

**SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES  
MONDAY, JULY 15, 2024  
APPROVED**

**SB Members Present:** Alison Manugian, Chair; Matt Pisani; John Reilly;

**SB Members Absent:** Peter Cunningham, Clerk; Becky Pine, Vice Chair;

**Also Present:** Mark Haddad, Town Manager; Kara Cruikshank, Executive Assistant to the Town Manager; Groton Water Commissioners; Melisa Doig, Human Resource Director; Hannah Moller, Treasurer/Tax Collector; Patricia DuFresne, Assistant Director of Finance/Town Accountant; Tom Delaney, DPW Director; Brian Callahan, DPW Director In Training; Kathy Dougherty, MassDOT; Greg Berube, Pare Engineering; Jason Kauppi, Moderator;

**Finance Committee Members:** Bud Robertson; Mary Linskey; Gary Green; Michael Sulprizio; David Manugian; Kristina Lengyel; Scott Whitefield.

Ms. Manugian called the meeting to order at 6:03 PM.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Mr. Haddad said they have been working with the Highway Department and the state regarding reviewing the Squannacook River Dam. The state recently finished the final Feasibility Report, which was posted on the Town of Groton website. Mr. Haddad intends to include this on the July 29<sup>th</sup> Select Board meeting agenda to review and discuss the next steps in the process.

**PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD #1**

None

**TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT**

- 1. Consider Ratifying the Town Manager's Appointments of Megan Kelly and Savanna Montiero as Groton Country Club Lifeguards, Colby LaPointe to the Groton Country Club Camp Staff, and Kaitlin Haggerty to the Groton Country Club Golf Staff.**

*Mr. Pisani made a motion to ratify the Town Manager's appointment of Megan Kelly and Savanna Montiero as Groton Country Club Lifeguards, Colby LaPointe to the Groton Country Club Camp Staff, and Kaitlin Haggerty to the Groton Country Club Golf Staff. Ms. Manugian seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

- 2. Consider Accepting the Town Manager's nomination and Appoint Molly Foster to the Commission on Accessibility, with a term to expire on June 30, 2025.**

*Mr. Reilly made a motion to ratify the Town Manager's appointment of Ms. Molly Foster to the Commission on Accessibility, with a term expiring on June 30, 2025. Mr. Pisani seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

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

Monday, July 22, 2024

No Meeting

Monday, July 29, 2024

Update from the Diversity Equity and Inclusion Committee

Consider Ratifying the Fire Chief's Contract/Swearing-In

	Public Meeting on Proposed Solution to Squannacook River Dam
	Accept and Finalize the Annual Review of the Town Manager
Monday, August 5, 2024	No Meeting
Monday, August 12, 2024	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, August 19, 2024	No Meeting
Monday, August 26, 2024	First Review of the Fall Town Meeting Warrant
Monday, September 2, 2024	No Meeting

**ITEMS FOR SELECT BOARD CONSIDERATION AND APPROVAL**

**1. Consider Approving an All Alcoholic One-Day Liquor License for the Friends of Prescott for Tequila...Y Mas! To be held on Friday, July 26, 2024, from 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.**

*Mr. Pisani made a motion to approve an All Alcoholic One-Day Liquor License for the Friends of the Prescott for Tequila...Y Mas! To be held on Friday, July 26, 2024, from 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Ms. Manugian seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

