

**SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES  
MONDAY, AUGUST 12, 2024  
APPROVED**

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

**Also Present:** Mark Haddad, Town Manager; Kara Cruikshank, Executive Assistant to the Town Manager; Hannah Moller, Treasurer/Tax Collector; Patricia DuFresne, Assistant Director of Finance/Town Accountant; Dawn Dunbar, Town Clerk; Brian Callahan, DPW Director In Training; Representative Margaret Scarsdale; Senator John Cronin; Representative Danillo Sena; Michelle Collette, Stormwater Inspector; Bud Robertson.

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

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Mr. Cunningham announced that Representative Scarsdale, Representative Sena, and Senator Cronin were in attendance.

Mr. Haddad announced that the Groton Hill Music Center has sent the Town of Groton its Quarter 2, 2024 PILOT payment in the amount of \$19,300. He expressed gratitude to the Groton Hill Music Center. He also explained that Groton Hill Music hosted the Groton Dunstable High School graduation at no cost to the district. The 2024 graduation was a huge success, and the Groton Hill has already agreed to host the Groton Dunstable High School graduation again in 2025.

**PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD #1**

Ms. Michelle Collette announced that on August 17, 2024, from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., the Groton History Center will dedicate a garden bench in memory of Mr. Leroy Johnson, Jr.

**TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT**

- 1. Consider Ratifying the Town Manager's Appointments of Johnna Brissette as the Departmental Assistant for the Groton Police Department and Andrew Glanville to the Groton Country Club Golf Staff.**

*Mr. Reilly made a motion to ratify the Town Manager's appointment of Johnna Brissette as the Departmental Assistant for the Groton Police Department and Andrew Glanville to the Groton Country Club Golf Staff. Mr. Cunningham seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

- 2. Notification of the Temporary Absence of the Town Manager and the Appointment of Takashi Tada as Acting Town Manager During the Temporary Absence.**

Mr. Haddad announced that he will be on vacation from August 17th through August 25th. He has appointed Mr. Takashi Tada as the Acting Town Manager in his absence.

**3. Call for the Establishment of a Charter Review Committee Pursuant to Chapter 7-6 of the Groton Charter.**

One of the Select Board's Annual Goals is to establish a Charter Review Committee to update (along with a formal review) the Groton Charter to allow for changes in how the positions of Police Chief, Fire Chief, and Town Clerk are selected/filled. Mr. Haddad reviewed Section 7-6 of the Charter and respectfully requested the Board to vote to establish a Charter Review Committee. Mr. Haddad will then alert the Finance Committee, Moderator, and School Committee of their need to make appointments to the Committee. He also requested the Select Board to establish a deadline for making appointments to this Committee.

*Ms. Pine motioned, pursuant to Section 7-6 of the Charter, to establish a Charter Review Committee. Mr. Cunningham seconded the motion.*

Discussion

*The Board discussed the application process. Mr. Haddad suggested that the Select Board advertise and receive applications for their appointees. The Board discussed and agreed with this process, set the application deadline for Monday, September 16<sup>th</sup>, and will conduct interviews on September 23<sup>rd</sup>.*

*The motion carried unanimously.*

**4. Determine the Final Solution for Repairs of the Island Road Bridge.**

Mr. Brian Callahan, DPW Director in Training, was present for the discussion. Mr. Haddad explained at the Select Board meeting on July 15<sup>th</sup> that the Board reviewed the proposed repair to the Island Road Bridge as suggested by the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT). Their proposed repair involves installing a 54-inch culvert to replace the current dilapidated bridge. During the discussion, several community members objected to the proposed repair and offered alternative solutions. MassDOT clarified that they would not pay for any solution other than the one they proposed. Mr. Haddad met with MassDOT, along with Tom Delaney, Kara Cruikshank, Alison Manugian, and Bud Robertson. He also invited Ron Hersch and Alex Woodle of the Great Ponds Advisory Committee to the meeting. During the meeting, they reviewed the proposed solution from MassDOT and some ideas raised at the July 15<sup>th</sup> meeting by others. MassDOT made it very clear that the State would not pay for alternative solutions and that the amount of testing required to propose a new solution would cost in the neighborhood of \$150,000+. The Board is left with either agreeing with the State's proposal or having the Town appropriate upwards of \$200,000 to study potential bridge repairs further and then pay for those repairs. Mr. Haddad said that he could not recommend to the Select Board and Finance Committee that they take on this liability when the State proposes and pays for a solution that would solve the issue. He also explained that Mass Highway has agreed to install a 60-inch culvert instead of a 54-inch culvert. Mr. Haddad noted that someone unknown had removed the beaver dam without a permit. The mud below it was also cleared, and this individual was identified. The Conservation Commission is aware, and the appropriate action will be taken. Mr. Pisani expressed concern about maximizing the water flow. Ms. Pine said she was in favor of the solution and wanted to thank Mr. Val Prest for presenting a creative solution at the July 15<sup>th</sup> Select Board meeting. She mentioned that the town cannot use the described homegrown method due to liability concerns. Mr. Reilly appreciated Mr.

