

**SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES
VIRTUAL MEETING
MONDAY, AUGUST 24, 2020
APPROVED**

SB Members Virtually Present: Alison S. Manugian, Chair; Joshua A. Degen, Vice Chair; Rebecca H. Pine, Clerk; John R. Giger, Member; John F. Reilly, Member

Also Virtually Present: Mark W. Haddad, Town Manager; Dawn Dunbar, Executive Assistant; Melisa Doig, HR Director; Patricia Dufresne, Town Accountant; Jonathan Greeno, Principal Assistant Assessor; Michael Hartnett, Tax Collector/Treasurer; Finance Committee Members – Gary Green, Bud Robertson, Art Prest, Mary Linskey, Colby Doody, Scott Whitefield, David Manugian; Vanessa Abraham; Bruce Easom; Tessa David; Anna Eliot; Alex Woodle; Russ Burke; Peter Cunningham; Mihran Keoseian; Jane Allen; Tom Orcutt; Jim Gmeiner; Don Black

Mr. Robertson called the Finance Committee to order at 7:03pm.

Ms. Manugian called the meeting to order at 7:03pm and reviewed the agenda.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mr. Haddad said that early voting was taking place at Town Hall during Town Hall hours. He said that all information relative to early voting was posted on the Town's website.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

1. Mr. Haddad said that the State Primary would be held on September 1st. He said that Town Hall and the Center would be closed on Tuesday and Wednesday for voting and post-election cleaning. He said that all employees would be working from home on those two days.
2. Mr. Haddad said that the only update relative to COVID he had was that enforcement of protocols such as mask wearing and gathering sizes was now being enforced by the Board of Health and Police Department per the Governor's recent order. He said that they had not had any issues locally according to the Police Chief. He said that a couple of complaints had been followed up on by the Board of Health.
3. Mr. Haddad said that they had been searching for a permanent Veteran's Agent and was happy to report that he would like to bring Joe Dean on board as Groton's new Veteran's Agent. He said that he had made that appointment and asked the Board to ratify it. He thanked Mike Detillion for rescuing the Town over the past few months in absence of having a Veteran's Agent.

Mr. Degen made a motion to ratify the Town Manager's appointment of Joe Dean as Veteran's Agent. Mr. Reilly seconded the motion. Roll Call: Degen-aye; Manugian-aye; Pine-aye; Degen-aye; Reilly-aye; Giger-aye

4. Mr. Haddad said that they had awarded a contract to Black Earth to operate their composting program with the goal being to better serve the public and find a better cost saving alternative to the very important service provided to the residents. Mr. Haddad said that Black Earth provided a no cost solution for managing and maintaining compost operations, as well as, allowing the Town to retain the fees collected for brush disposal with no revenue loss to the Town. There will be no more tipping fees for brush grinding in the future and the DPW will have materials when needed. Mr. Haddad said that Black Earth would also provide a Curbside Scrap Program for residents of the Town who wish to participate. He said that this would also allow them to see an increase in DEP Grant Awards because of this new program. Mr. Delaney said that they had one outfit provide them a bid for \$300K and Black Earth was \$0 which was a win-win for the Town. Andrew from Black Earth Compost said that they would reach out to groups in Town to increase participation in the curbside program. Ms. Pine asked how many man hours Mr. Delaney would save. Mr. Delaney said that this was a fill in job for them that was done on rainy days, as an example, but was not done often enough to keep the compost good. Ms. Tessa David said that this would also allow them to take care of food waste which was not something they could do right now. Mr. Degen asked if they would accept brush from contractors. Andrew from Black Earth Compost said that they would take leaves from contractors but was not sure

about brush or grass weeds yet. Mr. Delaney said that they did not accept weeds right now or contractor brush at the Transfer Station adding the leaves would be something new for residents.

PUBLIC HEARING ON THE WARRANT

Mr. Haddad read the hearing notice into the record.

*Ms. Pine moved to open the public hearing on the Fall 2020 Town Meeting Warrant. Mr. Degen seconded the motion.
Roll Call: Pine-aye; Degen-aye; Manugian-aye; Giger-aye; Reilly-aye*

Mr. Haddad reviewed balances in various funding accounts.

Article 1 – Mr. Haddad said that there were no unpaid bills at this time.

Article 2 – Mr. Haddad said that he was going to change a couple of his recommendations from what he had put in his memo to the Board.