**2. Call for and Open the Warrant for the 2024 Fall Town Meeting.**

Moderator Jason Kauppi was in attendance for the discussion. Mr. Haddad said it was that time of year for the Select Board to call for the 2024 Fall Town Meeting. He explained that the default date for the Town Meeting was the third Monday in October (this year, that date is October 21st). Due to early voting for the State Election on November 5<sup>th</sup>, Mr. Haddad recommends that the meeting be held on a different date. The Bylaw allows the Board to choose another date in September, October, or November with at least six weeks’ notice to Groton residents. Mr. Haddad recommended that the Board call for the Town Meeting to be held on either October 5, 2024, or October 19, 2024. He presented a proposed timeline for both meeting dates to the Board. Regardless of the chosen date, the Warrant would close on Thursday, August 15, 2024, at the close of business. Additionally, Mr. Haddad wanted to discuss the issue of not printing and delivering a copy of the Warrant to every household (over 4500 copies). He explained that printing costs have more than doubled for the Warrant mailing and that budgetary constraints make this very difficult to afford. Mr. Haddad said there wasn’t a requirement to print and deliver a copy to every household, although it has been a tradition to do so. He suggested following the approach for the May 18<sup>th</sup>, 2024 Spring Town Meeting, where postcards were issued and the Warrant was posted online. He proposed that 500 copies of the Warrant be printed and made available for residents who prefer a printed copy (they can pick it up at the Town Hall, Center in West Groton or the Library), with the remaining copies available at the Town Meeting. Mr. Haddad would like to recommend that they follow the postcard idea with a QR code and print 500 copies of the Warrant with the approval of the Moderator and Finance Committee. Mr. Gary Green, a member of the Finance Committee, fully supports this recommendation and would like to track the usage data. Mr. Haddad said that the motions would still be printed out. Moderator Mr. Kauppi said that the Town of Groton might be one of the last towns to print out the Warrant and suggested that it could still be printed out if a resident requests it. The Moderator and the Finance Committee supported sending postcards and printing 500 copies of the Warrant for the 2024 Fall Town Meeting.

*Mr. Pisani made a motion to call for the 2024 Fall Town Meeting to be held on Saturday, October 5, 2024. Mr. Reilly seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

*Mr. Reilly made a motion to open the warrant for the Fall Town Meeting on Monday, July 15, 2024, and to close the warrant on Thursday, August 15, 2024, at the end of the business. Mr. Pisani seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

#### **6:15 IN JOINT SESSION WITH THE FINANCE COMMITTEE- APPROVE FY 2024 LINE-ITEM TRANSFERS**

Ms. Patricia DuFresne, Assistant Director of Finance/Town Accountant, and the Finance Committee were in attendance. Ms. DuFresne provided an overview of the line-item transfers, explaining that they reduced the amount needed for the Fire Department by \$40,000. Mr. Haddad said that the Country Club is expected to have a surplus for the third year in a row. He said the Country Club currently has 75 employees, the highest number to date, and has over 1,000 members. Ms. DuFresne explained there were \$22,917 in new items and adjustments from the original proposed line-item transfers of \$168,838, resulting in a new final line-item transfer total of \$191,755.

*On behalf of the Finance Committee, Mr. Green moved to approve the Line-item transfers for the FY24 budget as presented that evening. Mr. Manugian seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

*On behalf of the Select Board, Mr. Reilly made a motion to approve the line-item transfers as presented. Mr. Pisani seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

#### **6:30 DISCUSSION/DECISION- ISLAND ROAD BRIDGE**

Ms. Kathy Doherty from the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (Mass DOT) and Mr. Greg Berube from Pare Engineering were virtually present for the discussion. Mr. Tom Delaney, DPW Director, Mr. Brian Callahan, DPW Director-In-Training, and residents of the Lake were present for the discussion. Mr. Haddad wanted to discuss the proposed repairs to the Island Road Bridge. The Board was provided with the current condition plans and the plans for the proposed solution offered by Mass DOT (Included in the minutes). Mr. Haddad said he was looking for direction on how to proceed with repairing the Island Road Bridge from the Finance Committee and the Select Board. Mr. Haddad said he went out and toured the bridge with Mr. Bud Robertson, Mr. Tom Delaney, Ms. Charlotte Steeves, the Conservation Administrator, and the Executive Assistant, Ms. Kara Cruikshank. Mr. Delaney mentioned that Mass DOT has included the Island Road bridge on their bridge schedule, and it is inspected monthly. He applied for the Small Bridge Program in the spring of 2022 and was granted the funding. Mass DOT would manage this project, and there would be no cost to the town. Bridges that are under 20 feet are considered as small bridges. The residents are not in favor of a culvert because they wouldn't be able to pass beneath it and there was an issue with water flow between Knopps Pond and Lost Lake that could control weed growth. Mr. Delaney said that the funding would be withdrawn if they deviate from the program, and the option is to either stick with the current plan or develop an entirely new approach. Mr. Berube provided a timeline for the project and explained there are power lines around the road and near the bridge. They have looked at various proposed bridge designs. He explained that crane access would be problematic due to the road and support size. Tractor-trailer access would also be difficult and time-consuming. The construction of the bridge would require the road to be closed for one day. Alternatively, using a precast option would take weeks.

