

**SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES
VIRTUAL MEETING
MONDAY, MARCH 15, 2021
APPROVED**

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

Members Absent: Alison S. Manugian, Chair

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 Bouchard, Town Clerk; Members of the Finance Committee – Robertson, Doody, Prest, Linskey, Whitefield; Members of the School Committee – Gilbert, LeBlanc, McCabe, Cronin, Kubick, Raynor, Glod; Sherry Kersey, GDRSD Business Manager; CPC Member Bruce Easom; Eileena Long, Left Field; David Saindon, Left Field; Meryl Nistler, Studio G; Kevin Lindemer; Dr. Laura Chesson, School Superintendent; Tom Orcutt, Water Superintendent; Jim Gmeiner, Water & Sewer Commissioner; Don Black, Housing Authority; Takashi Tada, Land Use Director; Russ Burke, Planning Board Member; Nathan Shapiro; Jason Kauppi, Town Moderator

Mr. Degen called the meeting to order at 7:00pm and reviewed the agenda. He asked participants to use the raise your hand function if they wished to speak because there were so many participants.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Ms. Pine said that March 13th marked the one-year anniversary since the pandemic shutdown in Groton. She thanked the Town Manager, employees and all boards for all their work over the past year. She also thanked the residents for keeping them in a less dangerous position than some of their neighboring towns and most of the state.

Ms. Gilbert called the School Committee to order at 7:04pm. Mr. Robertson called the Finance Committee to order at 7:04pm.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

1. Mr. Haddad said that the CDC had issued new COVID guidelines to which he and the Fire Chief had made some changes to their policy. He said that they cut quarantining back due to exposure from 14 to 10 days and added quarantine language for those traveling with a vaccine and without a vaccine. Mr. Haddad said that they took out refence to leaves of absences from this policy adding they would follow their FMLA policy. Mr. Haddad said that these protocols would probably be changed again in a couple of weeks as more people were getting vaccinated adding he would bring any proposed changes back to the Board. He respectfully requested that the Board vote to amend and issue the new policy.

Ms. Pine moved to approve the amended Infectious Disease Control Policy effective tonight. Mr. Reilly seconded the motion. Roll Call: Pine-aye; Degen-aye; Giger-aye; Reilly-aye

2. Mr. Haddad said that Groton had moved to a green COVID status. He said that the policy was that should they be a green status again this week, they would open the Town Hall and Library to the public on March 22, 2021. Mr. Haddad said that they would stay meeting on Zoom adding they were limited to 50% capacity. Mr. Degen asked about meeting in public. Mr. Haddad said that they would remain meeting remotely for 30 days after the emergency order was lifted.
3. Mr. Haddad asked the Board to add a question to the 2021 Annual Town Election Ballot relative to the debt exclusion for Florence Roche. He said that they needed to notify the Town Clerk 35 days before the election. Ms. Pine said that the wording had been checked by Town Counsel. Mr. Haddad said that Bond Counsel had also checked the wording.

Ms. Pine moved that they add the question to the 2021 town election ballot as question 1 as printed in their packet and approved by Bond and Town Counsel. Mr. Giger seconded the motion. Roll Call: Pine-aye; Degen-aye; Giger-aye; Reilly-aye

4. Mr. Haddad said that Bob Colman had notified him of his intention to resign in May. He said that he, Ms. Doig and Ms. Dunbar had met with the Cable Advisory Committee last week. He said that the Cable Advisory Committee wanted to see Ashley Doucette take Bob's position. He said he would like to ask the Board to waive their policy and allow him to internally post this position for a week. Ms. Pine said that she respected the recommendation of the Committee, but thought they had a policy they should follow. She added this had nothing to do with Ms. Doucette's ability to fulfill the job. She said she would prefer to not waive the policy. Mr. Reilly asked how long they would post externally. Ms. Doig said they would post for 2 weeks. She added that posting externally would be an expense for the Cable Department. Mr. Giger said he had known Ms. Doucette for a long time and thought she was eminently qualified for this job and didn't think they needed to look externally. Mr. Degen said that when they had an individual who had shown their capacities internally, he didn't think they should post externally but post it internally instead. He added that it was important to promote from within when necessary.

Mr. Reilly made a motion to waive their policy and post the Cable Director's position internally for one week. Mr. Degen seconded the motion.

Ms. Pine said they had excellent employees and thought they should promote from within but thought they needed to add new ideas in on the occasion. She thought this position was one of those positions.

Roll Call: Pine-nay; Degen-aye; Reilly-aye; Giger-aye

2020 SPRING TOWN MEETING WARRANT PUBLIC HEARING

Mr. Haddad read the public hearing notice into the record and asked the Board and Finance Committee to open the public hearing.

Ms. Pine moved to open the public hearing to discuss the spring town meeting warrant. Mr. Giger seconded the motion. Roll Call: Degen-aye; Pine-aye; Giger-aye; Reilly-aye

Mr. Robertson moved to open the public hearing to discuss the spring town meeting warrant. Mr. Prest seconded the motion. Roll Call: Prest-aye; Robertson-aye; Whitefield-aye; Linskey-aye; Doody-aye

Mr. Haddad reviewed the warrant article by article.

