

**SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES  
VIRTUAL MEETING  
MONDAY, DECEMBER 21, 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; Michael Hartnett, Tax Collector/Treasurer; Hannah Moller, Assistant Tax Collector/Treasurer; Megan Foster, Assistant Assessor; Marlena Gilbert, School Committee Chair; Don Black; Officer Bob Breault; Police Chief Luth; Sergeant Ed Sheridan;

Ms. Manugian called the meeting to order at 7:00pm and reviewed the agenda.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Mr. Giger reminded the public about the Fire Department's Santa ride on Christmas Eve adding the schedule and maps were listed online.

**TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT**

1. Mr. Haddad said that the Town Hall, Senior Center and Library had been closed to the public with employees working remotely until January 4th. He said that should something change; he would get ahold of the Board to hold an emergency meeting.
2. Mr. Haddad said that Groton was still a yellow community and went down to 49 cases over a 2-week period. He said that they would continue to be diligent but that this was some positive news. He asked people to do their best to adhere to the guidelines and protocols. Ms. Pine said that all surrounding towns were red with the exception of Dunstable.
3. Mr. Haddad said he had completed the search for Principal Assistant Assessor. He said that the interview team interviewed 4 applicants. Mr. Haddad said that the team unanimously decided that although qualifications were important, it wasn't always the only thing they looked at. He said that the best person to serve in the role was Megan Foster. He said that all 3 elected Assessors recommended in writing to him that they wanted Ms. Foster in that position. He said that Ms. Foster came in with a 30-60-90-day plan, that Ms. Foster was an active participant on the Finance Team and Ms. Foster had shown that she wanted the job. He said that he was recommending Ms. Foster for the job and would like to give her a 6-month contract and negotiate with her after that time to get her contract in line with the other contract employees. Mr. Reilly said that Ms. Foster slammed the interview and really rose to the top. Mr. Robertson said that there were 2 candidates that were really qualified but had the right personality. Mr. Degen asked if he had the opportunity to negotiate a contract with her for the 6-month time. Ms. Foster said they had and she was happy with it.

*Mr. Degen moved to affirm the appointment of Megan Foster as Principal Assistant Assessor with a probationary term to expire June 30, 2021. Ms. Pine seconded the motion. Roll Call: Pine-aye; Degen-aye; Manugian-aye; Reilly-aye; Giger-aye*

4. Mr. Haddad said that Police Chief Michael Luth attended their November 23rd meeting to discuss staffing within the Police Department given the fact that we are not filling a Patrol Officer vacancy. He said that at that time, they discussed the potential of eliminating one of the two School Resource Officer positions and returning it to patrol to ensure proper coverage. He said that the Select Board was not comfortable with this move and asked that they further review the manning issue and come back with a new recommendation. Mr. Haddad said that in addition, the issue of supervision was also raised. He said that with the vacancy of the Deputy Chief, Sergeant Ed Sheridan had been serving as Acting Lieutenant to provide necessary management coverage. Mr. Haddad said that this had caused a supervision gap on some of their shifts without having the Sergeant position serving in a patrol capacity. Mr. Haddad said that he and Chief Luth had had several meetings and conversations on this and had determined that, for

the short-term, they would keep the two school resource officers and fill all patrol shifts with overtime, when necessary. Mr. Haddad said that also due to the need for proper supervision, the Chief had recommended, and he fully agreed and supported, permanently filling the Deputy Chiefs position and then promoting a patrol officer to Sergeant. With all the scrutiny facing Police Departments at this time, he said that proper supervision was crucial.

Chief Luth said that he would be willing to keep the second SRO for the next year but would have to reevaluate this in the future. He said that they would do everything they could to make this work. Mr. Haddad said they were not filling that officer position, but that it was a top priority for them to fill should they find money. Mr. Giger said he had an issue with using OT to fill that shift. He said that this would burn out the organization. He said that he would like to see a mandatory review of this halfway through the year. Mr. Degen said he would like to see the Town Manager fund the position for next year but not fill it. Mr. Haddad said that the position was still on the roster but no money allocated to it. He said he would like to continue on and see what 6 months to a year looked like. Mr. Degen asked what the overtime budget was for the Police Department. He said he had huge concerns about the bleed rate on the overtime budget. Mr. Haddad said that the overtime budget was \$502,307 which covered vacations, sick leave, etc. Mr. Haddad said that the money allocated for shift coverage for unplanned events would cover most of the overtime that they were talking about. Chief Luth said that the other categories of overtime were pretty solid numbers (for covering vacation time, sick time, etc.). Mr. Robertson said they should leave it and see if they make it. Mr. Degen said he saw this as deficit spending by using overtime budget to cover this unfilled shift. Mr. Haddad said that this was something they could reevaluate as they go along. Mr. Degen said they needed to step up their planning for Indian Hill coming online as they would be opening at the end of the next fiscal year.

