

**SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, JUNE 28, 2021
APPROVED**

Members Present: Rebecca H. Pine, Chair; Alison S. Manugian, Vice Chair (remotely on Zoom); Peter S. Cunningham, Clerk; Joshua A. Degen, Member; John F. Reilly, Member

Also Present: Mark W. Haddad, Town Manager

Ms. Pine called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and reviewed the agenda.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Ms. Pine stated that the Housing Summit was held on Sunday, June 27th at the Center in West Groton. It was well attended and a lot of information was shared. The next step is for the Diversity Task Force and Affordable Housing Trust to debrief and review what was covered and bring a formal recommendation/plan forward to the Select Board.

Mr. Cunningham reminded everyone that the annual Fourth of July Holiday Fireworks will take place at sundown on Monday, July 12th at Town Field.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

There were no public comments.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

2. Mr. Haddad stated that since the Fiscal Year 2022 Operating Budget provided funding to restore the Police Officer position in the Police Department, the Police Chief, Michael Luth, undertook a search to fill that vacancy. The Town received 49 applicants, which is truly an amazing amount. Given the spotlight that has been on the police profession in the past year, to receive that many applicants is a testament to the reputation of the Groton Police Department and the outstanding leadership of Chief Michael Luth. From the 49 applicants, eight (8) were interviewed and put through a stringent review process. Based on this, Chief Luth recommended that the Town Manager appoint Adam Hyde of Fitchburg, MA to the vacancy. Adam is currently a Police Officer for the Town of Maynard. Mr. Haddad had a chance to meet with Mr. Hyde and thinks he will be a fine addition to the Department. He asked the Select Board to ratify his appointment.

Mr. Cunningham moved to affirm the Town Manager's Appointment of Adam Hyde as a full-time Police Officer for the Groton Police Department, said appointment to be effective on July 12, 2021. Mr. Degen seconded the motion. Roll Call: Reilly-aye; Degen-aye; Pine-aye; Cunningham-aye; Manugian-aye.

3. Mr. Haddad stated that the Select Board had authorized the Police Department to appoint additional Reserve Police Officers to the Department. To that end, Police Chief Michael Luth recommended that the Town Manager appoint Emily Ramos, currently a Police Officer at Fitchburg State University and Robert Wayne, a police sergeant at Boston College be appointed as reserve officers.

Mr. Degen moved that the Select Board affirm the Town Manager's Appointments of Emily Ramos and Robert Wayne as Reserve Officers for the Groton Police Department effective June 28, 2021. Mr. Reilly seconded the motion. Roll Call: Reilly-aye; Degen-aye; Pine-aye; Cunningham-aye; Manugian-aye.

6. Mr. Haddad presented a Board with a plan on how to bond the Florence Roche Project. Town Meeting authorized \$76,495,360 for the project. After MSBA Reimbursement (\$26,102,575), the Town will likely have to permanently borrow \$50,392,785. The original thought was to temporarily borrow (BANs) the funds over the next three years, pay interest on the BANs in each of the next two fiscal years (beginning in FY 23) and make the mandatory principal pay down after two years of BANs as required by law and then permanently finance the entire project in FY 2025. The idea is to permanently finance the project in FY 25 and pay it off over 25 years. The Finance Team has met with the Town's Financial Advisor and the Finance Team has developed a plan that is believed to be in the best interest of the taxpayers and residents of Groton. Specifically, the Town needs between \$5,000,000 and \$8,000,000 over the next year for the School project. After that, beginning next April/May 2022, the Town will need to borrow the remaining authorization to complete the project over the following two years. That said, the Finance Team is working to provide the taxpayers with the most cost-effective solution to fund this project. To that end, they have come up with a plan to permanently finance a portion of the project upfront and pay it off quicker than the original 25 years. As a reminder, the way the project works, is the Town pays all the bills and then the MSBA reimburses the Town for its share. So, while the Town Meeting authorized the \$76,495,360, and while we will need to temporarily borrow more than \$70,000,000, the Town will ultimately permanently finance only about \$50.5 million. The Town Manager recommended and the Finance Team has agreed that the Town immediately permanently finance the \$8,000,000 that is needed over the next year. The idea is to take advantage of the very low interest rates on permanent financing at this time, and pay the \$8,000,000 debt over twenty years, instead of 25 years. That way, when the project is permanently financed in FY 25, the Town will need to permanently finance \$42,392,785 and pay that off over 25 years. While this will cost the average taxpayer slightly more over the next four years, it will provide a savings in interest and total taxpayer impact over the life of the 20 years (on the \$8 million). Following the original plan, the \$8 million would have been temporarily borrowed (BAN) in FY 22, with the first interest payment due in FY 23. A second interest payment would have been owed in FY 24, and then it would be permanently financed in FY 25. With the approval of the Select Board, the Finance Team would like to permanently finance the \$8,000,000 this summer with an interest payment due in FY 22 and then the first principal payment due in FY 23. The following chart shows the impact of the new plan versus the original plan and the impact on the taxpayers:

