

**SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, AUGUST 23, 2021
APPROVED**

SB Members Present: Rebecca H. Pine, Chair; Peter S. Cunningham, Clerk; John F. Reilly, Member

Members Absent: Alison S. Manugian, Vice Chair; Joshua A. Degen, Member

Also Present: Mark W. Haddad, Town Manager; Dawn Dunbar, Executive Assistant; Hannah Moller, Tax Collector/Treasurer; Tom Delaney, DPW Director; Melisa Doig, HR Director; Megan Foster, Principal Assessor; Patricia Dufresne, Town Accountant; Mary Linskey and Colby Doody, Finance Committee Members

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mr. Haddad said he had been working with the Commemorations and Celebrations Committee on a reflection that would be held on 9/11 at the Gazebo at Town Field beginning at 8:45am.

Ms. Pine read the following statement into the record.

I'm sorry to have to make this announcement but it's important to let the public know that we were informed last week that a swastika had been carved into a tree located at Town Field behind the Library. The Police Department has been informed and is investigating this matter. The Select Board would like the public to know that it takes all matters relative to hate and racism very seriously and will not tolerate hateful, racist acts. Individuals found to be defacing property will be arrested and prosecuted to the fullest extent allowed by law. The Select Board asks that residents report any signs of graffiti or acts of hate and racism immediately to the Police Department so that they may investigate.

The Select Board also asks that its residents take time to educate themselves and their loved ones on the negative connotation a swastika represents. Regardless of who the culprits of this incident were, or what their intent was, the depth of fear and terror that a swastika causes for our Jewish neighbors cannot be and must not be underestimated or minimized. The swastika is a symbol of racial supremacism and intimidation because of its association with Nazi Germany and the horrific acts against millions of Jewish men, women and children.

Unfortunately, this incident is not an isolated one. Similar incidents of racist and ethnic graffiti and offensive imagery have occurred several times in Groton in recent years. I want to take this opportunity to report that, as a result of a successful investigation by our Police Department, five teenagers confessed to the vandalism and graffiti incident at the Country Club last year, and all went through the Restorative Justice Program, which provides education and support for offenders to comprehend the impact of, take full responsibility for their actions, and make amends.

Given this success, I want to restate the request for anyone who may have any information about this recent incident to please come forward and share it with the Groton Police. Groton, through its Select Board and Diversity Task Force is working tirelessly to educate the community on ending racism with its goal of being a community that truly welcomes all.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

1. Mr. Haddad said that as the Board would recall, he was planning on appointing Gary Seniw as the Veteran's Service Officer (VSO) but unfortunately, Mr. Seniw was unable to serve in this role and had withdrawn from consideration. Mr. Haddad said that Joe Dean, their current VSO, sent out letters to all of veterans in Town requesting interest in the position. He said that Maureen Heard immediately contacted Human Resources Director Melisa Doig and Joe Dean expressing an interest in the position. Mr. Haddad said that she was an Airforce Vet and had lived in Groton for about 9 years. Mr. Haddad said that he, Mr. Dean, and Ms. Doig interviewed Ms. Heard and had a great interview with her. He said that based on all of this, he had decided to appoint Maureen Heard as their Veteran's Service Officer and respectfully requested that the Board consider ratifying this appointment. Mr. Haddad said that the appointment would be effective today.

Mr. Cunningham moved to affirm appointment of Town Manager of Maureen Heard as Veterans Service Officer effective immediately. Mr. Reilly seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

2. Mr. Haddad said that he had appointed Evan Laudenslager and Preston Southwick to the Groton Country Club Golf Staff. He respectfully requested that the Select Board consider ratifying these appointments

Mr. Reilly made a motion to ratify the Town Manager's appointment of Evan Laudenslager and Preston Southwick to the Groton Country Club Golf Staff. Mr. Cunningham seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