Ms. Manugian said they were being asked to change some positions for supervisory roles and an unfilled position and whether or not it should be filled or overtime used, etc. Mr. Haddad said that the key to this was supervision now which was crucial. Mr. Giger thought they were only putting a band aid on this problem and wasn't going to heal alone. He said he wanted to see this remain a high priority. Mr. Degen said he had no problem with elevating Sergeant Sheridan and Officer Breault.

5. Mr. Haddad said that based on the recommendations of the Chief he wholeheartedly supported promoting Acting Lieutenant Sheridan to Deputy Chief. Mr. Haddad asked the Board to ratify his appointment.

*Mr. Degen moved to ratify the appointment of Ed Sheridan effective today to Deputy Chief. Ms. Pine seconded the motion.*

Chief Luth said that Ed Sheridan had his utmost confidence that he could run the department if he was unable to. He said that Ed Sheridan understood the community and couldn't endorse this more.

*Roll Call: Pine-aye; Degen-aye; Manugian-aye; Reilly-aye; Giger-aye*

6. Mr. Haddad said he had the fortune of appointing Bob Breault as officer 11 years ago. Mr. Haddad said that the Chief did a competitive search and testing for the promotion and agreed with the Chief's recommendation of Bob Breault as Sergeant. Mr. Haddad asked the Board to ratify his appointment.

*Mr. Reilly made a motion to ratify the Town Manager's appointment of Bob Breault as Sergeant within the Groton Police Department. Ms. Pine seconded the motion.*

Mr. Giger said that he had met Officer Breault when he was on the School Committee and thought he had done a great job and thought he would do a great job as Sergeant.

*Roll Call: Pine-aye; Degen-aye; Manugian-aye; Reilly-aye; Giger-aye*

Mr. Degen said that any money not spent within a line item in a budget would become free cash. Mr. Degen said they needed to fund positions but was concerned using overtime dollars to infill shifts and backfill shifts where they

didn't have the coverage required. Mr. Degen said he didn't see a scenario why they didn't fund this. Mr. Haddad agreed.

### **MIDDLE SCHOOL TRACK – CPA APPLICATION**

Ms. Gilbert said that when it came to the Florence Roche Project and Track that this was a Groton project and not a district project. She said that the School Committee had some tasks with this project; they had to get into the MSBA program, get the building committee established, and hire the OPM and Architect. She said that they had an \$80M project which also included a \$1.4M track. She said it was part of the project and not an add on. She said that they had an opportunity to apply for CPA funds should the CPC approve it for Town Meeting vote. Ms. Gilbert said they had a CPA application into the CPC already for the Middle School field restoration. She said that the School Committee was passing the baton as this was a Groton project but that she would still assist as a collaborative board member.

Ms. Manugian said there were a lot of pieces to this. Mr. Degen said that the track not only benefited Groton but Dunstable too as Dunstable students utilized it. Ms. Gilbert said that the reason it would end up behind the Middle School is because they wanted to build the new school on top of the track. Mr. Giger said that if they fund the track, and Dunstable had no obligation to help with that, the Dunstable students would be denied use of the track. Ms. Manugian said that they were going to be destroying the track to build a new school and because of that, it was on them to provide the same level of service or opportunity of a track. Ms. Manugian said that the information they had said it was not a regulation track and didn't need to be rebuilt but that the track was in fact a regulation track and needed to be rebuilt. Ms. Gilbert said that there was talk about bussing the students to the high school track which would be inconvenient, and costly. She said that they had a huge attendance at their last Building Committee meeting by members of the community of all ages who wanted to see the track rebuilt. Mr. Haddad said that the Building Committee voted to include the money in the project that went before the MSBA. Mr. Haddad said that Ms. Gilbert was telling them they had the ability to lower the amount of the school project by applying for CPA funds. Mr. Giger asked who would be responsible for the maintenance of it. Mr. Haddad said that the district would. Mr. Giger asked about the money raised by an organization to place artificial turf at the high school. He asked if someone looked into reaching out to those folks about utilizing some of those funds. Ms. Gilbert said that GD@Play had collected \$105K. She said that there were some pledges made that remain unsecured and could possibly agree to donate toward a natural turf field instead of an artificial turf field.

