# **SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES**

# **MONDAY, JANUARY 23, 2023**

**Held Virtually on Zoom**

**SB Members Present:** John F. Reilly, Chair; Rebecca H. Pine, Vice Chair; Matthew F. Pisani, Clerk; Alison S. Manugian; Peter S. Cunningham

**Also Present:** Mark W. Haddad, Town Manager, Kara Cruikshank, Executive Assistant; Dawn Dunbar, Town Clerk, Patricia DuFresne, Town Accountant, Hannah Moller, Tax Accountant; Megan Foster, Principal Assessor; Melisa Doig, Human Resources Director; Finance Committee: Bud Robertson, David Manugian

John Reilly called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM and reviewed the agenda.

**ANNOUNCEMENT**S

Mr. Haddad commended the public for their patience and understanding of the closure of the Town Hall the past two days due to snow storms. He said that employees remained accessible remotely. The Town Hall would be open to the public tomorrow, Tuesday, January 24, 2023 for regularly scheduled hours.

David Manugian said that the Capital Planning Advisory Committee would be holding a public forum on

Monday, January 30, 2023 located at the Town Hall Second Floor Meeting Room to discuss the Prescott Building. He said that the public is invited to express their concerns and ask questions. Mr. Haddad said that the Friends of Prescott have been invited to speak.

Dawn Dunbar, Town Clerk said that the nomination papers would be available Wednesday, February 1, 2023 for the annual Town Election Day being held on May 23, 2023. The deadline to return all nomination papers is Tuesday, April 4, 2023.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

**None**

**MANAGER'S REPORT**

1. **Mr. Haddad asked the Board to accept the nomination of Corey Magliozzi and appoint him to the Trails Committee.**

*Mr. Cunningham made a motion to approve the nomination and appointed Corey Magliozzi to the Trails Committee with the term expiring June 2023. Mr. Pisani seconded the motion. The motion carried. Roll Call: Pine- aye, Pisani- aye Cunningham- aye, Manugian- aye, Reilly- aye*

1. **Fiscal Year 2023 Second Quarter Financial Review**

Mr. Haddad displayed the FY2023 second quarter financial report and reviewed it with the Select Board. He said that he is very pleased with the Local Meal Tax which has already exceeded 50% of the $250,000 budgeted. The Local Room Occupancy Tax has also exceeded the budgeted amount of $100,000. Mr. Haddad said that the first quarterly payment from the Groton Music Hill ticket surcharge has been received and $8,500 would be recorded in Payments in Lieu of Taxes. The $25,000 increase to the budget would be sufficient and may need to be increased in the future. Mr. Robertson asked if the ticket surcharge can be listed in a subcategory of its own. Ms. Dufresne said that request can be easily accomplished for the third quarter. Mr. Cunningham asked if the funds received from the Registry of Deeds were included in the report. Mr. Haddad said that CPA funding is not tracked in this report. Ms. Dufresne confirmed that only general funds are included. Mr. Haddad said that he is pleased with Country Club’s revenue and it continues to succeed. $184,000 was collected in last year's first two quarters and this year the amount has already surpassed that amount at $212,000 however, spending has increased with the need for additional employees. Mr. Haddad said there will be a new revenue source once the pickleball courts are open. Ms. Pine asked if the pickleball courts are complete and recommended that there be an official public opening. Mr. Cunningham said that the courts would be finalized in April. License and Permits have also exceeded the budgeted amount for the year and are projected to increase next year with the anticipation of the development of 500 Main Street. Mr. Haddad said that Investment Income has exceeded the budget due to Ms. Moller’s investment in the Florence Roche accounts. Real Estate and Personal Property as shown on the report are lower due to the first two quarters being an estimation of the prior year's tax bill. The third and fourth quarters will be significantly higher for the debt service owed on the construction of the new elementary school. Ms. Dufresne commented that this is an unusual year and the taxes will be disproportionate until the third and fourth payments. Mr. Haddad said that the Excise Tax Bills would be mailed out next week. Ms. Moller said that there is a $60,000 increase from the previous year. Mr. Haddad expressed that the Town’s revenue is strong and that there is approximately $1.2 million dollars more in revenue than there was last year at this time.

