

**SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES  
VIRTUAL MEETING  
MONDAY, MARCH 1, 2021  
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; Hannah Moller, Assistant Tax Collector/Treasurer; Michael Hartnett, Tax Collector/Treasurer; Megan Foster, Principal Assistant Assessor; Michael Hartnett, Tax Collector/Treasurer; Michael Bouchard, Town Clerk; Meryl Nistler, Studio G; David Saindon, Left Field; Finance Committee Members Scott Whitefield, Colby Doody, Bud Robertson, Art Prest, Mary Linskey, David Manugian, Gary Green; Marlena Gilbert; Fay Raynor

Mr. Degen called the meeting to order at 7:00pm and reviewed the agenda.

Mr. Robertson called the Finance Committee Meeting to order at 7:04pm.

**PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD**

Rebecca Tabasky said she was a new resident of Groton as of February. She said she was thrilled about the Diversity Task Force and hearing All Were Welcome. She asked the Board to support 2 bills at the state level, the Working Family Mobility Act and the Safe Communities Act.

Ms. Pine said Mr. Degen had said at a meeting on February 8<sup>th</sup> about a failure of the Affordable Housing Trust to pursue legal action against the developer of Boynton Meadows. (*See attached statement*)

Mr. Degen asked that this discussion be put into an Executive Session with the Affordable Housing Trust so that the CEO's of the Town could be updated on this matter. He said he stood behind his comments based on knowledge he had to date. He said that affordable housing was needed but stood behind his conviction that the developer needed to be held accountable and would not support a CPC application for affordable housing until this was cleared up. He reiterated that he believed in affordable housing and the need for it.

**FLORECNCCE ROCHE BUILDING PROJECT PRESENTATION**

Ms. Gilbert began by showing a layout for the proposed elementary school also showing where the track would be relocated. She said that the School Committee looked at data on other elementary schools and showed that this proposed school construction was mid-range for MSBA school construction projects researched from 2019 to those projected to begin in 2021. She said that a renovation would make sense if they wanted the school to last another 10 years. She said that they were looking for a school that would be there for 50 plus years. She showed that a new build, with MSBA reimbursement would cost Groton residents \$51.8 million vs. renovating both Florence Roche and Swallow union, with no MSBA reimbursement, for a total cost of \$62 million. She said Swallow Union needed work but not to the extent of Florence Roche. Ms. Gilbert said that they currently didn't have enough space for special education needs within the current square footage of either school. Ms. Gilbert showed the tax impact/debt service they would be looking at. An average home valued at \$507,000 would see a full tax impact in FY2025 of \$770.64.

Ms. Pine asked if the proposed track relocation surrounded a soccer field. Ms. Gilbert said it would. Ms. Gilbert said that the field had been there but would be rehabilitated as part of a CPA application they have submitted. Ms. Pine asked if May 2022 was the expected start of construction. Mr. Saindon from Left Field said that once the project was approved, they needed to complete the design which would take a year and therefore was expected to begin construction in May 2022.

Mr. Green suggested that they look at total costs when looking at this for comparison sake and not with MSBA reimbursements. Mr. Saindon said that all projects provided as comparisons were MSBA approved projects. Mr. Giger said he agreed with Mr. Green and thought at a minimum that the cost to Groton and the State should show a square footage cost. He said that the MSBA money came from tax payers also and why he thought it should be shown.

Mr. Degen asked if they could build this school for less than using MSBA funding because of different requirements and hoped they could do that kind of cost comparison. Ms. Manugian said they could not have built this for less and met the criteria but didn't know how to show that.

Mr. Prest said he agreed with Mr. Giger in that the slide showing the cost per square footage comparison to the Groton Center was misleading.

Mr. Saindon said that the reimbursable portion was 53% adding there were a lot of things that were not eligible for reimbursement. Mr. Robertson said that the 53% was on a lower number than the total number then.

Ms. Gilbert showed a slide on their informational activity/community outreach going forward.

Mr. Giger suggested that they settle on numbers and stick to them moving forward. He said that this was what the taxpayers wanted to see at the end of the day.

### **TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT**

1. Mr. Haddad said that they continued to monitor the weekly health report issued by the Department of Public Health. He said Groton continued to be a "yellow" community with 33 reported cases in the last two weeks with a 1.80% positivity rate. He said that they were trending lower for the second straight week and would continue to be diligent in their efforts to address the impact this pandemic has on our operations. Mr. Haddad said that as on that day, the Governor had eased some of the restrictions also such as increasing capacity limits to 50%.
2. Mr. Haddad said that he was requesting that the Board consider ratifying the appointment of Jesse Johnson of Rindge, New Hampshire as a Truck Driver/Laborer for the Groton Highway Department.

