

**SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES  
MONDAY, MARCH 27, 2023  
TOWN HALL SECOND FLOOR MEETING ROOM**

APPROVED

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

**SB Absent:** none

**Also Present:** Mark Haddad, Town Manager; Kara Cruikshank, Executive Assistant; Dr. Laura Chesson, GDRSD Superintendent; Sherry Kersey, Business Manager; Bruce Easom, CPC Chair; Fay Raynor, Groton-Dunstable Regional School Committee; Brian Callahan, DPW Director in Training  
Finance Team: Megan Foster, Principal Assessor; Hannah Moller, Treasurer/Collector; Dawn Dunbar, Town Clerk; Patricia Dufresne, Town Accountant; Melisa Doig, Human Resource Director  
Finance Committee Members: Bud Robertson, Chair; Colby Doody, Vice Chair; Gary Green; Mary Linskey; Michael Sulprizio; Scott Whitefield

Mr. Reilly called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM and reviewed the agenda.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Mr. Robertson called the Finance Committee meeting to order.

Mr. Pisani announced on Sunday, April 2nd from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm, the Groton Firefighter Association will be hosting a breakfast with the Easter Bunny. Tickets are still available.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Mr. Prest said three children and three adults were killed today in Nashville, Tennessee. Respectfully, Mr. Prest asked for a moment of silence for the children and adults.

Ms. Dunbar reminded everyone that nomination papers are still available in the Town Clerk's office for the May 23, 2023 Election. Papers must be pulled by 5:00 pm on March 31, 2023, and must be returned by Tuesday, April 4<sup>th</sup> at 5:00 pm. Nomination Papers must have at least 50 registered voters' signatures to be certified. There are still several elected boards with potential vacancies. The committees with vacancies are as follows: Park Commission, (1) three-year term; Board of Health, (1) three-year term; Planning Board (1) three-year term; Sewer Commission, (1) three-year term; Groton Dunstable School Committee, (1) three-year term; and the Groton Housing Authority, (1) five-year term. If anyone's interested, please contact the Clerk's office for further details. The last day to register to vote and to participate in the 2023 Spring Town Meeting and the 2023 Town Election is Wednesday, April 19<sup>th</sup> by 5:00 pm. The Town Hall will be open until 5:00 pm on Friday, March 31, 2023.

**In Joint Session with the Finance Committee**

Mr. Haddad started by saying he believes the best way to continue the review of the FY 2024 Budget is to walk everyone through his memo that was provided in the packet, a memo dated March 23, 2023. Then he will walk everyone through the memo that was provided on March 25, 2023, which explains the various options in more detail. Mr. Haddad said on March 22, 2023, the Groton Dunstable Regional School Committee held a public meeting to discuss revisions to their FY24 Budget and Operating Assessments for the Town of Groton. At that meeting, they voted for an Operating Assessment of \$26,177,213, which puts the Towns proposed budget out of balance by \$239,497. The Town of Groton Cannot present a budget to

the Town Meeting that is out of balance. Mr. Haddad believes there are three options for the Select Board and Finance Committee to consider to balance the Budget:

Option# 1- Reduce the Municipal Budget by \$239,497. The Town would need to reduce the Town Manager's Proposed Operating Budget by another \$239,497 and vote to appropriate \$26,177,213 for the Operating Assessment of the Groton Dunstable Regional School District, plus \$465,796 for the District's Debt Assessment. Mr. Haddad said he and the Finance Team do have the cuts available that totals \$239,497 but they are significant reductions and he did not want to discuss them in public unless the Select Board and Finance Committee were seriously considering this option.

Option #2- Amend GDRSD Assessment at Town Meeting. The Finance Committee's Main Budget Motion to Town Meeting must contain the Proposed Operating Assessment that was voted from the Groton Dunstable Regional School District (\$26,177,213). This is the same Main Motion as Option #1. Mr. Haddad explained that the law requires that the Finance Committee has to present the approved budget of the School District to Town Meeting. Since this would put the budget out of balance, under Option #2, the Finance Committee would need to present a motion that would amend the main motion by reducing the Assessment by \$239,497. If the Motion to Amend fails, the Select Board and Finance Committee would need to make another Motion to Amend that would require an Override to fund the additional \$239,497. Mr. Haddad is not in favor of this Option because it is wrought with many problems. If either of the two proposed amendments fail, would be forced to scramble to reduce the Municipal Budget by \$239,497 at Town Meeting, or call for a Special Override Election that does not have a contingent vote at Town Meeting, meaning that if the Override fails, the Select Board would need to call for another Town Meeting prior to June 30th to balance the budget.

Option #3- Under Option #3, the Select Board would call for an Override Ballot Question (or Questions) at the May 23, 2023 Annual Town Election (based on the recommendation in his March 23rd Memo, the amount of the Override would be for \$490,547). Town Meeting would be asked to vote for a balanced budget and for an additional amount of \$490,547 that would be contingent on the approval of an Override at the Annual Town Election.