Mr. Haddad said that he met with the Finance Committee last week. He said that they had made some changes since the original proposed budget was presented in January. Mr. Haddad said that the budget had been reduced by \$108,719. He reviewed the increases and decreases. He said that the Finance Committee voted last week to allow him to reinstate the patrol officer position. He said that this would put the budget approximately \$3K under the levy limit. Ms. Pine asked if the budget would be presented in the consent agenda. Mr. Haddad said that they would be putting the 13 budget motions in a consent agenda. Mr. Degen said that a hold could be put on any item at Town Meeting that was contained in a consent agenda.

Mr. Lindemer asked why they would not get electric golf carts at the Country Club. Mr. Haddad said that they did not have the infrastructure necessary or the money available to build the infrastructure to purchase electric golf carts. Mr. Haddad said that he could find out the cost. Mr. Degen asked about the existing golf carts and whether they would be traded in or sold. Mr. Haddad said they could trade them in or auction them off. Ms. Pine asked about grants available for infrastructure. Mr. Lindemer, speaking as a Light Commissioner, said they would be interested in helping with that also.

Ms. Gilbert said that the track was an asset for both the schools and community as they found out going through the building project process of Florence Roche. Ms. Gilbert said that the track was not eligible for MSBA reimbursement but could

leverage state funding for it. She said that they decided to put together a CPA application for a new track behind the middle school. She said that if the project was approved at Town Meeting, the cost of the building project would decrease by \$1.4M. Ms. Gilbert said that the most cost-effective solution for Florence Roche was to build a new school on the existing parcel where the existing track was located. She said that they also planned to bring all Groton elementary students back to Groton with the construction of a new school.

Mr. Giger said people should understand that the track could also be included in the bond for a new school if not approved by CPA funding. Ms. Gilbert said that regardless of which way this went, it would be bonded either way. If bonded with the project, they would lose the ability to leverage CPA state funds of 40% and if part of the building project, that would also be bonded.

Ms. Gilbert said that they had spent a lot of time on this project. She said they had evaluated multiple potential sites within Groton. She said that the current parcel was the most cost-effective parcel. She said that the square footage was dictated by their academic programming and was approved by MSBA and DESE which was 109K square feet. She explained that once all Groton students came back to Groton (from Swallow Union) Groton would no longer be responsible for Dunstable capital needs at the elementary school. Mr. Degen asked what happened if this was voted down. Ms. Gilbert said that if voted down, they had 120 days to come up with an alternative solution. Ms. Gilbert said that they would also be walking away from MSBA reimbursement and could not afford to build this on their own. Mr. Prest said that they needed to replace the school adding they had no other choice. He said it wasn't going to be easy to get this passed but thought they needed to work hard to get the word out there.

Mr. Orcutt said article 9 was to request engineering funding of \$722,300 for the Whitney Well Treatment Facility.

Mr. Orcutt said that article 10 was requesting engineering funding for a new source well at Whitney Well. He said that preliminary testing and drilling had been very successful and could yield them 350 gallons per minute. Mr. Degen asked if the water at this new potential well location had been tested for manganese. Mr. Orcutt said that the water tested negative for manganese but would be treated like the other wells.

Mr. Orcutt said article 11 was no longer needed and could be removed. Mr. Orcutt said that the Commissioners would vote tomorrow to have this removed.

Mr. Gmeiner said that article 12 was put on the warrant on behalf of the applicant. He said that they would be holding a hearing in early April on this. It was asked that the property owners be invited to the meeting next week. Ms. Pine said she thought they could tie in if sewer went past their property. Mr. Gmeiner said that they had to be in the district to connect not just have access to it.

Mr. Easom said that article 13 was the normal article that allocated money into the CPA bins. He said that this year they included an additional \$15,500 in operating expenses to cover wages and benefits for the CPA Administrators time. Mr. Haddad said that due to the budget issues, he asked the CPC to cover their admin's time. There was a request to have in the packet the amount of money in all the buckets.

Mr. Easom said that they were moving 12 applications forward for Town Meeting discussion within article 14. Mr. Easom reviewed the recommended projects. Mr. Degen asked if they could be listed as they were ranked by the CPC. Ms. Pine said she didn't agree with doing that adding they had never been presented in that manner in the past. She said she didn't see any benefit to this other than building controversy. Ms. Gilbert said divisiveness came to mind when hearing this suggestion. She said she understood the ranking process, but did not understand how there could be extremely far out rankings in certain categories on some projects. She said she was not comfortable with 100% of the rankings she listened to and the criteria being used. She said she agreed with putting the projects through as a whole. Mr. Giger said he agreed with Ms. Gilbert and Ms. Pine. Mr. Haddad said that projects had to be moved forward by the Committee adding no matter what the ranking was, they were voted to be moved forward. Mr. Degen said he was fine with leaving it but thought the rankings needed to be made available adding they didn't need to spend all the money just because it was there. Mr. Reilly asked if the projects were ranked

by their categories. Mr. Easom said that they were ranked based on the merits. Mr. Reilly said he didn't see the need to show any rankings.