1. Mr. Haddad said he was recommending that any merit raise he received based on his review be paid out of free cash.
2. Mr. Haddad said that they were estimating a onetime hit in the Elections budget due to the mail in ballot and early voting changes. He said that they needed \$10K and was recommending that they use free cash to cover this. Mr. Degen asked if they could use Cares Act money. Mr. Haddad said that was something they needed to look into to.
3. Mr. Haddad said that there was an increase in postage due to mail in voting and would need additional money to cover those costs.
4. Mr. Haddad said that they had underfunded the maintenance budget in the Fire Department and needed an additional \$20K to cover costs. He said that they also were going to use another vendor for billing software for ambulance receipts and would cost \$6K.
5. Mr. Haddad said that they had overshot tipping fees by over \$10K in recent years adding that because people were home more, there was an increase in tipping fees at the Transfer Station. He said that it also cost them more in tipping fees to grind down brush from the microburst. He said that they needed \$20K from tax levy and \$20K from free cash. Mr. Delaney said that the construction and demolition debris was what was increasing the tipping fee. He said that the tax base was supplementing the disposal of construction debris. Mr. Haddad said that general trash was also causing their budget to be out of balance.
6. Mr. Haddad said that they were reducing the Country Club budget by \$24K.
7. Mr. Haddad said that he was asking for \$20K in Insurance to cover additional property coverage costs.

Article 3 – Mr. Haddad said that the wage and classification needed to be updated to correct a scrivener's error to increase the salaries of the Veteran's Agent and Call Department. He said that this was budgeted for at the Spring Town Meeting.

Article 4 – Mr. Orcutt said that they were requesting a transfer of \$160K for various small projects and engineering for the manganese treatment facility.

Article 5 – Mr. Orcutt said that they were requesting \$50K for center sewer work down near Conductorlab. Mr. Orcutt said that they had originally bypassed that stub because of the contamination that was discovered years ago. He said that this stub would be done by directional drilling and would need to be done at night per DOT regulations. Ms. Pine asked why this needed to be done now. Mr. Orcutt said that the property owner wanted to connect to sewer adding it had been paid for in 1990.

Article 6 – Mr. Orcutt said that they were seeking \$5K transfer for on call services at Four Corners Sewer.

Article 7 – Mr. Haddad said that they were requesting \$75K be placed in capital stabilization in anticipation of next year's capital plan. He said that this would put them in line with their financial policy. Mr. Robertson said that they had a \$600K problem to address going into next FY. Mr. Robertson said that he would like to save as much as they could in free cash to help with next years budget.

Article 8 – Mr. Haddad said that they did not need to add any money into stabilization at this time.

Article 9 – Mr. Haddad said that this was to add money into GDRSD capital budget. He said that they would need \$284K to cover their share. He said he was recommending \$300K be transferred. Ms. Manugian asked if they knew what the plan was moving forward. Mr. Haddad said that he did not believe the School Committee had taken this up but had received these numbers from the Business Manager. Mr. Robertson said he was recommending that this be dropped to \$200K and if the School Committee could take a \$200K hit on their capital side also.

Article 10 – Mr. Haddad said that this was the FY21 Capital Plan. He said that he met with the Capital Planning Advisory Committee and decided to only come forward with \$196K worth of items. Mr. Haddad said that he wasn't sure if the parking lot at the Library could be put off another year but was something they could look into. He explained why his original idea of using funds leftover from the library roof project was not going to work. Ms. Manugian asked if the Police Station siding could be paid out of the library roof proceeds. Mr. Haddad said he would look into that.

Article 11 – Ms. Pine said that they should revisit filling the vacancy in the DPW and use half of that employees time to complete stormwater work.

Article 12 – Mr. Haddad said that the old Sportsman Club in front of the Senior Center required some environmental work to see what would be required to tear down the building and use it as a parking area for the Senior Center and was requesting \$18K to see what would be required. Mr. Keoseian said that they were also looking to beautify the area, increase walking trails, etc. but could not move forward until they knew what remediation would cost. Mr. Robertson said that he would prefer to see this pushed off because of the pandemic.

Article 13 – Mr. Haddad said that the Complete Streets Committee would like to apply for a grant this fall but is required to fund the engineering work. He said that they needed the engineering to apply for the grant. He said that the estimated engineering cost would be \$35K. Mr. Manugian asked why this project bypassed the capital process. Mr. Haddad said that this was a state grant program where the Select Board had to adopt the program and a committee under state law. He said that this would not be part of the capital plan based on this. Ms. Manugian said she thought the intent of the Capital Planning Advisory Committee was to look at everything and was surprised that this wasn't something they would review. Mr. Robertson said that this was something that could also be put off to another year. Mr. Burke said that this was a program the State set up to better all modes of transportation adding the Committee had done a lot of work examining this for state approval. Ms. Pine said that they should not delay this adding there were more people walking due to the pandemic. She said that the State could pull the program at any time if there was a shortage of funds. Mr. Degen said that he agreed with Ms. Pine adding he thought the State might find themselves in a shortfall. He said that he agreed with moving forward on this.