Mr. Haddad commented that this year's expenditures compared to last year have increased due to the Country Club requiring additional employees and the need for extra COA vans. He reminded the Select Board that the funds utilized on the vans would be fully reimbursed by the State. The General Government, Public Safety, and DPW have remained consistent. Mr. Haddad said that the DPW has expended a significant amount of funds in the last couple of days due to the recent snow storms. Mr. Cunningham commented that the winter has been generally mild and questioned why there has been an increase in expenditures. Mr. Haddad said that the storms utilized a substantial amount of products to treat the roads. He said that the Operating Expenses are remaining within the budget and there is currently no need for concern.

1. **Update On Fiscal Year 2023 Goals and Objectives**

**Environmental Contamination Issues**

Mr. Haddad said that the Select Board had a meeting on November 21, 2022 to discuss the alternatives for addressing the PFSA issue at the high school. There were three options discussed and that included tying into three different Towns, Pepperell, Dunstable, or Groton Water Systems. The preferred option was tying into the Groton Water System. Mr. Haddad said he is currently working with T. Orcutt and consultations to determine the best short term solution. He said that today he conversed with the office of Congresswomen Trahan to assist in potential federal funding. There is also State funding that can be applied for. A recommendation to the Board can be expected in the next few months. Mr. Haddad said that the EPA is on their winter hiatus for the work being conducted at the Squannacook Sportsmen Club. They are expected to return in March. Ms. Pine asked for clarification why the alternative Towns are being sought if the Select Board agreed that the tying into the Groton Water System would be the best alternative. Mr. Haddad said he wanted to ensure that every option had been explored. Ms. Pine asked what the the short term solutions are. Mr. Haddad said that the short term solutions that are being considered are trucking in water for supplying the irrigation systems and filling tanks or potentially running a temporary line from Pepperell.

**Climate Change**

Mr. Haddad said that the Sustainability Commission met with the Select Board on December 12, 2022 and the workshop was very successful. He said that they had requested funding for educational tools and a pollinator garden and would be submitting a warrant article. Mr. Haddad said he would be meeting with them to assist with the next steps. Ms. Pine commented that numerous people in Town are hoping that the new Florence Roche Elementary School would install solar paneling and there are grants that the Town may qualify for however, after researching if the Town were to receive grant funding the reimbursement from the State would be reduced. Ms. Pine said at this time they would not continue to pursue any solar panel grants.

**Reducing Cost of Government**

Mr. Haddad said that Ms. Foster presented at the December 19, 2022 meeting on how new growth is determined. The first quarterly payment from Groton Hill Music was received and they we were very pleased. Mr. Haddad said that he made a commitment to reach out to the private schools and would be asking for assistance on paying down the debt service of the elementary school. The Green Communities Grant project for the installation of energy efficient lighting at the Library and Center Fire Station has been completed. Mr. Haddad said that they were hoping to apply for another grant in the spring, however will not be eligible until the training for the Maintenance Foreman is completed. The class was full when he had tried to register. Mr. Haddad said he and a few others would be collaborating with RISE Engineering on seeking other opportunities for energy efficient grants and they would be focusing on the Middle School.

Mr. Haddad reiterated Mr. Manugian’s announcement that the Capital Planning Advisory Committee has scheduled a public forum on January 30, 2023 to discuss the long term needs of the Prescott School. He said that the grant from the State was received to install the elevator at Prescott School and bids are due at the beginning of February.

**Affordable Housing and Housing Diversity**

Mr. Haddad said that the Affordable Housing is scheduled to meet with the Select Board on February 6, 2023 to provide an update. He said that they would be filing a CPA application to promote affordable housing.

**Diversity, Equity and Inclusion**

Mr. Haddad said that the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee were invited to attend the February 13, 2023 meeting to provide an update to the Select Board.