Mr. Haddad said both Boards would have to agree to support an Override of Proposition of 2 ½. Approval of all the votes would be by majority vote at Town Meeting. Ms. Pine asked if we would have to vote on all the Motions and if would they all have to pass. Mr. Haddad confirmed yes, they would. Ms. Pine stated people that who are opposed to the Override may vote against a Motion. She asked what happens then. Mr. Haddad said the Override question would already be on the Ballot and if Town Meeting doesn't appropriate that money and the Override passes, you have Excess Levy Capacity. Only Town Meeting Can Appropriate the Levy.

Mr. Robertson asked what happens if you go through the Motions and only the Groton Dunstable School passes. Mr. Haddad said it would still be contingent upon the Override. If the Override passes, we would end up with \$251,000 of Excess Levy Capacity. Mr. Cunningham asked if anyone has any insight on where Dunstable is at with their budget. Dr. Chesson said Dunstable is continuing to discuss its budget. They were about \$350,000 out of balance the last they spoke with them. The School Committee has another meeting scheduled for April 5<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Haddad said on April 10<sup>th</sup> the Select Board issues the Warrant, there is a lot of work to do by April 10<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Reilly wanted to make clear to everyone that the Municipal Budget has already been reduced to increase the appropriation to the School District. As far as the amount that Mr. Haddad is requesting for the Municipal Override, he would like to ask the Select Board and the Finance

Committee to consider adding back some of the positions into the budget that have been cut. (i.e.: The Additional Firefighter Position; Vacant Dispatcher Position; Library Sunday Hours; Health Insurance; Snow and Ice Deficit) Ms. Pine said she has some concerns about the number, she believes it is a small number to request an Override. She has concerns about needing an Override in the upcoming years. Ms. Pine wondered if they should consider asking for a larger amount. Mr. Haddad said over five years his projection shows a potential deficit of \$3.6 million. He believes \$3.6 is a conservative number. Mr. Robertson agreed and said we could wait to see what next year brings. Ms. Pine wanted to be clear, it may not be a small number for a lot of people to pay. She said in the context of the situation, it may not be the smartest thing. Ms. Manugian said she does not think she can support the idea of doing a larger Override this year. She's struggling with this and would like to understand more about what the cuts would be on the school side. Ms. Fay Raynor, Groton- Dunstable Regional School Committee Member, said it is a bit premature to talk about what the next few years will bring us. Ms. Pine asked are you saying no Override this year and focus on a multi-year Override next year? Ms. Raynor could not answer this question at this time. Mr. Pisani said a lot of people came to him saying they were disappointed with what the School Committee is doing. He said it is encouraging to hear the School Committee is going to regroup. Dr. Chesson read aloud the proposed cuts from the GDRSD. Mr. Robertson said he supports and relies on Dr. Chesson's opinion. She made the recommendations to the School Committee for the cuts. The School Committee has to agree with her. Mr. Reilly said Dr. Chesson made the recommendations to the School Committee, but they didn't go with her recommendations. Finance Committee Member, Ms. Mary Linskey, said she thinks this is our reality now, we are here because of the lack of State Funding. We are going to revisit this every year. She would like to see the School Committee go back and review this, as it was disappointing. Mr. Haddad said he and the Superintendent speak often and try to bring all the numbers to the decision-makers. The communication between the Town and the School has never been stronger. The question is whether or not to put an Override question on the Ballot and let the voters decide. Mr. Green said the Finance Committee will need to hear from the Select Board if they support an Override or not.

Ms. Pine said to go on the record, if the School Committee does not reduce the Assessment they are asking for today, then she is in favor of putting an Override on the Ballot. She is not in favor of reducing the Municipal Budget further at this point. If we can get by without needing an Override this year, we should start very early in the year planning for an Override next year. Dr. Chesson wanted to remind everyone that next year is a contract year. Groton Herald's, Ms. Connie Sartini, asked if it is possible to separate the Municipal Budget from the School Budget and only do an Override from the school request. Ms. Pine said it could be done but she is not in favor of separating the two. Mr. Cunningham believes it should include both if they do an Override. Mr. Cunningham asked how soon we need to take a vote on an Override. Mr. Haddad was hoping the Select Board would give some signal to the Finance Committee letting them know what the debate should be (i.e.: Cutting the Municipal Budget further; Cutting the School Budget; What to present at Town Meeting). The drop-dead date is April 10<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Haddad is recommending an Override in the amount of \$490,547 should the Select Board and Finance Committee agree on pursuing an override.

*Ms. Pine moved that the Select Board begin preparing for an Override of up to \$490,547, with the understanding if the School Assessment is reduced to \$25,937,716, we would not proceed with an Override. Mr. Cunningham seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

Mr. Prest asked if this Motion is to prepare for Option #3. Ms. Pine said yes it's to prepare for Option #3.

