2010 regular meeting minutes. Mr. Schulman seconded the motion. Motion unanimously carried.

Mr. Dillon moved to approve the February 27, 2010 executive session meeting minutes and not to release. Ms. Eliot seconded the motion. Motion carried 4-0-1 (Degen abstaining).

LIAISON REPORTS

Mr. Degen commented on the upcoming work day at the Country Club and was seeking volunteers. Mr. Degen also commented that Colonial Stoneyard is donating stone to the beautification of the Country Club. Ms. Eliot commented on the parade and events for 9/11 First Responders on April 17th. Mr. Cunningham also noted the Grange cleanup weekend on April 17th and April 18th.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Degen moved to enter at 8:59pm into Executive Session in compliance with M.G.L. Chapter 39, Section 23B (3) to discuss strategy with respect to litigation and not return to open session at the conclusion of the Executive Session. Ms. Eliot seconded the motion. Roll call- Degen-yes; Schulman-yes; Eliot-yes; Dillon-yes; Cunningham-yes

Approved: _____
Anna Eliot, Clerk

_____ respectfully submitted,
Patrice Garvin
Executive Assistant to the Town Manager

Date Approved: 4-20-10