

**SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, NOVEMBER 25, 2024
APPROVED**

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

Board of Assessors Present: Donald Black, Chair; Garret Boles; Jennifer Moore;

Finance Committee Members Present: Bud Robertson, Chair; Mary Linskey, Vice Chair; Kristina Lengyel, David Manugian; Scott Whitefield;

Also Present: Mark Haddad, Town Manager; Kara Cruikshank, Executive Assistant to the Town Manager; Patricia DuFresne, Assistant Director of Finance/Town Accountant; Melisa Doig, Human Resource Director; Megan Foster, Principal Assessor; Tammi Mickel, Assistant Assessor; Hannah Moller, Treasurer/Tax Collector; Joseph Twomey and Martha McLure, Trust Fund Commissioners; Karen Tuomi, Trust Fund Executive Director; and Lacey McCabe, Chair of the Groton Dunstable Regional School Committee.

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mr. Cunningham attended the MRPC Brownfields Committee meeting last week. He said they submitted an application for funding to the committee for the complete remediation of the Squannacook Sportsman's Club to meet DEP and EPA standards and successfully secured that grant.

Mr. Haddad announced that the Destination Groton Committee is working on various activities and seeking funding. He explained that they typically present a warrant article at Town Meeting, but they understand the town's current challenges, so they are focusing on raising funds instead. The Committee reached out to Groton School, and they contributed \$10,000 to Destination Groton's gift fund to support their activities. Mr. Haddad thanked Groton School for their contribution.

Mr. Cunningham said he attended the Community Spelling Bee at the Prescott Community Center and enjoyed his time there. Ms. Pine said that many Town Boards and Committees participated in the event.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD #1

Mr. Jeff Wallens announced that the Groton Community Christmas Concert will be held at the Congregational Church on December 9th at 2:00 p.m. and December 10th at 7:30 p.m.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

1. Ratify the Town Manager's Appointment of Cathleen Berry as Assistant Town Accountant.

Mr. Haddad announced that after 14 years of dedicated service to the Town of Groton, Assistant Town Accountant Sarah Mahoney has decided to retire at the end of January 2025. Fortunately, there is an internal candidate interested in her position. Cathleen "Katie" Berry, who has been an outstanding employee in the Land Use Department as an Interdepartmental Assistant since June 2023, is the candidate. Ms. Berry holds an associate's degree in business and a Certificate in Accounting. Assistant Director of Finance/Town Accountant Patricia DuFresne has enthusiastically recommended that Mr.

Haddad appoint Ms. Berry as the new Assistant Town Accountant. Ms. DuFresne said Ms. Mahoney has been a wonderful employee and has worked closely with her for thirteen years. Ms. DuFresne said the Accounting Department couldn't be more thrilled to welcome Ms. Berry.

Ms. Pine made a motion to ratify the Town Manager's appointment of Cathleen Berry as Assistant Town Accountant, effective January 31, 2025. Mr. Cunningham seconded the motion.

Discussion

Mr. Cunningham said Ms. Mahoney has been a stellar employee and will be missed.

The motion carried unanimously.

2. Ratify the Town Manager's Appointment of David Macinnis to the Historic Districts Commission.

Mr. Pisani made a motion to ratify the Town Manager's appointment of David Macinnis to the Historic Districts Commission, with a term to expire on June 30, 2027. Ms. Pine seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

3. Accept Donation and Create the Peter Twomey Youth Center Trust Fund.

Trust Fund Executive Director Karen Tuomi, Trust Fund Commissioners Joseph Twomey and Martha McLure, and GDRSD School Committee Chair Ms. Lacey McCabe were in attendance. Mr. Haddad provided the Board with a copy of the Declaration of Trust for the Peter Twomey Youth Center Trust Fund. Mr. Twomey explained that Mr. Joe DePietro, the donor, has left \$200,000 to the Commissioner of Trust Funds, the School Committee, and the Town. This funding ensures that after-school programs and activities will be available to all students. The Commissioners of Trust Funds have requested that the Select Board vote to accept and establish this fund. Mr. Haddad asked the Board to consider approving this declaration.

Mr. Cunningham moved to accept and establish a trust fund administered by the School District. Mr. Pisani seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Ms. McLure moved that the Trust Commissioners accept \$200,000 from donor Joseph DiPietro. Mr. Twomey seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

4. Update on Fiscal Year 2026 Budget.

Mr. Haddad has no update at this time.

5. Proposed Select Board Meeting Schedule through the End of the Year.

Monday, December 2, 2024	No Meeting
Monday, December 9, 2024	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, December 16, 2024	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, December 23, 2024	No Meeting
Monday, December 30, 2024	No Meeting
Monday, January 6, 2024	Regularly Scheduled Meeting

ITEMS FOR SELECT BOARD CONSIDERATION AND APPROVAL

1. TREAD Committee Update.

The TREAD (Tax Relief for Elders) Committee requested time on the agenda to provide the Board with an update on their activities and efforts. Ms. Moller was present for the discussion. She said over the years, they have done a number of things to raise funds for the TREAD Committee and to provide donations to residents in need. She explained that residents need to meet certain requirements to qualify for assistance. Those interested should complete an application if they are interested. The TREAD Committee has raised nearly \$19,000 from local businesses and residents. Ms. Moller said that the deadline to apply for the scholarship has been extended to April 1, 2025. This scholarship is intended to assist those facing tough times. Ms. Pine stated that the tax rate cannot be lowered for residents. She explained that this program provides an opportunity for community members to help support residents who may be struggling.