Prest's opinion and noted that the town lacks the necessary funds, but this solution will improve what is currently there.

*Mr. Cunningham made a motion to approve the installation of a 60-inch culvert, as proposed by MassDOT, for repairing the Island Road Bridge. Ms. Pine seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

**5. Proposed Select Board Meeting Schedule through Labor Day.**

Monday, August 19, 2024	No Meeting
Monday, August 26, 2024 (Remote)	First Review of the Fall Town Meeting Warrant Consider Award of RFP for the Lease of the Prescott School
Monday, September 2, 2024	No Meeting

**ITEMS FOR SELECT BOARD CONSIDERATION AND APPROVAL**

**1. Approve the Request from the Town Clerk to Create a Marriage Certificate Corrections Fee.**

Ms. Dawn Dunbar, Town Clerk was in attendance for the discussion. The Town Clerk is requesting that the Board establish a "Marriage Certificate Corrections" Fee due to the fact that a majority of weddings are now being performed by either a Justice of the Peace or by those obtaining a one-day solemnization certificate from the Commonwealth. She explained that errors are being made on the marriage license application because those conducting the ceremonies are not experienced in filling out their portion of the marriage license after the ceremony occurs. The Town Clerk's Office is spending a lot of time correcting the licenses and communicating with the couples and/or their officiant to have them re-complete their portion of the license. Vital Records is extremely particular with how these are filled out; therefore, the Town Clerk's Office must ensure they are filled out correctly. To help cover the extra time, a fee of \$30 is being requested. Mr. Haddad explained these fees would go into the general fund.

*Ms. Pine moved to accept a \$30 "Marriage Certificate Corrections" fee, effective immediately. Mr. Pisani seconded the motion, which was carried unanimously.*

**2. Establish the Stormwater Fee for Fiscal Year 2025.**

Mr. Haddad explained that the Board needed to set the Stormwater Fee for Fiscal Year 2025. He said the Budget approved at the May 18, 2024 Special Town Meeting included a minor increase of \$5,331. Mr. Haddad respectfully recommended that the Board set the fee at \$60, which would be the third consecutive year in a row at this rate.

*Ms. Pine made a motion to approve a \$60 Stormwater Fee for Fiscal Year 2025. Mr. Pisani seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

**3. Consider Approving a One-Day Wine and Malt Beverage License for the Groton Business Association for the GBA Meeting to be held at United Cultivation, 489 Main Street, on September 18, 2024, from 5:00 pm to 7:00 pm.**

*Mr. Pisani made a motion to approve a One-Day Wine and Malt Beverage License for the Groton Business Association for the GBA Meeting to be held at United Cultivation, 489 Main Street, on*

September 18, 2024, from 5:00 pm to 7:00 pm. Ms. Pine seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

- 4. Consider Approving a One-Day Wine and Malt Beverage License for the Groton Historical Society for the Tarbell Exhibit Opening to be held at the Boutwell House, 172 Main Street, on Saturday, September 21, 2024, from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.**

*Mr. Cunningham made a motion to approve a One-Day Wine and Malt Beverage License for the Groton Historical Society for the Tarbell Exhibit Opening to be held at the Boutwell House, 172 Main Street, on Saturday, September 21, 2024, from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Ms. Pine seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

- 5. Consider Approving a One Day All Alcoholic Beverage License for the Friends of Prescott for Do You Think You Know About Vodka to be held on Friday, August 16, 2024, from 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.**

*Mr. Pisani made a motion to approve a One-Day All Alcoholic Beverage License for the Friends of Prescott for Do You Think You Know About Vodka to be held on Friday, August 16, 2024, from 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Mr. Cunningham seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

#### **6:15 CONSIDER ADOPTING AND ISSUING A RESOLUTION TO GOVERNOR HEALEY TO DECLARE A STATE OF EMERGENCY REGARDING THE CLOSURE OF NASHOBA VALLEY MEDICAL CENTER.**

Representative Scarsdale, Senator Cronin, and Representative Sena were present for the discussion. Mr. Haddad thanked the Senator and Representatives for attending.

The Board discussed considering adopting and issuing an Emergency Resolution to Governor Maura Healey on the closure of the Nashoba Valley Medical Center. Mr. Haddad provided the Board with a copy of the proposed Resolution to review.