Ms. Pine asked who owned the property. Mr. Haddad said that the Town owned the Florence Roche property, the track and part of the parking lot. He said the district owned the rest. Ms. Pine said that they were going to improve the field behind the middle school and wouldn't hurt to ask Dunstable if they would be interested in participating in an application. Ms. Manugian said that part of the answer wasn't clear at this point. Ms. Gilbert said that the MSBA saw this as a Groton project and wasn't sure how they would see incorporating another Town at this point. Ms. Gilbert said that this project should be done in a collaborative manner but that she wasn't asking the Board to take on this project. Ms. Pine said that there were a lot of ways this project was murky. Ms. Gilbert said that the School Committee made the decision to bring the students back to Groton under the knowledge that this was a home town elementary school and something that was favored by the MSBA. Mr. Degen asked how much money sat in open space and recreation fund currently for the CPA. Mr. Degen said he would not support a CPA proposal and would not tie the taxpayers into a 3% surcharge for the future. Ms. Manugian said it would take 3 years to fund this and not long term like Surrenden Farm. Mr. Degen said he had been charged with discussing Groton's participation in the CPA and at what surcharge rate with the CPC adding he was scheduled on one of the CPC's upcoming agendas to discuss this.

Ms. Pine said that the CPA funded a lot of worthwhile projects and thought the track was one of those projects. Mr. Robertson said that this was a creative way of trying to fund a portion of this. Mr. Giger asked if there was a way to fund some of this with CPA funds and bond some of it. Mr. Haddad said he would want to check with the OPM on that and whether the MSBA would accept this.

Mr. Degen said that they had a policy to not vote on something the same night it was presented. Mr. Degen said he was extremely uncomfortable with a multiyear bonding of a project using CPA funds. Mr. Haddad said he didn't see any harm in filing the application and withdrawing it if that's what decided. Mr. Giger said that they didn't have the information yet on

what the best solution was for the Town. Mr. Haddad said they weren't telling the CPC what to do, just submitting an application and they decide how and if to fund it.

*Ms. Pine moved that the Town Manager prepare an application to the CPC to fund the cost of building a new track as part of the Flo Ro replacement school project. Ms. Manugian seconded the motion. Roll Call: Pine-aye; Manugian-aye; Reilly-aye; Degen-nay; Giger-nay*

**TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT – CONT.**

7. Mr. Haddad said that Lowell Five would like to donate \$2,500 to be used toward Diversity Education and Inclusion and asked the Board to consider accepting the gift. Ms. Manugian said they would obviously want to accept this with much gratitude.

*Mr. Degen moved to accept the gift of Lowell Five of \$2,500 and graciously thank them for their contribution. Ms. Pine seconded the motion. Roll Call: Pine-aye; Degen-aye; Manugian-aye; Reilly-aye; Giger-aye*

8. Mr. Haddad said that he wanted to fill the Assistant Assessor position but wanted the Board's position on it. Mr. Degen and Ms. Pine were fine with filling the position of Assistant Assessor. Mr. Giger asked if they needed 2 fulltime positions. Mr. Haddad said that they needed two fulltime people adding they were going into a full revaluation year. Mr. Haddad said that they examined every single position when looking at the budget. Mr. Robertson said that they used to have 2 ½ positions in that office and then downsized to 2 positions. The Board agreed to advertise the position of Assistant Assessor.

9. Mr. Haddad said he the budget would be sent out to the Board and Finance Committee within the next few days.

10. Mr. Haddad said that he would work on the Board's meeting schedule with the Chair and get it to the Board for their next meeting.

**OTHER BUSINESS**

Ms. Manugian said Mr. Degen requested that they have a discussion with the Board of Health and Water Department about PFAS. She said he proposed January 4<sup>th</sup> for that meeting. Ms. Manugian said that Mr. Degen had also asked State Representative Harrington to attend a future meeting and have her address some questions and topics that had arisen. Mr. Giger suggested inviting Senator Kennedy in also. Ms. Manugian asked the Board to send her any suggestions they had. Mr. Degen provided his reasoning for wanting a joint meeting with the Board of Health and Water Commission to talk about PFAS. Ms. Manugian asked for the Board to be co-posted for the January 4<sup>th</sup> meeting and asked if Tom Orcutt could educate them in advance on PFAS.

Mr. Haddad said that because the Board was not meeting again before January 4<sup>th</sup>, he asked if they could vote again now to extend the signatory authority to John Reilly and the Town Manager through February 4<sup>th</sup> 2021.

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

**MINUTES**

*Ms. Pine moved to approve the meeting minutes of December 14, 2020 as presented. Mr. Degen seconded the motion. Roll Call: Manugian-aye; Pine-aye; Degen-aye; Giger-aye; Reilly-aye*

Ms. Manugian adjourned the meeting at 9:11pm.

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_  
Rebecca H. Pine, Clerk

\_\_\_\_\_ respectfully submitted:  
Dawn Dunbar, Executive Assistant

Date Approved: 01/11/2021