3. Mr. Haddad said that there was one meeting left before Labor Day adding that the Board was scheduled to meet next Monday, August 30th. He suggested that they meet via Zoom next week beginning at 6:30pm adding that Senator Kennedy's office wanted to hold a joint meeting with the Town of Pepperell to discuss public transportation. It was decided to meet on Zoom beginning at 6:30pm.
4. Mr. Haddad said that on June 24th, he, Tom Delaney, Steele McCurdy, Michael Luth, Alison Manugian, and Josh Degen appeared before the Planning Board to discuss the redesign of the Old Ayer Road/Route 119 Intersection as approved by the Planning Board in the Site Plan/Special Permit for Indian Hill Music. He said that the Planning Board informed them that the redesign must comply with Concept Plan 3D, although Tom Delaney, as Highway Surveyor, had the ability to adjust the plan to meet his approval, as long as it closely resembled Concept Plan 3D. Mr. Haddad said he had provided the Board with the final plan that he and Tom Delaney worked out with the Indian Hill Music Engineers. He said they believed this plan met the Planning Board's requirement that the final plan resemble Concept Plan 3D. He said it showed some proposed reconfigurations of the common area (known as Prescott Common) to accommodate widening and straightening of the roadways, and the addition of some storage lanes for the left turns at the southern end of Old Ayer Road (at the present time there is no dedicated left turn lane from Old Ayer Road onto Route 119 at the southern end). Mr. Haddad said that the plan maintains the existing two-way traffic flows on both the northbound and southbound ends of Old Ayer Road where they meet Route 119, and that a dedicated left turn on the southern end had been added for the benefit of emergency apparatus and other large vehicles that would otherwise have difficulty entering Main Street on the north end where the intersection angle is too sharp to allow for adequate sight lines. He said that all of their Public Safety Officials had recommended this Plan. Mr. Haddad said that he had requested time on the Planning Board's Agenda for their meeting of August 26th to request that the Planning Board sign off on this plan as resembling Concept Plan 3D but prior to attending that meeting, he respectfully requested that the Select Board, acting in their role as Road Commissioners, approve this plan. He said that Indian Hill would like to begin construction on September 1, 2021.

Mr. Cunningham asked why this was coming up now. Mr. Haddad said that it was approved 4 years ago, fell off the radar, should have been done 4 years ago and when he and Mr. Delaney looked at it again, it just didn't make sense. Ms. Pine said that there was only a slight change from what was approved to what was being proposed now. Ms. Pine said that there was very little public input or awareness 4 years ago when this was being decided. Ms. Pine said she was also unaware that the left turn off Old Ayer Road was not being changed which is a dangerous intersection already. Ms. Pine said that they needed to listen to their public safety individuals and square off those intersections. Mr. Cunningham said that there was a very well attended public hearing(s) on this matter adding this was the plan that was settled on. Ms. Collette said she agreed with what was being proposed adding she was not the Town Planner when this was going through the approval process. Mr. Delaney said that he went back through all the meetings minutes but wasn't sure what happened between the last meeting and the final decision adding the discussion had been that the final design be left up to him as DPW Director to decide but that 3D was the preferred plan of the Planning Board. Mr. Haddad said that the Planning Board could vote to approve that this plan resembles what they voted on 4 years ago and allow this work to happen.

Mr. Cunningham moved that they support this concept and allow the Town Manager to go to the Planning Board for approval. Mr. Reilly seconded the motion.

The Friends of the Tree Warden spoke in favor of keeping the trees on Prescott Common.

The motion carried unanimously.

5. Mr. Haddad said that he had provided the Board with the first draft of the 2021 Fall Town Meeting Warrant. He said that there were 23 Articles on the Warrant, including one Citizens' Petition. Mr. Haddad reviewed the articles contained within the draft Warrant within the meeting packet.

There was a brief discussion about the marijuana article and the Town Seal placeholder article.

7:15PM – BOARD OF LIBRARY TRUSTEES

Mr. Haddad said that the Library Trustees were here to discuss the FY 2022 Library Budget Reduction of \$55,000 and its impact on the operation of the library, including the potential loss of State Aid. He said that they were at risk of losing \$22K in state aid. He said that the Trustees were requesting that the \$55,000 cut because of budget reductions be restored to the Budget.

Mr. Gerath said that they had lost 2 Library Assistant positions, summer reading help and nine months of Sunday staffing due to this cut in the budget. He said that they were short on the municipal appropriation on wages and would have to apply for a waiver for that. He said that if Town meeting approved this extra funding, they would withdraw their waiver. He said that they could meet their books and hours requirements. Mr. Gerath said that he didn't know what a decision would be on the waiver adding he hoped the State would be sympathetic. He said getting back to full service was very important to them and the residents.

Mr. Cunningham asked if there was any guidance at the State level about how they were responding to requests like this because of COVID and budget issues. Mr. Gerath said that they waived just about everything last year but were not telegraphing that similar waivers would be approved this year. He said he wasn't there to scare them into saying they wouldn't get a waiver if requested.

Mr. Haddad reviewed an updated budget since Town Meeting in the Spring. Mr. Gerath explained why the Trustees had voted to eliminate library late fees which would result in a \$5K (FY22 estimated revenue) reduction in revenue to the Town. Mr. Haddad said that based on all updates to the budget since the Spring Town Meeting, this would yield an increase in the estimated tax rate from \$18.09 to \$18.26 adding that the increase in motor vehicle excise would essentially fund the this increases in the library budget.

Ms. Pine said she was pleased with this solution and suggested that, if need be, having the library open 2 evenings instead of 3 might be a compromise.