## **REVIEW PROPOSED WARRANT ARTICLES FROM THE COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE**

Mr. Bruce Easom, CPC Chair was in attendance, along with other members of the Community. Mr. Easom said the CPC convened their meeting at 6:30 pm in the First Floor Meeting Room of Town Hall. He would like to reconvene the meeting of the CPC.

Article 13- Community Preservation Funding Accounts: Mr. Easom said this Article allocates the expected revenue received from the Local Surtax Interest and the State. This Article is to see if the Town will vote to make the following appropriations from the CPC Fund: Allocation of Community Preservation Funds to the following sub-accounts: Open Space Reserve; Historic Resource Reserve; and Community House Reserve. None of these amounts are authorized for spending except without additional approval at Town Meeting for the CPC Operating Expense.

Article 14- Community Preservation Funding Recommendations: Mr. Easom said for the record he is a member of the Squannacook Greenways and will recuse himself from these votes but he is happy to summarize the Articles.

Proposal A: Housing Trust Funds Request-This application is seeking \$200,000 in CPA funds. No questions were asked.

Proposal B: The CPC is requesting \$4,000 in CPA funds to cover a portion of the 2023 rehabilitation/preservation costs for the Massapoag Pond. No questions were asked.

Proposal C: The Conservation Commission is requesting \$400,000 in CPA funds to be added to the Town's Conservation Fund. Mr. Haddad asked what is the balance of the Conservation Fund. Mr. Easom said we can get that number from Conservation Administrator, Nik Gualco.

Proposal D: The Park Commission is requesting \$80,000 in CPA funds to replace an existing baseball field located at Town Field. No questions were asked.

Proposal E: The Park Commission is requesting \$90,000 in CPA funds to build over the site of the former Little League regulations diamonds at Cutler Field. Mr. Doody asked when it comes to projects like this are there community members coming forward to have some of the items done? Mr. Haddad said the request came from the Parks Commission, a community group. Mr. Cunningham asked if these are currently little league fields. Will they be turned into softball fields? Park Commissioner, Ms. Eliot said this would be to construct two new softball fields at Cutler Field.

## **CONTINUATION OF PUBLIC HEARING FROM JANUARY 30, 2023- Consider Opting Out of Vote by Mail for the May 23, 2023, Annual Town Election**

**Mr. Haddad asked the Select Board to reconvene the Public Hearing to Consider Opting Out of Vote by Mail for the May 23, 2023, Annual Town Election and then to continue the public hearing until the end of the discussion.**

*Mr. Cunningham made a motion to re-convene the public hearing to consider Opting Out of Vote by Mail for the May 23, 2023, Annual Town Election. Ms. Pine seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

*Ms. Pine made a motion to continue the public hearing to Consider Opting Out of Vote by Mail until the close of the current discussion. Mr. Cunningham seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

Proposal F: Housing Coordinator- This application is requesting \$55,857 in CPA Funding from the Community Housing category. No questions were asked.

Proposal G: Squannacook River Rail Trial- Squannacook Greenways is requesting \$90,000 in CPA Funding. No questions were asked.

Article 33: Amend Funding Distribution for Middle School Track- The CPC has decided they have sufficient funding in the unallocated reserve to reduce the borrowing authorization of Article 9, of the 2022 Spring Town Meeting, by \$900,000 so only \$100,000 will need to be borrowed (instead of the \$1million authorized)

Article 34: Debt Service for Middle School track- This article appropriates the debt payments for the Middle School Track Project. The anticipated debt service for FY24 is \$55,000.

Ms. Pine asked why we have to vote. Mr. Haddad said because Town Meeting approved borrowing \$1 million for the project and that would have to be reduced if the Town did not intend to borrow those funds.

There were no other questions.

**Consider Ratifying the Town Manager’s Appointment of Brian Callahan as the DPW Director-in-Training.**

Mr. Haddad said he brought forward to the Select Board a proposal to institute a DPW Director in Training Program for when Tom Delaney retires. Two Candidates came forward. After interviewing the two Candidates, Mr. Haddad said there was no doubt Brian Callahan is the right person for this program. Mr. Haddad said we are very excited to work with him and believes Mr. Callahan will make a phenomenal Public Works Director. Ms. Manugian said Mr. Callahan was very compelling.

*Ms. Manugian made a motion to ratify the Town Manager’s appointment of Brian Callahan as the DPW Director-in-Training. Mr. Pisani seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.*

**PUBLIC HEARING- EARTH REMOVAL PERMIT EXTENSION REQUEST-RICHARD BLOOD- 94 WEST MAIN STREET, WEST GROTON, MA**

Mr. Haddad read aloud the Public Hearing notice for 94 West Main Street into the record.

Mr. Haddad asked the Select Board to open the public hearing and to continue it until the conclusion of the 7:15 pm public hearing.

