

**SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, JULY 1, 2024
APPROVED**

SB Members Present: Alison Manugian, Chair; Becky Pine, Vice Chair; Peter Cunningham, Clerk; Matt Pisani; John Reilly;

Also Present: Mark Haddad, Town Manager; Kara Cruikshank, Executive Assistant to the Town Manager; Tom Orcutt, Groton Water Superintendent; Jim Gmeiner and Greg Fishbone, Groton Water Commissioners; Melisa Doig, Human Resource Director; Jeremy Januskiewicz, Ayer Deputy Fire Chief; Hannah Moller, Treasurer/Tax Collector; Patricia DuFresne, Assistant Director of Finance/Town Accountant; Bud Robertson, Finance Committee Chair.

Ms. Manugian called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mr. Haddad announced that the Groton Town Hall would be closed to the public on Thursday, July 4th, and Friday, July 5th, due to the July Fourth holiday. On Friday, July 5th, employees will work remotely, take personal time, or take a vacation day. He also announced that Groton's Annual Fireworks show would take place on Monday, July 8th, 2024, starting at 6:00 P.M., at Town Field. Also, the Transfer Station hours will be open on Wednesday, July 3rd, Friday, July 5th, and Saturday, July 6th this week.

Mr. Haddad announced that the gas line at the construction site of the new Florence Roche was struck earlier that day because the gas main was not buried deep enough. He clarified that Dig Safe had clearly marked it beforehand. The Groton Fire Department and National Grid got to the scene quickly and stopped the leak.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD #1

None

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

- 1. Consider Accepting the Town Manager's nomination and Appoint Josh LoPresti and Dan Pierpont to the Trails Committee, with terms expiring on June 30, 2025.**

Ms. Pine made a motion to ratify the Town Manager's appointment of Mr. Josh LoPresti and Dan Pierpont to the Trails Committee with terms to expire on June 30, 2025. Mr. Reilly seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

- 2. Proposed Select Board Meeting Schedule through Labor Day.**

Monday, July 8, 2024	No Meeting
Monday, July 15, 2024	In Joint Session with Finance Committee- Approve FY 2024 Line-Item Transfers Call for the 2024 Fall Town Meeting Island Road Bridge Discussion
Monday, July 22, 2024	No Meeting
Monday, July 29, 2024	Regularly Scheduled Meeting

Monday, August 5, 2024	No Meeting
Monday, August 12, 2024	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, August 19, 2024	No Meeting
Monday, August 26, 2024	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, September 2, 2024	No Meeting

6:15 P.M. Public Hearing- Consider Setting a Special Rate Development Fee for the Chicopee Row/North Street Development Water Main Extension Project.

Mr. Haddad read aloud the public hearing notice into the record.

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

Mr. Tom Orcutt, Groton Water Superintendent, and Water Commissioners Mr. Jim Geminer and Mr. Greg Fishbone attended the public hearing held by the Select Board to discuss and consider adopting a Special Rate Development Fee for the Chicopee Row/North Street Development Water Main Extension Project. Mr. Haddad updated the Board and the public on the project's current status. He said that they were in the planning process, and the drawings were around 80 percent complete. They have secured permit approval from the Groton and Dunstable Conservation Commissions and have obtained state approval for SRF funding at 0 percent. Mr. Haddad had hoped to receive permit approval for the interbasin transfer from the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) at their July meeting. However, he just received notification that the hearing would be in August. This means that the project bidding would be delayed by thirty days. He said he had exchanged numerous emails with the state since receiving the notification. Mr. Haddad inquired about the possibility of having the permit discussed and voted on during the upcoming August meeting. This is currently being considered. If they cannot get on the DCR's August agenda, the project will not be able to obtain SRF funding. The project is expected to be put out to bid on September 1, 2024.

Mr. Haddad said a Public Information Session would be held on July 11th at the Performing Arts Center at 7:00 p.m. Abutters have been notified of the Session, a PowerPoint Presentation will be given, and public information will be presented. He explained there would be a Special Regulation for individuals who are not affected by the PFAS6 but are interested in connecting to the water line. He also said that the Groton Select Board would waive all System Development Fees for all properties in Groton and Dunstable that have had their well water contaminated by Aqueous Film-Forming Foam related to the Groton Dunstable Regional High School contamination plume.

Mr. Haddad mentioned that he had a call with Town Counsel earlier that day, and he's scheduled to have a call with the Town's insurance company on Tuesday, July 2nd, to discuss liability insurance related to the project and the process of going on private property during the connection phase. Mr. Haddad explained that because the taxpayers of Groton would fund the project, he didn't think it was appropriate to charge people at the regular rate. Mr. Orcutt drafted a Select Board Regulation, which the Board reviewed and discussed. Ms. Pine proposed some changes to the Regulation. These suggestions were discussed, and the Board members, Mr. Orcutt and Mr. Haddad, agreed to the changes. Mr. Haddad stated that he would update the Regulation to reflect these changes.