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	\$8 Million BAN		\$8 Million Permanent	
	<u>Annual Debt Service</u>	<u>Average Tax Payer Bill</u>	<u>Annual Debt Service</u>	<u>Average Tax Payer Bill</u>
2022	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 129,025	32.98
2023	\$ 140,000	\$ 35.78	\$ 516,425	131.99
2024	\$ 300,875	\$ 76.90	\$ 517,800	132.34
2025	\$ 540,125	\$ 138.05	\$ 518,425	132.5
Total After Four Years	\$ 981,000	\$ 250.73	\$ 1,681,675	\$ 429.81
Difference in Cost to Taxpayer Over 4 years (More Costly Permanently Financing)				\$ 179.08
Total After Life of Note	\$ 11,218,400	\$ 2,867.87	\$ 10,482,750	\$ 2,679.25
<i>23 Years with Ban Option</i>				
<i>21 Years with Permanent Option</i>				
Difference in Cost to Tax Payers in Total Debt Over Life of Bond				\$ (735,650)
<i>(Less Cost Permanently Financing - Savings to Tax Payers)</i>				
Difference in Cost to Tax Payers in Average Tax Bill Over Life of Bond				\$ (188.62)
<i>(Less Cost Permanently Financing - Savings to Tax Payers)</i>				

In addition, Mr. Haddad provided the Board with a comparison of the total principal interest of the original way the Town was planning on financing the project, versus the proposed way. The following is a comparison showing almost \$4 million in savings interest over the life of the bonds:

**Comparison of Scenarios for Bond Issue
 Florence Roche Elementary School Project
 Total Principal and Interest Cost to Tax Payers**

Scenario #1

Year 1 - BAN \$8,000,000 - 1 Year	\$	140,000
Year 2 - BAN \$33,000,000 - 1 Year	\$	760,000
Year 3 - BOND - \$52,000,000 - 25 Years	\$	<u>78,876,675</u>

Total Principal and Interest Over Life **\$ 79,776,675**

Scenario #2

Year 1 - BOND \$8,000,000 - 20 Years	\$	10,482,750
Year 2 - BAN \$25,000,000 - 1 Year	\$	437,500
Year 3 - BOND \$44,000,000 25 Years	\$	<u>64,942,187</u>

Total Principal and Interest Over Life **\$ 75,862,437**

Difference In Cost **\$ 3,914,238**

Mr. Haddad asked the Board to approve scenario #2. Mr. Degen questioned the savings and wanted to make sure that the overall impact to the taxpayers would be the same over the life of the bond. Mr. Haddad stated that while the upfront costs would be a little more, the overall costs to the taxpayers would be less. Mr. Robertson had worked with the Town Manager and Treasurer an Assistant Treasurer on this plan is in agreement with the proposal. Ms. Manugian was concerned that we told the taxpayers prior to Town Meeting that the upfront would be one thing and this is a different plan, even though the overall costs would be less. She believes the residents should be informed of any change in financing plans. Mr. Haddad stated that he would work with the local papers to get the information out. Mr. Degen suggested adding a flyer to the second quarter tax bills. Mr. Haddad will work with Hannah Moller and Mike Hartnett on getting the word out.

Ms. Pine asked if the Town Manager would like a vote supporting this plan. Mr. Haddad stated he would appreciate a vote.

Mr. Degen moved to approve the Florence Roche Financing Plan as recommended by the Town Manager as Scenario #2. Mr. Cunningham seconded the motion. Roll Call: Reilly-aye; Degen-aye; Pine-aye; Cunningham-aye; Manugian-aye.

Ms. Manugian left the meeting at 7:50 p.m.

Mr. Haddad suspended his Town Manager's Report until the end of the Committee presentations

OLD BURYING GROUND COMMITTEE

Mr. Don Black, Chair of the Old Burying Ground Committee came before the Select Board to provide an update for the Board on the Committee's work. It is a five-member committee, although currently there are three active members with two vacancies. Mr. Black felt the Committee was operating very well with three members. He provided the Board with a summary of their activities and what they would like to accomplish over the next year. Ms. Pine thanked Mr. Black for the update and asked that the two vacancies be advertised.

CONDUCTOR LAB COMMITTEE

Mr. Robert Hanninen, Mr. Mark Deuger and Ms. Michelle Collette represented the Conductor Lab Committee to provide an update to the Board. They have been working on the clean-up of the site since 1986. Mr. Hanninen and Mr. Deuger provided a history of their work and the improvements to the site since the contamination was first identified. The site is getting close to being fully remediated. The ultimate decision stands with the Department of Environmental Protection. The Committee will come back with an update once DEP makes a final determination. Ms. Pine thanked the Committee for their dedication and efforts over the many years.