*Mr. Cunningham made a motion to open the public hearing for Earth Removal Permit Extension Request for 94 West Main Street. Ms. Manugian seconded the motion. The vote carried unanimously.*

*Ms. Pine made a motion to continue the Earth Removal Permit Extension request at 94 West Main Street until after the 7:15 pm public hearing. Mr. Cunningham seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

Mr. Haddad asked the Select Board to re-convene the public hearing to consider Opting Out of Vote by Mail for the May 23, 2023, Annual Town Election.

*Ms. Pine moved to reopen the public hearing to consider Opting Out of Vote by Mail for the May 23, 2023, Annual Town Election. Ms. Manugian seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

Our Town Clerk, Ms. Dawn Dunbar, said during the previous meeting, in late January, to have a Vote by Mail was going to cost about \$7,000. This included an estimate of about \$3,000 for postcards. There was good conversation but it did not sound like the board wanted to spend the money on sending postcards for Early Voting, so it would reduce that cost. Ms. Dunbar said they will be ready for Vote by Mail. On April 11th she will be ready to send her draft Ballot to the printer. The Town Clerks' office will be ready to proceed however the Board wishes. Mr. Cunningham asked if there was any feedback about Vote by Mail after the previous meeting. Mr. Haddad said not in the Town Manager's office or Town Clerk's office.

Applications could be available at Town Meeting, Ms. Dunbar said.

*Ms. Pine moved to close the public hearing without taking action. Mr. Pisani seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

### **PUBLIC HEARING- EARTH REMOVAL PERMIT EXTENSION REQUEST-RICHARD BLOOD- 94 WEST MAIN STREET, WEST GROTON, MA**

*Ms. Pine made a motion to re-open the public hearing for Earth Removal Permit Extension Request for 94 West Main Street. Mr. Pisani seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

Mr. Haddad read the standard conditions to be included in the Earth Removal Permit.

Mr. Haddad recommended that if the Select Board votes to issue the extension, they include the conditions as recommended by the Earth Removal Committee. Ms. Collette said this Earth Removal Operation has been very low key and it has gone on for decades with very little activity and no complaints. The Blood family would like to maintain their right to continue to remove sand and gravel when necessary.

#### **Public Input**

Mr. Blood said maybe one day they will want to build another slaughterhouse and this would create more jobs.

*Ms. Pine made a motion to close the public hearing. Mr. Pisani seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

*Ms. Pine moved to approve the extension of the Earth Removal Permit to Richard Blood at 94 West Main Street for two years, through March 27, 2025, with the conditions as listed by the Earth Removal Stormwater Advisory Committee. Mr. Pisani seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously*

### **TOWN MANAGERS REPORT**

- 1. Consider Accepting the Town Manger's Nomination and Appoint Brittain McKinley to the Trails Committee**

*Mr. Pisani made a motion to appoint Brittain McKinley to the Trails Committee with a term to expire in June of 2023. Ms. Pine seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.*

- 2. 2023 Spring Town Meeting Warrant Review- Including, but not Limited To Consider Taking Positions on the Various Articles and Consider Opening the Warrant to Add an Additional Article for Change of Funding Distribution for Middle School Track**

Mr. Haddad asked the Board to open the Warrant to add the Article to allow the reduction of the Debt Service for the Middle School Track.

*Ms. Manugian made a motion to open Warrant. Ms. Pine seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

Mr. Haddad asked the Board to please add Article 33 to the Warrant.

*Mr. Cunningham made a motion to add Article 33 to the Warrant. Ms. Pine seconded the motion. The Motion was carried by unanimous vote.*

Mr. Haddad asked the Board to close the Warrant.

*Ms. Pine made a motion to close the Warrant. Mr. Pisani seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

Mr. Haddad said Article 31 on the Warrant provides for Line-Item Transfers within the FY 2023 Budget. He will be requesting the Select Board and Finance Committee to approve Line-Item Transfers at the end of the Fiscal Year, but he said there are some rather large requests that the Town Accountant and he would like to present to the 2023 Spring Town Meeting. Funding that is needed: Building Inspection General Expenses; Board of Health Consulting; Country Club Wages; and Country Club General Expenses. The total request is \$80,355.00

Mr. Haddad wanted to point out that the Moderator did a great job preparing an explanation on electronic voting that will be included in the Warrant.

**Positions**

- Article 1- Unanimous in favor to support
- Article 2- Unanimous in favor to support
- Article 3- Unanimous in favor to support
- Article 4- Unanimous in favor to support
- Article 5- Deferred Until Town Meeting
- Article 6- Ambulance 1 Replacement- Unanimous in favor to support
  - Command Vehicle- Unanimous in favor to support
  - Loader- Unanimous in favor to support
  - IT Infrastructure- Unanimous in favor to support
  - Municipal Building Repairs- Unanimous in favor to support
  - Building Maintenance Van- Unanimous in favor to support
  - Property Improvements- Unanimous in favor to support
  - Police Cruisers- Unanimous in favor to support
  - Hazmat Storage Evidence Locker- Unanimous in favor to support
  - Golf Carts- Unanimous in favor to support
  - Driving Range Improvements- Unanimous in favor to support
  - Greens Equipment- Unanimous in favor to support
- Article 7- Unanimous in favor to support
- Article 8- 4 in Favor to Support- 1 Against, Manugian
- Article 9- Unanimous in favor to support
- Article 10- Unanimous in favor to support
- Article 11- Unanimous in favor to support
- Article 12- Deferred Until Town Meeting