2. Consider Approving a One-Day Wine and Malt beverages License for the Friends of Prescott for Open Mic Night to be held on Friday, December 13, 2024, from 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.

Mr. Pisani made a motion to approve a One-Day Wine and Malt Beverages License for the Friends of Prescott for Open Mic Night to be held on Friday, December 13, 2024, from 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m., Ms. Pine seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

3. Annual Tax Classification Hearing.

Chair Don Black called the Board of Assessors to order.

The Tax Classification Hearing was held to determine the annual tax levy percentage for Fiscal Year 2025. Principal Assessor Megan Foster and Board of Assessors Members Mr. Don Black, Ms. Jennifer Moore, and Mr. Garrett Boles attended the hearing to assist with the determination. Assistant Assessor Tammi Mickel was also present.

Ms. Foster presented a PowerPoint presentation to the public and the Select Board members outlining the process to set the tax rate and what factors contribute to impacting the rate. The average value of a Single-Family House in Groton is \$707,877, and there has been a decrease in the percentage of the average assessment for commercial properties. New Growth was certified on October 29, 2024, with an assessed value of \$25,307,020 or \$381,883 in Tax Levy Growth.

Ms. Foster reviewed how the tax rate is established and calculated and explained that it will be \$15.25 for FY 2025. She also provided a ten-year historical recap of the average single-family tax bill.

Classification Vote Summary

1. Vote for a single tax rate or consider a shift of the tax levy from the Residential class to the Commercial, Industrial, and Personal Property classes.

Ms. Pine moved that the Board use the factor of 1 and vote for a single tax rate in the Town of Groton at a tax rate of \$15.25 in FY 2025. Mr. Cunningham seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

2. Vote on whether to adopt a residential exemption.

Mr. Cunningham moved that they not adopt a residential exemption. Mr. Pisani seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

2. Vote on whether to adopt a small commercial exemption.

Ms. Pine moved that they not adopt a small commercial exemption. Mr. Reilly seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

OTHER BUSINESS

Pursuant to the Charter, Authorize the Town Manager and One Member of the Select Board to Sign Warrants for the Next 30 days.

Mr. Cunningham made a motion to authorize the Town Manager and one member of the Select Board to sign the Warrants for the next 30 days. Mr. Reilly seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

SELECT BOARD LIASON REPORTS

Mr. Reilly commented that the Board of Assessors is doing a great job, and the Select Board also commended the Principal Assessor on her efforts.

Mr. Cunningham said he attended a tour at Devens and thanked the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC).

- A. PFAS Issue—Mr. Haddad said they are getting ready to construct the waterline on Chicopee Row. The kickoff meeting will be held on December 10th. Groton Water Superintendent Mr. Orcutt has drafted a memo to provide to the abutters of Chicopee Row. Mr. Haddad said the construction would take place during the evening hours.
- B. Nashoba Valley Medical Working Group- There was no update.
- C. Charter Review Committee- Mr. Haddad said that a public hearing would be held at the Groton Town Hall on Thursday, December 5th, at 7:00 p.m. to receive input on the Charter. Ms. Pine said it was important for the public to know that the Select Board did not appoint Mr. Haddad to the Charter Review Committee. She stated she did not support him on the Committee and mentioned that Moderator Jason Kauppi appointed Mr. Haddad. She asked Mr. Haddad and Mr. Cunningham to keep the Select Board informed on the efforts of the Charter Review Committee. Mr. Cunningham said that, as Chair of the Charter Review Committee, Mr. Haddad's proposals made sense. He explained that they want to receive as much input on the Charter from the public as possible. The Charter Review Committee page has been created on the Town of Groton website. Mr. Cunningham said the Committee would tentatively like to bring something forward to the Spring Town Meeting. Mr. Haddad recommended adding this to an upcoming agenda for the Select Boards input. Mr. Cunningham stated that they would provide an update to the Select Board on any recommendations of the Charter Review Committee. Ms. Pine clarified that they received communication from a member of the Park Commission regarding a proposal, but they were unaware of any proposal related to the Charter concerning the Park Commission. Mr. Haddad is attending the December 10th Park Commission meeting to discuss this proposal. Mr. Robertson suggested that any group with a proposed change should know about it before the public hearing. Mr. Haddad said the Charter Review Committee should function as a public body that needs to operate under the open meeting law and needs to dictate how

this is done. He emphasized that he does not recall any prior Charter Review Committee members approaching the Town Manager to discuss any proposals that would impact his job.

- D. Florence Roche Elementary School Construction Project—Mr. Haddad thanked the Conservation Commission for allowing double entry at the school entrance. This change has made a big improvement.
- E. PILOTs- Mr. Haddad said the PILOT Working group is close to drafting a final report.

Public Comment Period #2

Approval of the Regularly Scheduled Meeting Minutes of November 4, 2024

Ms. Pine made a motion to approve the minutes of the regularly scheduled meeting of November 4, 2024.

Mr. Pisani seconded the motion. The vote carried unanimously.

Executive Session

Mr. Haddad asked the Board to make a motion to enter Executive Session Pursuant to M.G.L., c.30A, §21(a), Clause 3 – “To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation If an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigation position of the public body and the chair so declares”- Purposes- Collective Bargaining.

And not to return to open session.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 7:14 p.m. Respectively submitted by Kara Cruikshank, Executive Assistant to the Town Manager.