Ms. Eliot said she had problems with the Affordable Housing Trust's (AHT) application. She said that the statement made by the AHT recently was inconsistent with the application itself. She said that removing the Surrenden Farm parcel from their application was problematic for her. She felt it should be brought back to the CPC for discussion. Ms. Pine said that Ms. Eliot was correct adding the process was focused on that parcel when the draft application was done. She said that there were significant problems realized after the deadline for the final application. She said that they reached out to the CPC and requested permission for an expansion of the scope which had been granted. Ms. Eliot said there should be a meeting of all the parties before this went any further.

Mr. Degen said that the GD Field Restoration Plan was seeking Groton CPA funds and asked if Dunstable was being asked for funding. Ms. Gilbert said that Dunstable CPC would be requesting funding at their Town Meeting this spring also. She said that this project was long overdue and needed this to be approved for the safety of their students. She said that they had been trying to find way to take care of their assets and this was one way of funding that. She said that Dunstable was going forward with a request for 23% of the funding as per the regional agreement. Ms. Pine asked if GD@Play was contributing toward this. Ms. Gilbert said that they donated \$100K adding some of these funds would be going toward equipment to maintain the fields.

Mr. Lindemer explained article 15 which was to extend the center sewer system under the golf course, by means of an easement to his property on Boston Road.

Mr. Burke explained article 16 to amend the medical marijuana zoning bylaw and remove language relative to medical marijuana dispensaries to be in compliance with state law. He said that they were waiting for Town Counsel to opine on this.

Mr. Burke said that the Schedule of Use Regulations needed to be updated for accessory apartments.

Mr. Black said the Groton Housing Authority was seeking a title land transfer of parcel 227-135 consisting of 8.8 acres to the Housing Authority. Ms. Pine said that there was an easement which would need to be cleared up and that prior contamination of the site was possible. Ms. Pine said it wasn't clear what or why the transfer of ownership was needed adding the parcel was in the Town's name already. She said the AHT thought it might be premature at this point.

Ms. Collette said that article 19 had been discussed with Select Board Member Giger for some time now. She said that this proposed bylaw banning polystyrene was based on what had been adopted in Westford in 2016. She said that polystyrene, otherwise known as Styrofoam, was a known carcinogen and could not be recycled. She said that the Board of Health would hold a hearing on April 5th.

Mr. Nate Shapiro provided some background on Surrenden Farm. He said that 14 acres had been set aside as a reserve parcel. He said that the area had become a recreational site. She said a legal agreement existed which said that if the reserve parcel was developed, Joy Lane would be discontinued and moved. He said he wanted to remove the parcel from reserve and transfer it to the Conservation Commission to remain recreational space.

Mr. Haddad said that articles 21-34 would be part of the consent agenda and reviewed those articles.

Mr. Haddad said that he held a town meeting planning meeting last week. He said that a couple of recommendations were to start at 9am instead of 10am and that a change in time would require a vote of the Board. He said that they also talked about the preference to not break for lunch and encourage people to bring snacks / bag lunch because of the logistics of checking people back in and out. He said he also wanted permission to have porta toilets rented so people wouldn't have to go into the school for facilities. Ms. Gilbert asked if a projector screen was going to be used at Town Meeting adding they wanted to show a walk through of Flo Ro at Town Meeting. Mr. Haddad said that they talked about it but they decided to not bring in a screen. He said that lighting would be an issue as well as rental costs. He said that in one town, they spent \$30K on a jumbotron adding they didn't have that kind of money to spend. Mr. Degen suggested using a QR code at Town Meeting for

people to view the walkthrough at Town Meeting. Mr. Reilly asked if the walkthrough was going to be shown in advance of Town Meeting. Ms. Pine said she was in favor of all recommendations.

Mr. Haddad asked the Board to vote to change the start time to 9am on May 1st.

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

Mr. Haddad asked the Board to continue the hearing until 7:30pm on March 22nd.

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

Mr. Robertson adjourned the Finance Committee meeting at 9:22pm.

TOWN MANAGERS REPORT

5. Mr. Haddad reviewed the Board's upcoming schedule.

ON-GOING ISSUES

Ms. Pine asked about Green Communities and whether they had heard back from them yet. Mr. Haddad said he had no update on this.

MINUTES

Ms. Pine moved to approve the meeting minutes of March 8, 2021 as presented. Mr. Reilly seconded the motion. Roll Call: Degen-aye; Pine-aye; Giger-aye; Reilly-aye

Mr. Degen adjourned the meeting at 9:26pm.

Approved: _____
Rebecca H. Pine, Clerk

_____ respectfully submitted:
Dawn Dunbar, Executive Assistant

Date Approved: 3/15/21