Article 13- Unanimous in favor to support

Article 14-CPC Proposal A: Housing Trust Funds Request- Unanimous in favor to support

CPC Proposal B: Preservation of Lake Massapoag- Unanimous in favor to support

CPC Proposal C: Conservation Fund-FY 2024- 4 in favor to support, 1 Against- Manugian

CPC Proposal D: Rebuild Major League Baseball Diamond- Unanimous in favor to support

CPC Proposal E: Construct Softball Diamonds at Cutler- Unanimous in favor to support

CPC Proposal F: Housing Coordinator- FY 2024- Unanimous in favor to support

CPC Proposal G: Squannacook River Rail Trail- 4 in favor to support, 1 Abstention-  
Cunningham

Article 15: Unanimous in favor to support

Article 16: Ms. Pine suggested amending the wording of this Article to:

3.2.2(v) sign all payroll and expense warrants; provided, however, that the select board, at its sole discretion, may delegate this authority to the town manager and one member of the select board by a vote of the board at a posted meeting- 4 in favor to support with amendment, 1 Against Manugian

Article 17: 4 in favor to support, Cunningham, deferred until Town Meeting.

Article 18: Unanimous in favor to support

Article 19: Unanimous in favor to support

Article 20: Mr. Haddad said it is his understanding this Article will be withdrawn by the Sewer Commission. The Sewer Commission is meeting on Wednesday, March 29<sup>th</sup>.

Article 21: Mr. Haddad said it is his understanding this Article will be withdrawn by the Sewer Commission. The Sewer Commission is meeting on Wednesday, March 29<sup>th</sup>.

Article 22: Unanimous in favor to support

Article 23: Unanimous in favor to support

Article 24: Unanimous in favor to support

Article 25: Deferred Until to Town Meeting

Article 26: Unanimous in favor to support

Article 27: This article allows the Sewer Department to transfer money from its surplus account to cover any deficit in the Fiscal Year 2023 Center Sewer Budget. As of the printing of the Warrant, it is anticipated that \$100,000 (amended from \$25,000) will be transferred for this purpose-  
Unanimous in favor to support

Article 28: Unanimous in favor to support

Article 29: There currently are no prior year bills- Deferred Until to Town Meeting.

Article 30: Unanimous in favor to support

Article 31: Deferred Until to Town Meeting

Article 32: Unanimous in favor to support

Article 33: Unanimous in favor to support

Article 34: Unanimous in favor to support

Article 35: Unanimous in favor to support

### **3. Fiscal Year 2024 Budget Development Update**

After the Finance Committee meets Wednesday at 7:00 pm, he will do a rough draft of the Budget Message for the Finance Committee and he will share it with the Select Board. That will be amended depending on what happens with the schools.



Mr. Haddad stated that he is seeking a \$5,200 annual stipend for the Council on Aging Director for the additional duties she has taken on managing the Center in West Groton. The Center in West Groton was constructed in 2019 primarily and ostensibly to house the Council on Aging Operation. During the design phase of the building, members of the Council on Aging’s Strategic Planning Committee and members of the Center’s Building Committee conducted charettes and fundraising meetings describing the new building as a Community Center for use by all members of the Community. They even changed the name of the “Senior Center” to the “Center”. This has created incredible interest and use of the Building. The Council on Aging Director’s primary function is to manage the Department and create programming for our Seniors. She often works evenings and weekends overseeing those programs. We flex her time to address these additional hours. What we haven’t accounted for is all the other requests for use of the Center. From the Garden Club to the Women’s Club to the Nashoba Valley Artists to requests for birthday parties and other special events, the Council on Aging Director’s schedule is constantly changing and requiring her to work more evenings and weekends serving as a Building Manager, not just the Council on Aging Director. This additional duty (including scheduling and setting up the various rooms for the requested events) is not contemplated in her job description and he believes we need to compensate the Director for taking on the added responsibility Mr. Haddad will talk to the Finance Committee on Wednesday evening but would like to see support for the stipend. Ms. Manugian said she supports this but wonders if a stipend is a right mechanism, the stipend is not pensionable. She asked if there was a way to increase the job responsibilities to the salary. Mr. Haddad said we could change the job description and increase the salary. Town Treasurer, Ms. Moller clarified because she is actively working, the stipend is pensionable. Mr. Cunningham would like to discuss this further with Mr. Haddad.