1. **Consider Approving Town Manager’s Proposed DPW Director-In-Training Program**

Mr. Haddad said that Mr. Delaney is anticipating on retiring from the DPW in two years. He said that the In-Training Program has been a success and there is $7,000 in savings that would be applied from a recent retirement. There are two internal applicants that he would be interviewing in the next couple of weeks. Mr. Haddad asked the Select Board to consider approving the In-Training Program. Mr. Cunningham asked if Mr. Haddad addressed the unions. Mr. Haddad confirmed that had conversed with both the Supervisors Union and the Highway Union and they were very supportive of the program. Ms. Pine asked what education credentials or training qualifications are required for this position. Mr. Haddad said a high school education would be adequate since it is not an engineering position. He commented that working with a candidate would assist in shaping a successful transition. Ms. Pine was concerned that the applicant should meet certain requirements with the extensive amount of management and knowledge that is necessary. Ms. Manugian questioned the time frame of the previous training programs that had been completed. Mr. Haddad said that they varied from six months to two years. Mr. Pisani agreed that the program is beneficial and that two years of training would be adequate due the varying responsibilities within four seasons. Mr. Cunningham requested to see the job description and qualifications; he noted that there are different levels of chemical certifications and proper licenses that should be required. Mr. Haddad assured the Select Board that all DPW employees obtain their CDL and Hydraulic license. Ms. Manugian was concerned that the appointed person may not want to resume working with Town, if the Town decides to choose an outside candidate. Mr. Haddad pointed out that there is a risk either way; the applicant may be opposed to accepting the position after observing all the responsibilities that are entailed. Mr. Reilly asked how the $7,000 would be utilized. Mr. Haddad said that the internal employee would shadow Mr. Delaney and perform their daily tasks however if there were night meetings or additional training needed the funds would be utilized. Mr. Reilley commented that the DPW Director is the only person that is knowledgeable on creating the budget within the department. Mr. Haddad said that the applicant would be required to attend budget training and assist in creating the upcoming budgets. The Select Board decided that they would continue the discussion at the February 27, 2023 meeting.

1. **Fiscal Year 2024 Budget Development Update**

Mr. Haddad said that he sent an email congratulating the Finance Team. He was pleased to hear that Wall Street has reaffirmed the AAA Bond Rating as stable and the Town would be receiving a first time SP Plus 1 rating which is the highest rating for temporary bonding. The report shared today shows that the Town is in great shape financially and that Wall Street appreciates the ways the Town conducts things. Mr. Haddad ensured to inform them during their conversation the process of the FY24 budget and that the finance team believes that the Town’s financial strategies and management of budgets would allow for the Town to proceed through this crisis without impacting the financial policies. He explained the importance of staying within the financial polices and the impact it could have on retaining the AAA Bonding. Wall Street will be reviewing the Town again in June. Mr. Haddad said that the $1.95 million of free cash was received today for the School District and that the amount has increased by $600,000 from the prior year. Mr. Haddad said that the School District should have the ability to cover a portion of the one-time costs in ARPA positions utilizing their own funds. Mr. Haddad said it will be essential to explore both the Town’s and the School Districts free cash.

Mr. Haddad recommended that there be an executive session scheduled for February 27, 2023 at 6:00 pm prior to the Select Board’s regularly scheduled meeting. He said that the School District’s budget would be announced prior to that session.

1. **Update on Select Board Meeting Schedule Through 2023 Spring Town Meeting**

Mr. Haddad reviewed the upcoming meetings with the Select Board. He said on February 8, 2023 that the School District would be meeting at the Middle School PAC to discuss the initial school budget they would be required to finalize their budget by March 15th.

