

**SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2024
APPROVED**

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

SB Members Absent: Peter Cunningham, Clerk;

Also Present: Mark Haddad, Town Manager; Kara Cruikshank, Executive Assistant to the Town Manager; Patricia DuFresne, Assistant Director of Finance/Town Accountant; Vanessa Abraham, Groton Public Library Director;

Board of Library Trustees: Mark Gerath; Helena Fruscio Altman; Jennifer Petersen; Mark Gerath; David Zeiler.

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Ms. Pine attended the Groton Community Christmas Concert at the Congregational Church over the weekend and announced there was another performance that evening. She said it was a wonderful event and strongly recommended attending.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD #1

None

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

1. Ratify the Town Manager's Appointment of Barbara Rich to the Commission on Accessibility.

Ms. Pine made a motion to ratify the Town Manager's appointment of Barbara Rich to the Commission on Accessibility. Mr. Pisani seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

2. Update/ Report on ARPA Expenditures.

Select Board Chair Manugian requested an update on the final expenditures of the ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) funds. Assistant Director of Finance/Town Accountant Patricia DuFresne attended the meeting to discuss the prepared report with the Board. Mr. Haddad thanked Ms. DuFresne for providing the report and highlighted various projects for which the Town of Groton utilized the \$3.3 million from the federal government. He explained that one of the largest projects they used the funding for was the PFAS engineering to bring clean water to the Groton Dunstable Regional High School. He said he was really pleased with the way the Town of Groton utilized these funds, stating that taxpayers should be happy. Mr. Haddad emphasized that all the funds were fully spent and put to good use. Ms. Pine added that the funds for employee retention and the schools during the pandemic kept the Town running.

3. Update on Fiscal Year 2026 Budget.

Mr. Haddad provided an update on the FY 2026 Budget, stating that he and the Finance Team have started reviewing the budgets for various departments. Budget meetings are currently taking place this week and will conclude on Thursday. By the end of these meetings, he expects to have a clearer understanding of the town's budget situation. He said the Town Manager's and Town Administrator's Tri-Com Working Group held another meeting this past week to continue discussing the FY 2026 Budget as it impacts the Towns of Groton and Dunstable and the Groton Dunstable Regional School District.

Earlier that day, Mr. Haddad met with Sherry Kersey, the Director of Business at the GDRSD, Superintendent Geoff Bruno, Dunstable Town Administrator Jason Silva, and School Committee Chair Lacey McCabe to discuss the budget timeline. The timeline is as follows:

- On January 6, 2025, the town will receive two proposed budgets from the school district: a balanced budget and a level-services budget.
- On January 13, 2025, the Select Board and the Finance Committee will meet jointly to provide the Town Manager with final Budget Guidance.
- On January 31, 2025, Mr. Haddad will present the final Proposed Operating Budget to the Select Board and Finance Committee.
- On February 12, 2025, the School District will release its budget booklet with its FY 2026 Proposed Budget.
- The tentative date for the School District's public hearing on the Budget is February 26, 2025.
- On March 12, 2025, the school budget will be certified by the GDRSD Committee.

Focus group meetings will be held between January 6th and March 12th, and budget forums will be held after March 12th. Mr. Haddad emphasized the importance of providing the right information to the public, which will be done once the School District's budget has been certified.

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

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. Pursuant to Section II, Paragraph B of the Agreement with the Police Chief Michael Luth, Determine the Board's Intention on Whether or not it Intends to Renew the Agreement

Mr. Haddad said the current Employment Agreement between the Town of Groton and Police Chief Michael Luth expires on June 30, 2025. Section II, Paragraph B of the Agreement states that *"the Select Board shall vote on or before January 1, 2025, at a Regular Meeting whether or not it intends to renew this Agreement for an additional term and shall give the Employee's written notice of its decision on or before February 1, 2025."* He said Chief Luth had been an outstanding Police Chief and recommended that the Select Board consider renewing this Agreement and authorizing the Town Manager to negotiate a new contract with him.

Ms. Pine moved to renew the agreement with Police Chief Luth and authorize the Town Manager to negotiate a new contract. Mr. Pisani seconded the motion, which was carried unanimously.

2. Pursuant to Section I, Paragraph B (2) of the Agreement with the Town Clerk Dawn Dunbar, Determine the Board's Intention on Whether or not it Intends to Renew the Agreement.