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

**ITEMS FOR SELECT BOARD CONSIDERATION AND ACTION**

**1 Adopt Proclamation Declaring April 2, 2023, Groton Garden Club Day in Honor of the Club’s 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

Mr. Haddad said the Groton Garden Club is celebrating its 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. The Groton Garden Club requested the Select Board to adopt a proclamation to make April 2, 2023 “Groton Garden Club Day”. Ms. Pine read aloud the proclamation into the record.

*Mr. Cunningham moved to adopt the proclamation as written. Mr. Pisani seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

Ms. Pine said all of the plantings at the Town Commons are handled by the Garden Club. Mr. Cunningham said they did a great job with the plantings at the Fire Station.

**2 Consider Approving a One Day Wine and Malt Beverage License for the Friends of Prescott for an Open Mic Night at the Prescott School on Friday, April 14, 2023 from 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.**

*Mr. Cunningham made a motion to approve a One Day Wine and Malt Beverage License for the Friends of Prescott for an Open Mic Night at the Prescott School on Friday, April 14, 2023, from 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. Mr. Pisani seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.*

**3 Consider Approving a One Day Wine and Malt Beverage license for the Groton Neighbors for an Event at First Parish Church on Friday, May 5, 2023, from 4:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.**

*Mr. Cunningham made a motion to approve a One Day Wine and Malt Beverage License for the Groton Neighbors for an event at the First Parish Church on Friday, May 5, 2023, from 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. contingent upon receiving an up-to-date certificate of insurance. Ms. Manugian seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.*

**OTHER BUSINESS**

**ON-GOING ISSUES**

**Green Communities Application and Implementation-**

Ms. Pine asked for an update on where they stand with Green Communities. Mr. Haddad said Quintin Shea has completed his class so we have completed the projects and we can apply in the Fall for the next round of funding. In the meantime, members of the Sustainability Commission would like to work with us on the application. Rise Engineering is working with the DPW and the Light Commission on potential solar at the middle school.

**Florence Roche-**

Mr. Cunningham asked for an update. Mr. Haddad said the Florence Roche building project is going remarkably well. We are very close to getting the gross maximum project price. This means everything has been bid and we will sign a document saying this is what the project cost will be. The committee did value engineering to cut the costs of the project. The demolition and landscaping are the big items left to bid. When the Building Committee and Project Team bid for the landscaping, they are going to have alternate bids.

**MINUTES-***Mr. Pine made a motion to approve the minutes of the regularly scheduled meeting from March 13, 2023, as presented. Ms. Cunningham seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.*

The meeting was adjourned at 8:55 pm.

Respectively submitted by Kara Cruikshank, Executive Assistant to the Town Manager



## TOWN OF GROTON

173 Main Street  
Groton, Massachusetts 01450-1237  
Tel: (978) 448-1111  
Fax: (978) 448-1115

## Select Board

John F. Reilly, *Chair*  
Rebecca H. Pine, *Vice Chair*  
Matthew F. Pisani, *Clerk*  
Alison S. Manugian, *Member*  
Peter S. Cunningham, *Member*

### Town Manager

Mark W. Haddad

**To:** *Select Board  
Finance Committee*

**From:** *Mark W. Haddad – Town Manager*

**Subject:** *How Override is Voted on At Town Meeting and Ballot*

**Date:** *March 25, 2023*

In an effort to provide as much information as possible to understand how a General Override would work at Town Meeting, I have prepared this memorandum that explains the process in more detail. This supplements the information that was contained in my budget memorandum provided in the Select Board Packet for the Joint Select Board/Finance Committee Meeting scheduled for Monday, March 27, 2023.

As you know, I outlined three options for consideration at Monday's meeting in my Memorandum dated March 23, 2023. Please note that the current proposed FY 2024 Town Manager's Municipal Budget is at \$16,806,679 (after recent reductions totaling \$331,231). Under **Option #1**, the Town would need to reduce the Town Manager's Proposed Municipal Budget by another \$239,497 and vote to appropriate \$26,177,213 for the Operating Assessment of the Groton Dunstable Regional School District, plus \$465,796 for the District's Debt Assessment. The Motion would read as follows:

**MOTION:** *I move that the sum of Twenty-Six Million Six Hundred Forty-Three Thousand Nine Dollars (\$26,643,009) be hereby raised and appropriated from the Fiscal Year 2024 Tax Levy and other general revenues of the Town for the Groton Dunstable Regional School District as represented by lines 1410 through 1413 as shown in Appendix A of the Warrant.*

**Quantum of Town Meeting Vote:** *Majority*

How the Municipal Budget would be reduced is subject to further discussion between the Finance Team, the Select Board and the Finance Committee.