Monday, January 30, 2023 -Destination Groton Committee Update

-Consider opt out of mail in voting for Annual Town Election

-Discuss Whether or Not to opt-in for Early Voting for Annual -Town Election

Monday, February 6, 2023 -Affordable Housing Trust Update/ Report

Monday, February 13, 2023 - Regularly Scheduled Meeting

Monday, February 20, 2023 - No Meeting (President’s Day)

Monday, February 27, 2023 -Review First Draft of 2023 Spring Town Meeting Warrant

Monday, March 6, 2023 - Regularly Scheduled Meeting

Monday, March 13, 2023 -Public Hearing of 2023 Spring Warrant Regularly scheduled meeting

Monday, March 20, 2023 - No Meeting

Monday, March 27, 2023 - Regularly Scheduled Meeting

Monday, April 3, 2023 - Regularly Scheduled Meeting

Monday, April 10, 2023 - Approve Warrant for Posting

Monday, April 17, 2023 - No Meeting (Patriot’s Day

Monday April 24, 2023 - Regularly Scheduled Meeting

Saturday, April 29, 2023 -2023 Spring Town Meeting

**SELECT BOARD ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION AND ACTION**

1. **Mr. Haddad asked the Board to consider appointing Barbara Rich to the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee.**

*Ms. Pine made a motion to appoint Barbara Rich to the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee. Mr. Cunningham seconded the motion. The motion carried. Roll Call: Pine- aye, Pisani- aye Cunningham- aye, Manugian- aye, Reilly- aye*

1. **Mr. Haddad asked the Board to consider approving the Political Activity by Town Employees Policy and the Political Activity by Elected and Appointed Officials (Non-Employees) Policy.**

*Mr. Cunningham made a motion to approve the Political Activity by Town Employees Policy. Ms. Pine seconded the motion. The motion carried. Roll Call: Pine- aye, Pisani- aye Cunningham- aye, Manugian- aye, Reilly- aye*

*Mr. Cunningham made a motion to approve the Political Activity by Elected and Appointed Officials (Non- Employees) Policy. Ms. Pine seconded the motion. The motion carried. Roll Call: Pine- aye, Pisani- aye Cunningham- aye, Manugian- aye, Reilly- aye*

Ms. Pine commented that she had originally requested that the two policies be changed and noted that the language may not be the clearest however; it is the language that is utilized by the State and should be adopted. Mr. Cunningham said that it is important that the two policies are differentiated.

1. **Mr. Haddad asked the Board to approve the letter to the Division of Conservation and Recreation/Mass Trails Program in support of Squannacook Greenways Grant Application.**

*Ms. Pine made a motion to approve the letter to the Division of Conservation and Recreation/Mass Trails Program in support of the Squannacook Greenways Grant Application as amended. Ms. Manugian seconded the motion. The motion carried. Roll Call: Pine- aye, Pisani- aye, Cunningham- aye, Manugian- aye, Reilly- aye*

1. **Mr. Haddad asked the Board to consider approving a One Day Beer and Wine Liquor License for the Friends of Prescott for a Prescott Open Mic Night on Friday, February 10, 2023 from 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.**

*Mr. Pisani made a motion to approve a one day Beer and Wine Liquor License for the Friends of Prescott for a Prescott open Mic Night on Friday, February 10, 2023 from 6:30pm to 9:30 pm. Ms. Pine seconded. The motion carried. Roll Call: Pine- aye, Pisani- aye Cunningham- aye, Manugian- aye, Reilly- aye*

1. **Mr. Haddad asked the Board to authorize the Town Manger and the Chair of the Select Board permission to sign the expense warrant.**

*Ms. Pine made a motion to authorize the Town Manager and the Chair of the Select Board permission to sign the expense warrant. Mr. Cunningham seconded. The motion carried. Roll Call: Pine-aye, Cunningham-aye, Pisani-aye, Manugian- aye, Reilly- Abstain*

**OTHER BUSINESS**

Ms. Pine recommended that there be an update regarding the ARPA funding.

**SELECT BOARD ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION AND ACTION**

**MINUTES**

*Mr. Cunningham made a motion to approve the minutes of the regularly scheduled meeting on January 9, 2023 as amended. Ms. Pine seconded the motion. The motion carried. Roll Call: Pine- aye, Pisani- aye Cunningham- aye, Manugian- aye, Reilly- aye*

The meeting was adjourned at 8:06 p.m.

Respectfully submitted: Kristine Fox, Minute Taker