A copy of the updated Select Board Regulation, reflecting the changes voted by the Board, is enclosed in these minutes.

Public Comments

None

Ms. Pine moved to close the public hearing. Mr. Cunningham seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Reilly made a motion to adopt and approve the Special Regulation as amended that evening, effective July 1, 2024. Mr. Pisani seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Haddad thanked Mr. Orcutt for his hard work creating this Special Regulation and thanked Members Pine and Manugian for their feedback and thorough review.

OTHER BUSINESS

ON-GOING ISSUES

- A. PILOTSs- Mr. Haddad mentioned that he had contacted Town Counsel to obtain a draft of the Home Rule Petition before the close of the Warrant for the Board's review.

SELECT BOARD LIASON REPORTS

Mr. Cunningham announced that the Squannacook Rail Trail is not scheduled for reconstruction until approximately 2030. The earmark set aside by Senator Kennedy for the trail's engineering and design has been allocated to the repair fund instead. Ms. Pine stated that the trail's conditions were unsafe. Mr. Cunningham was very upset by this news.

Public Comment Period #2

None

Approval of the Regularly Scheduled Meeting Minutes of June 24, 2024, and Special Meeting of June 25, 2024

Mr. Cunningham moved to approve the minutes of the regularly scheduled meeting of June 24, 2024. Mr. Pisani seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Cunningham moved to approve the minutes of the Special Meeting of June 25, 2024. Ms. Pine seconded the motion. The motion carried 4 in favor, 1 abstention (Manugian).

Mr. Pisani recused himself from the meeting prior to the Fire Chief discussion.

ITEMS FOR SELECT BOARD CONSIDERATION AND ACTION

1. Consider Appointing a Fire Chief for the Town of Groton Pursuant to M.G.L Chapter 42, Section 48.

Mr. Haddad explained that a Search Committee was formed, consisting of seven individuals, to select a new Fire Chief. Thirty applicants applied for the position, and the Committee interviewed four Candidates. They narrowed it down to two finalists: Mr. Arthur Cheeks, the current Full-Time Deputy Fire Chief for the Town of Groton, MA, and Mr. Jon Belanger, the current Deputy Fire Chief for the Town

of Oxford, MA. Both finalists came to the Select Board for an interview during their June 24th meeting, and then both Candidates participated in an Assessment Center. Mr. Haddad said that he was very impressed with both Candidates and that either would be an excellent Fire Chief. He said that based on the results from the Search Committee, the Chiefs Panel, Select Board interviews, and the Assessment Center, Deputy Chief Arthur Cheeks came out on top of each Assessment. Mr. Haddad recommended to the Board that Deputy Chief Arthur Cheeks be appointed as the new Groton Fire Chief. He believes Chief Cheeks is the right person to take over the Groton Fire Department.

Ms. Pine explained the Assessment Center process to those who were not present. She stated that both Candidates had equal experience. Ms. Pine expressed concern about Mr. Belanger's commute from Oxford, MA. She mentioned that she supported Mr. Haddad's recommendation to appoint Deputy Chief Arthur Cheeks.

Mr. Reilly said the process was excellent, and both candidates were exceptional. He also expressed concern about the distance of Mr. Belanger's commute. Mr. Reilly pointed out that some of the things the Chiefs would have to learn and that Mr. Belanger would have a different learning curve than Mr. Cheeks. Deputy Chief Cheeks already knows the locations in Groton and would not have to go through this learning curve. Mr. Reilly also stated that he supported Deputy Chief Arthur Cheeks.

Mr. Cunningham said he was comfortable knowing that Chief McCurdy was a great mentor to Deputy Chief Cheeks and only a phone call away, and he expressed his support for Deputy Chief Arthur Cheeks.

Ms. Manugian added that hiring within was important and thought that was an important message for current and future employees.

Mr. Cunningham enthusiastically made a motion to appoint Deputy Chief Arthur Cheeks as the Fire Chief for the Town of Groton Pursuant to M.G.L Chapter 42, Section 48, pending contract negotiations. Ms. Pine seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Executive Session

Mr. Haddad asked the Board to make a motion to enter Executive Session Pursuant at 6:49 pm to M.G.L., c.30A, §21(a), Clause 2 – “To conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with non-union personnel or to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations with non-union personnel” – Purpose – Prepare for Negotiations with Selected Fire Chief Candidate.

And not return to open session.

Ms. Pine made a motion to enter into Executive Session. Mr. Reilly seconded the motion. Roll Call: Pine-aye; Cunningham-aye; Manugian-aye; Reilly-aye.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:50 p.m. Respectively submitted by Kara Cruikshank, Executive Assistant to the Town Manager.