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Under **Option #2**, the Main Motion for the Budget would be the same as described under Option #1. Once that Motion is put on the Floor, a member of the Finance Committee would immediately make the following Motion:

**Motion to Amend:** *I move to amend the Main Motion by reducing the amount by \$239,497, so that the amount appropriated would be \$26,403,512.*

If the Motion to Amend fails, the Select Board and Finance Committee would need to make another Motion to Amend that would require an Override to fund the additional \$239,497. The Motion would be as follows:

**Motion To Amend #2:** *I move that the Main Motion be amended as follows:*

*I move that the sum of Twenty-Six Million Four Hundred Three Thousand Five Hundred Twelve Dollars (\$26,403,512) be hereby raised and appropriated from the Fiscal Year 2024 Tax Levy and other general revenues of the Town for the Groton Dunstable Regional School District as represented by lines 1410 through 1413 as shown in Appendix A of the Warrant, and, further, that, in addition to the amount raised under Lines 1410 through 1413 for the Groton Dunstable Regional School District, the Town vote to raise from the Fiscal Year 2024 Tax Levy and other general revenues of the Town an additional \$239,497 to be added to Line 1410 "Groton Dunstable Regional School District Operating Expenses", contingent upon a Proposition 2½ Override under and pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 59, Section 21C, Clause (g).*

Should this Amendment pass, the Select Board would have to call for a Special Override Election to take place prior to June 30, 2023. Should the Override pass, the FY 2024 Assessment for the Groton Dunstable Regional School District would be \$26,177,213. Should the Override fail, the Assessment would be \$25,937,716 and the GDRSD Committee would need to vote to reduce the Town’s Assessment.

As I stated in my March 23<sup>rd</sup> Memorandum, I am not in favor of this Option because it is wrought with many problems. If either of the two proposed amendments fail, we would be forced to scramble to reduce the Municipal Budget by \$239,497 at Town Meeting, or call for a Special Override Election that does not have a contingent vote at Town Meeting, meaning that if the Override fails, the Select Board would need to call for another Town Meeting prior to June 30<sup>th</sup> to balance the budget.

Under **Option #3**, the Select Board would call for an Override Ballot Question (or Questions) at the May 23, 2023 Annual Town Election (based on the recommendation in my March 23<sup>rd</sup> Memo, the amount of the Override would be for \$490,547). Town Meeting would be asked to vote for a balanced budget and for an additional amount of \$490,547 that would be contingent on the approval of an Override at the Annual Town Election. The end of Appendix A of the Spring Town Meeting Warrant would contain the following:

<b>Contingent Budget - Additional Requested Amount for Override Ballot Question To Be Held on May 23, 2023</b>						
<u>Line</u>	<u>Department/Description</u>	<u>FY 2024 Proposed Within Levy</u>	<u>Additional Amount Requested</u>	<u>FY 2024 Proposed With Override</u>	<u>Additional Tax Rate Impact</u>	<u>Impact On Average Tax Bill</u>
1311	Fire Department Wages	\$ 1,112,490	\$ 30,000	\$ 1,142,490	\$ 0.01	\$ 6.34
1370	Police & Fire Communications Wages	\$ 448,073	\$ 52,000	\$ 500,073	\$ 0.02	\$ 12.68
1410	GDRSD Operating Expenses	\$ 25,937,716	\$ 239,497	\$ 26,177,213	\$ 0.09	\$ 57.06
1661	Library Wages	\$ 314,504	\$ 29,050	\$ 343,554	\$ 0.01	\$ 6.34
3010	Employee Benefits - Health Insurance	\$ 2,090,563	\$ 40,000	\$ 2,130,563	\$ 0.02	\$ 12.68
	Snow and Ice Deficit	\$ -	\$ 100,000	\$ 100,000	\$ 0.04	\$ 25.36
<b>Total</b>					<b>\$ 0.19</b>	<b>\$ 120.46</b>

The various Motions under Article 5 would include the following (sections subject to an Override):

**MOTION 3: PROTECTION OF PERSONS & PROPERTY - Motion 3a:** *I move that Four Million Seven Hundred Thirty-Seven Thousand Five Hundred Ninety-Seven (\$4,737,597) be appropriated for Protection of Persons and Property as represented by lines 1300 through 1372 in Appendix A of the Warrant; each line item to be considered as a separate appropriation for the purposes voted; and to meet this appropriation, the sum of \$787 be transferred from the Excess and Deficiency Fund (Free Cash); the sum of \$350,000 be transferred from Fire & Emergency Medical Services Receipts Reserved; and the sum of \$4,386,810 be raised from the Fiscal Year 2024 Tax Levy and other general revenues of the Town.*

**Motion 3b:** I move that, in addition to the amount raised under Lines 1300 through 1372 for Protection of Persons & Property, the Town vote to raise from the Fiscal Year 2024 Tax Levy and other general revenues of the Town an additional \$30,000 to be added to Line 1311 "Fire Department Wages" and an additional \$52,000 to be added to Line 1370 "Police & Fire Communications Wages" for a total additional sum of \$82,000, contingent upon a Proposition 2½ Override under and pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 59, Section 21C, Clause (g).

