# SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES MONDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2021

**APPROVED**

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

**Also Present:** Mark W. Haddad, Town Manager; Dawn Dunbar, Executive Assistant (Via Zoom) Ms. Pine called the meeting to order at 7:00pm and reviewed the agenda.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements.

## TOWN MANAGER’S REPORT

1. Mr. Haddad said that they had updated the Board's Infectious Disease Protocols Policy to reflect the Mandatory COVID- 19 vaccination requirement and requiring employees to report a close contact with anyone infected with COVID-19. He reviewed the policy updates that were being proposed. Mr. Degen asked how boosters were going to be addressed. Mr. Haddad said that he was not bringing that forward at this time. He said he was not ready to take that next step yet. Ms. Pine said that boosters were being recommended but people needed to wait until 6 months after the second vaccine to get a booster. Ms. Manugian asked if they could require that people get the booster one month after their 6 months was up. Mr. Haddad said that they could but asked the Board to hold off and have the discussion again until January.

Mr. Haddad respectfully requested that the Board approve this amended Policy.

*Mr. Cunningham moved to adopt the Infectious Disease Protocol Policy as presented. Ms. Manugian seconded the motion. Roll Call: Pine-aye; Manugian-aye; Degen-aye; Cunningham-aye; Reilly-aye*

1. Mr. Haddad said that with regard to the Fiscal Year 2023 Budget, they had completed the reviews with all Departments and Boards. He said that the budget reviews were excellent and that he could not be happier with the performance of their excellent Department Heads. He said that they were out of balance still but were working on balancing the budget.

Mr. Haddad said that one issue that had come up with the Interface Mental Health Referral Services. He said that two years ago, he eliminated funding for the Interface Council (the total cost for the service at that time was

$12,000, which Groton paid $8,000 and the GDRSD and Town of Dunstable paid $2,000 each). He said that the Board received concerns from several residents and the Board decided to restore the funding by seeking a reserve fund transfer. He said that he was informed last week that the new cost of the service had increased from $12,000 to

$20,000. Mr. Haddad said that in addition, he was told that the Town of Dunstable had decided to no longer participate in this program and would not be contributing $2,000 for the program. He said that in order to meet this year's cost of $20,000, they would need to come up with an additional $10,000 in FY 22 and then increase the FY 23 budget. Mr. Haddad said that due to the increase and the fact that Dunstable no longer wanted to participate, he was inclined to withdraw from the service due to the increase cost and budgetary increase. Mr. Haddad said that one solution was to use money from the Lawrence Academy Gift Account to fund this for the next year. Mr. Degen said he would like to know how many Groton residents used the services so that they could better negotiate the fees now that Dunstable has decided to withdraw. Ms. Manugian asked if Mr. Haddad knew how long it took the referral to be made. Mr. Haddad said that he would have to find that out. Ms. Pine said that it seemed like it was a well-used service and didn’t think just cutting it off was good for the residents of the Town. Ms. Manugian said that she needed to lot more information adding she did not think from personal experience that the service was not what she expected.

## TAX CLASSIFICATION HEARING CONTINUATION

Principal Assistant Assessor Megan Foster and Board of Assessor Member Mr. Don Black were present.

*Mr. Degen moved to re-open the public hearing. Ms. Manugian seconded the motion. Roll Call: Pine-aye; Manugian-aye; Degen-aye; Cunningham-aye; Reilly-aye*

Ms. Foster explained the purpose for the tax classification hearing and the action that would be required by the Board that evening. Ms. Foster reviewed some tables she provided the Board in their packet. She said that new growth was certified in

$19,751,110 in assessed value or a new growth value of $347,620. Ms. Foster said that the town was 94% residential and 6% commercial/industrial/personal property. She said that this was consistent with previous years. Ms. Foster said that they have come to a single tax rate of $17.19 and explained the calculation. She said that a factor of 1 would result in the taxation of all property at the same single tax rate. Ms. Foster showed the difference between the single tax rate, split rate with CIP of 125% and max split rate at 150%.

Ms. Foster reviewed a small commercial exemption option that the Board may choose to adopt which would provide a 10% exemption to small commercial businesses that qualify. Mr. Haddad said that the Board had not voted to adopt this in the past.

Mr. Haddad said that he was recommending that the Board adopt a single tax rate with no residential or commercial exemptions.

*Mr. Degen moved that the Board use the factor of 1 and vote a single tax rate in the Town of Groton at a tax rate of $17.19. Mr. Cunningham seconded the motion.*

Ms. Pine asked what an arm’s length transaction was and what personal property meant. Mr. Haddad said that if you take a commercial building and shake everything out of it, that was considered personal property.