Article 14 – Mr. Haddad said that they were requesting funds to perform cyclical inspections. He said that since this was an annual cost, it made sense to place this in the Assessors budget and for it to come out of taxation.

Article 15 – Mr. Easom said it was a requirement to put expected revenues into the CPC buckets. Mr. Easom reviewed the bins and amounts.

Article 16

A - Mr. Woodle explained the Lost Lake/Knops Pond Weed proposal requesting CPA funds.

B – Ms. Manugian asked if adding the requested amount into the Conservation Fund would allow them to do anything or if they would need to continue to add more. Mr. Gualco said that they would need to continue to add more.

C – Mr. Easom said that the History Center had put in an application to restore portraits of Groton historians and put them on display.

D – Ms. Abraham said that the pocket doors were a historic feature in the Library they would like to restore.

E – Mr. Haddad said that the Board wrote a letter of support last spring for this project adding the project remained the same.

F – Mr. Black said that the cannon project was ready to go pending approval.

CPA OUT OF CYCLE APPLICATIONS

1. Mr. Haddad said that there were two out of cycle CPA articles on the warrant. Ms. Eliot said that the Park Commission would like to engineer and design a sports complex at Cow Pond Brook Field to include sanitary facilities. She said that a new well would need to be dug so that all fields would be irrigated also. She said that they were asking for letter of support and would like to come before the Board at their next meeting. Ms. Manugian asked if they could get a cost estimate for the project and if it should go to the Capital Planning Advisory Committee. Ms. Eliot said that she had been to see them.
2. Ms. Pine said that the Affordable Housing Trust was asking for \$200K for a temporary program for rental assistance.

Article 17 – Mr. Haddad said that this allowed the Trust Fund Commission to utilize other investment opportunities.

Articles 18, 19 & 20 – Mr. Haddad said that the wording was the same as was presented on the Spring Town Meeting. Mr. Burke said that one zoning article included some additional cleanup that was missed as it related to multi-family housing.

Article 21 – Mr. Haddad said that the changes to the dog bylaw were to bring the bylaw in compliance with State law.

Mr. Haddad said he was waiting to hear from the Planning Board on whether to add the road acceptance of Red Pepper Lane to the warrant. Mr. Burke said that they could go ahead and add it to the warrant. The Board agreed.

Mr. Haddad asked the Board to continue the public hearing to Monday, August 31st at 7:15pm.

Ms. Pine made the motion. Mr. Degen seconded the motion. Roll Call: Pine-aye; Degen-aye; Manugian-aye; Giger-aye; Reilly-aye

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

5. Mr. Haddad said that the Affordable Housing Trust has recommended that Carolyn Perkins be appointed to the Trust to fill a vacancy. Ms. Pine said it had been discussed that it would be great to have someone who was on both the CPC and the AHT. She said that Carolyn was a good fit because of her Planning Board experience and professional background.

Mr. Giger moved to appoint Carolyn Perkins to the Affordable Housing Trust with a term to expire June 30, 2022. Ms. Manugian seconded the motion. Roll Call: Pine-aye; Degen-aye; Manugian-aye; Giger-aye; Reilly-aye

6. Mr. Haddad said that the Select Board had approved of a plan to train Bob Garside to take over as Building Commissioner when Ed Cataldo retired on September 8, 2020. He said that the plan was to have Mr. Cataldo train Mr. Garside and for Mr. Garside to pass the State Test to become a certified Building Commissioner. Mr. Haddad said that the training had gone very well and Mr. Garside had done a great job learning and performing the duties of Local Building Inspector. Mr. Haddad said that Mr. Cataldo had been impressed with the way Mr. Garside had approached and learned the job. Mr. Haddad said that while the pandemic had allowed Mr. Garside to show his abilities, it had also hampered his ability to become a certified Building Commissioner. He said that there were three tests that Mr. Garside needed to pass to become certified. He said that Mr. Garside passed the first test easily and was preparing to take courses for the next two sections but unfortunately, through no fault of Mr. Garside's, the pandemic had put all of that on hold and classes had not been available and testing had not been scheduled. Mr. Haddad said that Mr. Garside would not be able to become certified by Mr. Cataldo's retirement date. He said that while Mr. Cataldo could perform inspections and manage the Department, the Town needed to have a Building Commissioner to issue occupancy permits, etc. Mr. Haddad said he had approached Mr. Cataldo with the idea of paying him a monthly stipend to stay on as Building Commissioner (after he retired) to perform the work necessary to issue occupancy permits. Mr. Haddad said that Mr. Cataldo was willing to do that for the Town, which he was very grateful for and respectfully requested the Board's approval to pay Mr. Cataldo a monthly stipend of \$1,200 (\$300 a week) for four months (September through December 31st) for a total cost of \$4,800. Mr. Haddad said he