**MOTION 4: SCHOOLS - b.) Groton Dunstable Regional School District – Motion (b)1:** I move that the sum of Twenty-Six Million Four Hundred Three Thousand Five Hundred Twelve Dollars (\$26,403,512) be hereby raised and appropriated from the Fiscal Year 2024 Tax Levy and other general revenues of the Town for the Groton Dunstable Regional School District as represented by lines 1410 through 1413 as shown in Appendix A of the Warrant.

**Motion (b)3:** I move that, in addition to the amount raised under Lines 1410 through 1413 for the Groton Dunstable Regional School District, the Town vote to raise from the Fiscal Year 2024 Tax Levy and other general revenues of the Town an additional \$239,497 to be added to Line 1410 "Groton Dunstable Regional School District Operating Expenses", contingent upon a Proposition 2½ Override under and pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 59, Section 21C, Clause (g).

**MOTION 6: LIBRARY AND CITIZEN'S SERVICES – Motion 6a:** I move that the sum of One Million Nine Hundred Forty-Five Thousand Two Hundred Seventy Dollars (\$1,945,270) be hereby appropriated for Library and Citizen's Services as represented by lines 1600 through 1703 as shown in Appendix A of the Warrant; each line item to be considered as a separate appropriation for the purposes voted; and to meet this appropriation, the sum of \$8,494 be transferred from the Excess and Deficiency Fund (Free Cash); and \$1,936,776 be raised from the Fiscal Year 2024 Tax Levy and other general revenues of the Town.

**Motion 6b:** I move that, in addition to the amount raised under Lines 1600 through 1703 for Library and Citizen's Services, the Town vote to raise from the Fiscal Year 2024 Tax Levy and other general revenues of the Town an additional \$29,050 to be added to Line 1661 "Library Wages", contingent upon a Proposition 2½ Override under and pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 59, Section 21C, Clause (g).

**MOTION 8: EMPLOYEE BENEFITS – Motion 8a:** I move that Four Million Nine Hundred Thirty Thousand Six Hundred Sixty-Three Dollars (\$4,930,663) be raised and appropriated from the Fiscal Year 2024 Tax Levy and other general revenues of the Town for Employee Benefits as represented by lines 3000, 3002, 3010, 3011 and 3012 in Appendix A of the Warrant; each line item to be considered as a separate appropriation for the purposes voted.

**Motion 8b:** I move that, in addition to the amount raised under Lines 3000, 3002, 3010, 3011 and 3012 for Employee Benefits, the Town vote to raise from the Fiscal Year 2024 Tax Levy and other general revenues of the Town an additional \$40,000 to be added to Line 3010 "Employee Benefits Health Insurance/Employee Expenses", contingent upon a Proposition 2½ Override under and pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 59, Section 21C, Clause (g).

Approval of all of these votes would be by Majority Vote. It would be done this way so that if the Override fails at the Ballot, the Town would have a balanced budget for Fiscal Year 2024 without having to go back to Town Meeting. The only caveat to this would be that the GDRSD Committee would need to reduce their Assessment to the Town to match the Town Meeting approved Assessment of \$25,937,716.

With regard to the Ballot Questions, the Select Board has a couple of options on how to place them on the Ballot. Please note that a simple majority is required to pass an Override Question at the Ballot. There could be one Question that includes the entire Override Amount. It would read as follows:

**QUESTION 1:** Shall the Town of Groton be allowed to assess an additional \$490,547 in real estate and personal property taxes for the purpose of funding the Town's Annual Operating Budget, including the Town's share of the cost of operating the Groton Dunstable Regional School District for the fiscal year beginning July first two thousand twenty-three? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

Should the Select Board wish to split the Override between the School District and the Municipal Operation, the following two questions would be placed on the Ballot:

**QUESTION 1:** Shall the Town of Groton be allowed to assess an additional \$239,497 in real estate and personal property taxes for the purpose of funding the Town's share of the cost of operating the Groton Dunstable Regional School District for the fiscal year beginning July first two thousand twenty-three? Yes\_\_\_\_  
No \_\_\_\_

**QUESTION 2:** Shall the Town of Groton be allowed to assess an additional \$251,050 in real estate and personal property taxes for the purpose of funding the Town's Annual Operating Budget for the fiscal year beginning July first two thousand twenty-three? Yes\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

I hope this information provides a good summary of the various options before the Select Board and Finance Committee as you work to balance the Fiscal Year 2024 Operating Budget of the Town of Groton. I look forward to reviewing this in more detail at your joint meeting scheduled for Monday, March 27, 2023.

MWH/rjb

cc: Patricia DuFresne – Town Accountant  
Hannah Moller – Treasurer/Collector  
Megan Foster – Principal Assessor  
Dawn Dunbar – Town Clerk  
Melisa Doig – Human Resources Director  
Kara Cruikshank – Executive Assistant  
Dr. Laura Chesson – Superintendent – Groton Dunstable Regional School District  
Sherry Kersey – Director of Business – Groton Dunstable Regional School District