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

*Mr. Degen moved that they not adopt a residential or small business commercial exemption. Ms. Manugian seconded the motion. Roll Call: Pine-aye; Degen-aye; Manugian-aye; Cunningham-aye; Reilly-aye*

*Mr. Degen moved to close the public hearing. Ms. Manugian seconded the motion. Roll Call: Pine-aye; Degen-aye; Cunningham-aye; Reilly-aye; Manugian-aye*

*Mr. Degen moved that the Board reaffirm the previous 2 motions. Mr. Cunningham seconded the motion. Roll Call: Pine- aye; Degen-aye; Manugian-aye; Cunningham-aye; Reilly-aye*

## TOWN MANAGER’S REPORT - CONTINUED

1. Mr. Haddad said that they had received five Letters of Interest in response to their Request for Letters of Interest from firms interested in entering into a Host Community Agreement with the Town of Groton for a Recreation Marijuana License. He said that letters of Interest were received from the following firms:
	* Noble Manna Farms, Inc.
	* N.E. Craft Cultivators
	* BeWell
	* United Cultivation
	* The Stories Company

Mr. Haddad said he believed all of these proposals were well done and complied with the Request for Letters of Interest that they issued. He said he pleased with the result. Mr. Haddad said that he asked Town Counsel for any advice on how to proceed. He recommended that they set up interviews with the 5 applicants and then make an informed decision based on their presentation in the public meeting. Mr. Haddad said that they could grant host agreements with all firms but advised against that. He said that he thought it could get messy and cost the applicants money even if they might not get the license from the Town. He said that they had 4 licenses to give out but their zoning was too restrictive for it at this time.

Mr. Degen said he thought they should interview each of the applicants to get a feel for them and their business. Mr. Haddad suggested setting up the interviews for January for a non-Select Board meeting night. Ms. Pine said that she didn’t think it was worth their time to interview any firm that didn’t have a lease agreement. Mr. Haddad said he agreed and needed to talk that out. Ms. Pine asked also for a letter from the landlord or seller that they understood there was a marijuana business being proposed for a particular space. Mr. Cunningham said he didn’t mind interviewing all of them especially if a change to zoning was going to be proposed. Ms. Pine said that they would need to bring a change to zoning to the Spring Town Meeting. Mr. Haddad said that they would be able to start the process but wouldn’t be able to get though the Planning Board until they had the proper zoning in place. Mr. Haddad said that he was looking at an additional meeting the second week of January to hold these interviews.

There was a brief discussion about outreach meetings and whether the Board should hold them on top of the applicants having to hold their own outreach meetings. The Board decided to meet on January 5th at 5pm with a snow date of January 6th at 5pm.

## SELECT BOARD ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

1. Mr. Haddad said that for the past month or so, they had advertised for interested citizens to serve on the Destination Groton Committee. He said that the Charge of the Committee called for a five-member Committee. He said that they had received six Committee Interest Forms from the following individuals: Joan Parker-Roach, Julie Platt, Jeff Gordon, Mairi Elliot, Greg Sheldon, and Brenda Perreault. Mr. Haddad said that he wanted to discuss how the Board wanted to determine who/how to appoint this Committee.

Ms. Manugian asked if they could amend the charge to include all 6 applicants. Mr. Haddad said that they could but said he recommended leaving it at 5. Ms. Pine said she was in favor or appointing Greg Sheldon and Jeff Gordon as they had been integral leaders on the Destination Groton study. Ms. Manugian said that she would like to interview them all. Mr. Degen agreed with Ms. Manugian adding he didn’t want to show preferential treatment. Mr. Haddad said that he would add this to next week’s agenda. Mr. Reilly said that he also agreed they should interview all candidates.

## OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

## ON-GOING ISSUES

Mr. Haddad said he had no updates to the on-going issues.

Ms. Pine said that they were having a small ceremony at Surrenden Farm next Monday night for the CPC Chair to present a large check to the Town for the final Surrenden Farm debt payment. She invited Board members to attend adding the ceremony was being held at 3:45pm on December 13th.

## MINUTES

*Mr. Degen moved to approve the minutes of the regularly scheduled meeting of November 22, 2021 as written. Mr. Cunningham seconded the motion. Roll Call: Pine-aye; Manugian-aye; Degen-aye; Reilly-aye; Cunningham-aye*

Ms. Pine adjourned the meeting at 8:07pm.

Approved:

Peter S. Cunningham, Clerk respectfully *submitted:*

Dawn Dunbar, Executive Assistant

Date Approved: 12/13/2021