Senator Cronin said he was advocating for three actions regarding the hospital: First, he has called on the Governor to declare a public health emergency to keep the hospital open; Second, they need to seek a new operator to take over from Steward, including determining why the Michigan group did not qualify as a bidder during federal bankruptcy proceedings; Lastly, the state needs to stabilize Noshoba by providing bridge funding between August 31<sup>st</sup> and a new operator taking over the hospital. He said everyone needs to articulate the impact of losing this medical facility and put pressure on the administration. He said personal stories need to be shared so they can understand the implications.

Representative Sena said they had sent letters to the Governor asking for help and to extend the closure beyond August 31<sup>st</sup> in an effort to keep the hospital open. They are doing everything they can, expressed gratitude for the town's support, and emphasized the need for ongoing efforts to continue.

Representative Scarsdale said it was very important for the Commissioner of the Department of Health to hear directly from the fire chiefs about the impact on the surrounding communities. She explained that one bidder was deemed unacceptable, but two other bidders were still negotiating with the state. She encourages everyone to attend the Thursday, August 15<sup>th</sup> meeting at Devens Common at 6:00 p.m.

Mr. Cunningham stated that the Commonwealth should have had representation in the bankruptcy proceedings due to the real and unacceptable public health emergency that will impact lives. He said their advocacy was appreciated.

*Mr. Cunningham moved to adopt and issue a Resolution to Governor Healey to Declare a State of Emergency. Mr. Pisani seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

## **OTHER BUSINESS**

### **ON-GOING ISSUES**

- A. PFAS ISSUE- Mr. Haddad explained that the Town met with the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) on Wednesday, August 7th, to discuss an interbasin transfer, which will be on their September 12 agenda for approval. He explained that they have authorization to go out to bid in September with the contingency. The plans are prepared and ready to proceed with the project.

Mr. Haddad explained that they were involved in the Dupont and 3M lawsuit regarding PFAS. There is a special allocation fund for special projects and money that has been allocated so far. The town has submitted another application for the \$402,000 for the engineering costs they have incurred, and the school district has spent over \$500,000 on PFAS. They are trying to recoup some of that money.

- B. Fiscal Year 2026 Budget—The first Tri-Comm meeting will be held on August 28, 2024.
- C. Green Communities Application and Implementation- The town will apply for funding next spring since the previous grant work was not completed, making the town ineligible.
- D. Florence Roche School Construction Project—Mr. Haddad said the teachers began moving into the new Florence Roche Elementary School on August 5th and 6th. The final paving is expected to be completed by August 13th, and scheduled tours for members of the community in the upcoming week are fully booked. An open house is planned for the Spring, and there will be a ribbon-cutting ceremony.
- E. PILOTs—The Town Manager’s Working Group on Studying PILOTs had its first meeting this past week. Mr. Haddad provided the Board with a memorandum to update them on the status of their review and to receive feedback from the Select Board. The first step in the process was to develop a list of all exempt properties in Groton to determine whether or not a particular Non-Profit/Property Owner should be approached about making a PILOT or codifying the current payment. He said there are currently 590 exempt properties/parcels in the Town of Groton, with 10 currently providing the Town of Groton with a PILOT. The Town collected approximately \$420,000 from these ten organizations. The Working Group has developed the following initial “Rules of Exemption”:
1. State Property-including Property owned by the MBTA
  2. Federal Property
  3. Properties purchase with Community Preservation Act Funds
  4. Properties that have a Permanent Conservation Restriction
  5. Town of Groton Properties/Buildings under the control of the Groton Select Board

6. Town of Groton Properties /Buildings that are Operated/Funded within the Tax Levy

Mr. Haddad said the Working Group believes a good start has been made for a set of rules. Ms. Pine suggested that one way to assess the enterprises is to quantify how the money is coming. Mr. Haddad wants the Board to consider delaying the Home Rule Petition until the Working Group does more work in the Spring. He said it is a process that they need to follow. Mr. Pisani said they must communicate when it will be presented and explain why. Mr. Cunningham said they need to explain the reasoning to the community. Mr. Haddad said the PILOT Working Group is meeting again on Wednesday, September 4<sup>th</sup>.

**SELECT BOARD LIASON REPORTS**

None

**Public Comment Period #2**

None

**Approval of the Regularly Scheduled Meeting Minutes of July 29, 2024**

*Mr. Cunningham made a motion to approve the minutes of the regularly scheduled meeting of July 29, 2024. Ms. Pine seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

The meeting was adjourned at 7:18 p.m. Respectively submitted by Kara Cruikshank, Executive Assistant to the Town Manager.