Mr. Haddad asked what would happen if the town deviated away from the project. Ms. Doherty explained that if the town didn't go through the program, it would take 10 to 15 years to be reconsidered for the project list.

The estimated cost of building the bridge through the program was approximately \$400,000. If the town decided not to go through the program, the cost would be approximately \$2 million. Mr. Sulprizio asked about the expected lifespan of the bridge. Mr. Berube said that it would be approximately 75 years.

Public Comment

*Mr. Ron Hersch, a Greal Lake Association and Lake resident member, said he was interested in participating in the project. He said he was concerned about the lack of water flow between the two sides of the Lake.*

*Mr. Art Prest, a Lake resident, said he would like to review the engineer's economic and environmental impact of the water flow analysis.*

*Mr. Alex Woodle asked if there was a plan to mitigate the stormwater runoff. The engineer explained that they would implement filter strips to remove sediment, and maintenance would involve removing sand.*

*A resident of 50 Island Road was concerned about a culvert. He stated that the water passage has been free-flowing for many years and disagrees with installing a culvert.*

*Mr. Val Prest, an engineer and Lake resident, said he doesn't believe the culvert will be effective. He wants the water flow to address the weed issue and for people to be able to pass through it. Mr. Prest explained and presented a proposed plan to repair the bridge.*

*Resident Ms. Alison Bedard mentioned she was a bridge engineer and that any structure under 20 feet would not qualify for federal funding. She also expressed concerns about a structural metal plate.*

Mr. Haddad asked how long the town would be eligible to stay in the Small Bridge Program if they wanted to take this under advisement. Ms. Doherty Mass DOT would need a decision from the town by Tuesday, September 17th. Ms. Doherty said the project has been on hold since May 31st because the abutters had some issues with the project, and no progress has been made.

Finance Committee member Mr. Bud Robertson suggested that a further review should be conducted and was concerned about the cost to the taxpayers if they didn't continue the project through the state. He stated that the town just went through a strenuous budget season. If they wait, they aren't going to gain anything.

Finance Committee member Mr. David Manugian said he shared Mr. Robertson's concerns and that Mass DOT is proposing a solution that would not require the town to spend any money. Mr. Manugian said that Groton recently had a failed override. The Finance Committee and Select Board have stressed the importance of seeking state funding, which the Department of Public Works (DPW) has done. Finance Committee member Mr. Sulprizio said that looking at it from a public safety and financial standpoint, he doesn't think they have the luxury of time. The proposed solution may not be the top solution for everyone, and they would like to resolve this matter soon.

After a lengthy discussion and deliberation, Mr. Haddad suggested that Members Cunningham and Pine be present to continue the discussion. He proposed to table the discussion for the time being and continue the discussion during the August 12th Select Board meeting.

**OTHER BUSINESS**

**ON-GOING ISSUES**

- A. PFAS ISSUE—Mr. Haddad said on Thursday, July 11<sup>th</sup>, an Informational Session regarding the Water Main Extension was held at the Performing Arts Center. Mr. Tyler Schmidt, an engineer from Environmental Partners, provided a presentation that can be viewed on the Groton Channel. Mr. Haddad said that residents appreciated the informational session and thought it was very successful.

**SELECT BOARD LIASON REPORTS**

None

**Public Comment Period #2**

None

**Approval of the Regularly Scheduled Meeting Minutes of July 1, 2024**

*Mr. Reilly moved to approve the minutes of the regularly scheduled meeting of July 1, 2024. Mr. Pisani seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

The meeting was adjourned at 7:57 p.m. Respectively submitted by Kara Cruikshank, Executive Assistant to the Town Manager.