was hopeful that classes at the State level and testing would commence this Fall giving Mr. Garside the ability to complete his training and pass the test. Mr. Haddad said that should the State not make this available thus allowing Mr. Garside to complete his certification by December 31st, they would have to revisit the issue. Mr. Haddad said that that \$4,800 could be covered by Cares Act funding. Mr. Haddad requested the Board's permission to move forward with this plan.

Ms. Pine said that she was grateful that Mr. Cataldo was willing to do this but thought that \$1,200 was overpaying Mr. Cataldo. She said that on average they had had 7 occupancy permits per month which took about 1-3 hours, it worked out to a high hourly rate. She said she thought they should reduce this to \$1,000 per month or a per permit stipend. Mr. Haddad said that this was an issue of supply and demand. He said that they needed a building commissioner and if they were to bring in a consultant as an example, they were going to pay a premium. He said that he was going to be a resource to Mr. Garside also for approximately 4-5 hours a week. He asked the Board to consider this and support it. Mr. Robertson said that for the \$200 difference between what Mr. Haddad requested and Ms. Pine countered with was not worth trying to take him down \$200. He said that in the grand scheme of things it was not a big number. Mr. Robertson said he valued his skillset. Mr. Reilly said if Mr. Cataldo decided to not retire and continue to help us until Mr. Garside was certified, it would cost the Town 2 salaries. He said he was good with the proposal. Mr. Degen said that he had given this a lot of thought they needed a building commissioner to sign off on permits. He said that it wasn't a lot of money. The Board was okay with this proposal.

The Finance Committee adjourned at 9:30pm.

7. Mr. Haddad said that Select Board Member Giger asked for an update on the status of the Single Use Plastic Bag Ban. Mr. Haddad said that the Governor had issued a Moratorium that allowed the use of these bags during the first part of his emergency order on the COVID-19 Pandemic. He has since lifted the Moratorium and Towns could now implement the ban. Mr. Haddad asked the Board to vote to institute the ban effective January 1, 2021 so that they could give their businesses enough time to plan and prepare for the ban. Ms. Pine said that January 2021 was premature given that they could remain in a COVID state through the winter. Mr. Degen said that Town Meeting adopted it and the ban was lifted and thought that January 1, 2021 was reasonable. Ms. Pine said that Shaw's was requiring people to bag their own reusable bags.

Mr. Haddad asked the Board to vote to set the ban to January 1, 2021.

Mr. Degen moved that they notify all business in town the single use ban will go into effect on January 1, 2021 consistent with Fall of 2019 vote. Mr. Giger seconded the motion. Roll Call: Pine-aye; Degen-aye; Manugian-aye; Giger-aye; Reilly-aye

8. Mr. Haddad said that Mr. Garside formalized the building department fees as discussed by the Board at their last meeting with some clarifying language suggested by Ms. Manugian earlier that day.

Mr. Degen moved to adopt Town Manager and Building Inspector fee changes as stipulated in their packet with one further edit by Ms. Manugian to go into effect January 1, 2021. Ms. Manugian seconded the motion. Roll Call: Pine-aye; Degen-aye; Manugian-aye; Giger-aye; Reilly-aye

OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Haddad said that the recommendation in Executive Session was for Mr. Degen to be the mediator between Town Counsel and the Town Manager to improve relations.

Ms. Manugian made a motion to designate Mr. Degen as mediator between Town Counsel and Mr. Haddad. Ms. Pine seconded the motion. Roll Call: Pine-aye; Degen-abstain; Manugian-aye; Giger-aye; Reilly-aye

Mr. Haddad said that the Board discussed the Prescott School RFP at their last meeting and he asked if the Board wanted to stick to one year only RFP or leave the drafted language broad with up to 3 years to provide the board with flexibility. The Board was okay with the wording and the flexibility. Mr. Giger said he did not support the broad language.

MINUTES

Ms. Pine moved to approve minutes of August 10, 2020. Mr. Reilly seconded the motion. Roll Call: Roll Call: Pine-aye; Degen-abstain; Manugian-aye; Giger-aye; Reilly-aye

Ms. Manugian adjourned the meeting at 9:41pm.

Approved: _____
Rebecca H. Pine, Clerk

_____ respectfully submitted:
Dawn Dunbar, Executive Assistant

Date Approved: 09/14/2020