GREAT POND ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Mr. Jim Leuning, Mr. Larry Hurly, Mr. Alex Woodle and Mr. Remigiuz Kaleta represented the Great Ponds Advisory Committee. This Committee is responsible for overseeing and maintaining the various Great Ponds in Groton. Mr. Leuning provided an update on the weed harvesting of Baddacook Pond, which has been very successful, and will continue this summer. Mr. Woodle updated the Board on the herbicide treatment of Lost Lake/Knops Pond. While the rain impacted the first two treatments, the third treatment seems to be working very well. Mr. Kaleta updated the Board on the success of the treatment of Duck Pond. The aeration process seems to be working very well. It will continue this summer as well. Mr. Hurley stated that dealing with Whitney Pond will take some time. The Committee will be hiring a consultant to come up with a plan to address the weed infestation of Whitney Pond. Ms. Pine asked what the Weed Harvester Committee does and if there is an overlap. Mr. Leuning stated that the Weed Harvester Committee is responsible for operating and maintaining the Weed Harvester. There is no overlap. Ms. Pine thanked the Committee for their hard work and report.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT – (continued):

4. Mr. Haddad requested that the Board ratify his appointments of Lillian Blouin and Benjamin Szum as Lifeguards and Mason Noseworthy as a Camp Counselor at the Groton Country Club.

Mr. Degen moved that the Select Board affirm the Town Manager's Appointments of Lillian Blouin and Benjamin Szum as Lifeguards and Mason Noseworthy as a Camp Counselor at the Groton Country Club. Mr. Reilly seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

5. Mr. Haddad nominated Ralph Acaba for appointment to the Trails Committee.

Mr. Degen moved that the Select Board appoint Ralph Acaba to the Trails Committee with a term to expire on June 30, 2022. Mr. Reilly seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

7. Mr. Haddad reviewed the upcoming Select Board schedule with the Board. The Board will not meet next week (July 5th). The next meeting will be on July 12th. Ms. Pine asked if the Board will be willing to meet on July 19th in a work shop to set this year's goals. Mr. Degen said he could as long as the meeting started at 4:00 p.m. The consensus of the Board was to meet at 4:00 p.m. on July 19th. Mr. Haddad will confirm the time and date with all members.

ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION AND ACTION

1. Mr. Haddad reached out to Raquel Majeski, Chair of the Diversity Task Force and asked for a roster of potential appointments/reappointments to the Task Force. Ms. Majeski recommended the following individuals be appointed to the Task Force:

Raquel Majeski – Representing Lawrence Academy
Michelle Collette – Representing the Council on Aging
Amy Degen – Representing the Groton Interfaith Council
Joshua Degen – Representing the Select Board (subject to Mr. Degen's ethics opinion)
Deirdre Slavin Mitchell – Representing the Groton Civil Discourse Project
Lorena Novak – Member at Large
Susan Hughes – Representing A Better Community
Barbara Rich – Representing the LGBTIA+ Community.

Mr. Cunningham moved that the Board make the appointments as listed by the Town Manager. Mr. Reilly seconded the motion. The motion carried 3 In Favor, 1 Abstention (Degen).

Mr. Haddad stated that would leave three vacancies representing the Groton School, Town Employee and ADA Community. Mr. Degen suggested reaching out to Housing Coordinator Fran Stanley to represent the Town employees. Mr. Haddad said he would and report back to the Board.

2. It is time for the Select Board to start the Town Manager's Annual Review. Per the Policy, Mr. Pine, as Chair, certified that four of the members could participate in the Review. Mr. Cunningham, having only been recently elected to the Board, would not be participating. Ms. Pine directed the Twon Manager to begin his self-evaluation.

OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business

ON-GOING ISSUES

Mr. Haddad informed the Board that the CM Selection Committee for the Florence Roche Construction Project has narrowed the CM firms to three; Gilbane Construction; Fontaine Construction and Commodore Builders. They will be recommending Gilbane Construction as the preferred Construction Manager for the project at the next Florence Roche Building Committee meeting scheduled for July 13th.

MINUTES

Mr. Degen moved that the Board approve the minutes of the Special Meeting of June 14th. Mr. Cunningham seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Pine asked that the minutes of June 21st be brought back to the next meeting as they were very lengthy and she did not have a chance to review them.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 9:00 p.m., Mr. Degen moved to enter into Executive Session pursuant to MGL, c.30A, §21(a)(3) – “To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body and the chair so declares”. And not return to public session. Mr. Reilly seconded the motion. Roll Call: Reilly-aye; Degen-aye; Pine-aye; Cunningham-aye.

Meeting adjourned at 9:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Approved: 7/12/2021

Mark W. Haddad
Town Manager

Peter S. Cunningham, Clerk