Mr. Cunningham moved that the support the Town Manager going to the Finance Committee to present this plan to reinstate the \$55K into the library budget. Mr. Reilly seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

SELECT BOARD ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

1. Mr. Haddad said that the Friends of Prescott had requested a One Day Beer and Wine Liquor License for an Open Mic Night on Friday, September 10, 2021 from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. Mr. Haddad respectfully requested that the Board consider approving the license request.

Mr. Cunningham moved to approve the request for a one-day beer and wine license from the Friends of Prescott for Open Mic Night on September 10, 2021 from 7-9pm. Mr. Reilly seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

2. Mr. Haddad said that as the Board was aware, they had received over \$4 million in Federal Coronavirus Funding (\$1.03 million in CARES Act Funds and \$3.3 million in Coronavirus Recovery Funds). He said it had been many years since the Town had received Federal Funds adding that it was necessary to have a policy in place on how these funds would be managed. Mr. Haddad said that Town Accountant Patricia Dufresne had drafted an Internal Control Policy for Federal Award Management. He said that it was very well written and extremely comprehensive and respectfully requested that the Board consider approving this Policy

Ms. Dufresne said that they needed a policy in place to control how federal funds were spent and needed this done for the current Fiscal Year. Mr. Cunningham said that they could amend it as they see fit moving forward should anything change.

Mr. Cunningham moved that they approve the Town of Groton Internal Control Policy for Federal Award Management as presented. Mr. Reilly seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

3. Mr. Haddad said that the Friends of Prescott presented a proposed landscaping plan for the front of the Prescott School at their last meeting. He said that they requested assistance from the Highway Department to install the proposed concrete sidewalk. Mr. Haddad said that the Board requested a cost estimate from DPW Director Tom Delaney prior to approving the Plan. He said that according to Mr. Delaney, it would cost approximately \$24,730 for this work (\$18,000 in labor and \$6,730 in materials). He said that while the Labor cost was high (Mr. Delaney anticipated this taking three weeks to complete), those funds were already in the budget and would just delay other

projects. He said that the materials would cost (\$6,730) which was not budgeted. He said that they would need to identify a funding source should the Board agree to authorize the work.

Mr. Cunningham said he was not willing to spend \$6,730 at this time. Ms. Pine said that they could approve it as a not to exceed amount. She said it was good to give that feedback and ask them to scale back on the amount of concrete. Mr. Cunningham said he would like to see a final plan that wasn't as impactful.

Ms. Sartini asked what projects would be delayed. Mr. Delaney listed some items that could be delayed including early preparation for the winter. Mr. Reilly said delaying other work for 3 weeks was an issue but they needed to look at this as a betterment to one of their properties adding he was struggling with this.

Mr. Haddad said that Judy Anderson sent an email regarding lack of railings on the front steps and added he would be going to the HDC for permission to install those next month.

Mr. Haddad asked the Board to vote to approve the use of DPW labor and materials cost not to exceed \$6,000 for the redesign of the front of Prescott School.

Mr. Cunningham made the motion. Mr. Reilly seconded the motion. Mr. Cunningham asked that they see final plan before anything occurs. The motion carried unanimously.

4. Mr. Haddad said that they had received a request from the Sewer Commission and Water Commission to extend the approval for virtual meetings through March 31, 2022. He respectfully requested that the Board approve this request.

Mr. Cunningham moved to accept the request. Mr. Reilly seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Pine said it behooved them to keep an eye on the Delta Variant but wanted them to think about allowing the Select Board, Conservation Commission, Planning Board and Board of Health to go back to remote meetings. She said she thought they should have a full board make that decision.

5. Mr. Haddad said that he thought the Board was the leader in the State requiring vaccinations and was very proud of them. Mr. Haddad said that a lot of their employees had already complied with the August 31st deadline to be vaccinated and show proof. Mr. Haddad said that everyone had been following the mask mandate but asked them to reconsider mandating masks when vaccinated employees were meeting with other vaccinated employees. Ms. Pine said she didn't have a problem with a few people meeting together when vaccinated.

Mr. Cunningham moved to amend their previous policy to allow up to 3 employees who were all vaccinated to meet together in the same space without masks. Mr. Reilly seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Cunningham mentioned that Pfizer had received full FDA approval that day.

ON-GOING ISSUES

B: Mr. Haddad said that the deadline for Green Communities was coming up adding they were moving forward with their application.

MINUTES

Mr. Reilly moved to approve minutes of regularly scheduled meeting of August 9, 2021. Mr. Cunningham seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Pine adjourned the meeting at 8:37pm.

Approved: _____
Peter S. Cunningham, Clerk

_____ respectfully submitted:
Dawn Dunbar, Executive Assistant

Date Approved: 08/30/2021