*Ms. Pine made the motion to ratify the appointment of Jesse Johnson as Truck Driver/Laborer for the DPW effective March 15, 2021. Mr. Degen seconded the motion.*

Mr. Degen asked about the travel time and if there were any requirements. Mr. Haddad said that they did have travel requirement adding they had other employees who lived in Rindge and could get here in under the required time.

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

3. Mr. Haddad said that at the request of Building Commissioner Bob Garside, he had appointed Jeremy Pierce as the Alternate Plumbing and Gas Inspector and respectfully requested that the Board to ratify this appointment.

*Ms. Pine made a motion to ratify the Town Manager's appointment of Jeremy Pierce as Alternate Gas/Plumbing Inspector. Mr. Degen seconded the motion. Roll Call: Pine-aye; Manugian-aye; Degen-aye; Reilly-aye; Giger-aye*

4. Mr. Haddad said that Paul Martell has resigned from the Board of Registrars as he was now the Chair of the Republican Town Committee, which made him ineligible to serve as a registrar. Mr. Haddad said that since there were two Democrats on the Board of Registrars, this appointment has to be a Republican. He said that the Republican Town Committee had nominated Paul Fitzgerald as Paul Martell's replacement. He said that Paul Fitzgerald, if appointed, would serve the remainder of Paul Martell's term. Mr. Haddad respectfully requested that the Board make this appointment with his term to expire on June 30, 2021. Mr. Haddad added that Mr. Fitzgerald would be up for reappointment in June when the Select Board makes their annual appointments.

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

5. Ms. Foster said that she was there to provide an overview of the types of property tax relief options available to residents. She said that the statutory exemptions were limited to one of out the five but that the 2 town adopted programs were both available to seniors. Ms. Foster reviewed the limits and process for each of the exemptions. Ms.

Manugian asked a question on some of the tax exemption limits and whether they were as high as they could go. This was something that needed to be looked into.

6. Mr. Haddad reviewed the wording for the ballot question and asked the Board if they wanted to vote on the ballot wording that night or wait until the public hearing. Ms. Manugian said she preferred to hold it until the public hearing. Ms. Pine asked if this was reviewed by counsel. Mr. Haddad said it was drafted by Bond Counsel and reviewed by Town Counsel. Mr. Haddad said that MSBA Counsel had also signed off on it.

Mr. Haddad reviewed each of the articles contained in the warrant for the 2021 Spring Town Meeting.

Mr. Degen asked how many years the middle school track project funding would be for. Mr. Haddad said he recommended to the CPC that this be for 5 years using a State House note.

Ms. Pine said that there would be a wording change to the Affordable Housing Trust's CPA application for testing to not include Surrenden Farm. Mr. Degen asked if there would be a cost reduction based on this. Ms. Pine said there would not be.

Ms. Manugian asked if contamination of the site under article 19 was of concern because of its previous use as a training site for the Fire Department. Mr. Haddad said he was unsure. Ms. Pine said that the Affordable Housing Trust would be interested in meeting with the Housing Authority on this adding this property was listed in the Housing Production Plan and had just come forward.

Mr. Degen said that they could not change the wording of the Citizen's Petition and suggested that the proponents change Board of Selectmen to Select Board. Ms. Pine said that the summary submitted stated by the proponents of this petitions said that Joy Lane would have to be relocated and wanted to correct that misunderstanding. She said that no road would be created but that the existing road/driveway into General Field would be upgraded and Joy Lane would remain as such. Ms. Pine said that the Affordable Housing Trust had backed off and stopped considering the Surrenden Farm parcel because of the road access issue which would be daunting and expensive.

7. Mr. Haddad said that they needed to adjust their insurance budget by \$35-40K due to property losses they had experienced over the last 3 years.
8. There was a discussion about logistics for Town Meeting being held on Saturday and whether one day would be enough.
9. Mr. Haddad reviewed the Board's schedule moving forward.
10. Mr. Haddad asked the Board to extend the signing authority on warrants for him and one member of the Board through April 8<sup>th</sup>.

*Ms. Manugian moved to extend the signing authority for the Town Manager and Mr. Reilly on the warrants. Ms. Pine seconded the motion. Roll Call: Pine-aye; Manugian-aye; Degen-aye; Reilly-abstain; Giger-aye*

## MINUTES

The minutes were tabled until the next meeting.

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

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

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

Date Approved: 3/8/21