Mr. Haddad said that the current Appointment and Employment Agreement between the Town of Groton and Town Clerk Dawn Dunbar expires on June 30, 2025. Section I, Paragraph B (2) of the Agreement states that *"the Town, through the Select Board, shall decide on or before January 15, 2025,*

whether it intends to renew the Employee's appointment. If the Select Board decides to renew the Employee's appointment, the Town Manager shall give the Employee notice of whether he intends to renew this Agreement for an additional three-year period and shall give the Employee written notice of his decision on or before February 1, 2025." He said Ms. Dunbar has done a phenomenal job and recommends that the Select Board consider renewing her appointment.

Mr. Pisani made a motion to renew Ms. Dunbar's appointment as Town Clerk. Ms. Pine seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Haddad expressed his intention to renew her Agreement for an additional three years and will notify Ms. Dunbar of his decision on or before February 1, 2025. He will then begin negotiations for a new contract with her.

3. Pursuant to Section I, Paragraph B of the Agreement with Town Manager Mark Haddad, Determine the Board's Intention on Whether or not it Intends to Renew the Agreement.

Chair Manugian explained that the current Employment Agreement between the Town of Groton and Town Manager Haddad is set to expire on June 30, 2025. According to Section I, Paragraph B of the Agreement, *"the Board shall notify the Employee in writing on or before February 15, 2025, if it intends not to renew this Agreement."* Chair Manugian emphasized that the community is very well served by the Town Manager and expressed support for renewing Mr. Haddad's Agreement.

Ms. Pine moved to notify the Town Manager of the Select Board's intent to renew the Agreement. Mr. Pisani seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Haddad said he will schedule an executive session on Monday, December 16th, for the Town Manager to receive guidance from the Select Board regarding contract negotiations with Police Chief Luth and the Town Clerk. The Board will need to determine a process to negotiate a new Agreement with the Town Manager.

6:15 P.M. In Joint Session with the Boards of Library Trustees- Consider Appointing Heidi Robes to the Board of Library Trustees to Fill a Vacancy until the 2025 Spring Election.

The Board of Library Trustees attended, and Chair Altsman called the meeting to order.

Mr. Haddad explained that there was a vacancy on the Board of Library Trustees. Mr. Gerath mentioned that they had received six applications, and Ms. Altsman expressed their excitement about adding Ms. Heidi Robes to the Board. Ms. Robes stated that she had been a resident for almost thirty years and looked forward to working with the Board of Library Trustees.

Ms. Pine made a motion to appoint Ms. Heidi Robes to the Board of Library Trustees until the May Election. Mr. Reilly seconded the motion. Reilly-aye; Pisani- aye; Manugian- aye; Pine-aye; Gerath-aye; Altsman-aye; Zeiler-aye; Peterson-aye.

OTHER BUSINESS

On Going issues

- A. PFAS Issue—Mr. Haddad explained that they are a month behind on the start of construction with the contractor, DeFelice Construction, because SRF Funding has not yet been approved. The State is about a month behind in its approval. Work should commence in January 2025. The contractor has asked if the Town would reconsider moving work from night to daytime during the winter months due to frost. The Police Department will meet with the contractor on Thursday, December 12, to discuss this further. Mr. Haddad will provide an update to the Board next week.
- B. Nashoba Valley Medical Working Group- No update at this time.
- C. Charter Review Committee—The Charter Review Committee is reviewing a proposal concerning the appointments of the Fire Chief, Police Chief, and Town Clerk. The proposal states that the Town Manager would make the appointments subject to the Select Board's ratification. Last week, during the committee meeting, a public hearing was held, and this proposal was discussed. The Charter Review Committee would like input from the Select Board on this proposal. Mr. Haddad will schedule this matter at the Select Board meeting scheduled for January 13th.
- D. Florence Roche Elementary School Construction Project—No update at this time.
- E. PILOTs—The PILOT Working Group held its meeting, and Mr. Haddad is currently drafting the final report. Mr. Haddad provided an update that an Open Meeting Law complaint has been filed, saying the Town Managers Working Group is a public body and should adhere to the Open Meeting Law. He does not believe that the Working Group is subject to the Open Meeting Law. The complainant has been notified of the response. This matter has not been brought to the Attorney General's office for review.

SELECT BOARD LIASON REPORTS

Public Comment Period #2

None

Approval of the Regularly Scheduled Meeting Minutes of November 25, 2024

*Ms. Pine made a motion to approve the minutes of the regularly scheduled meeting of November 25, 2024.
Mr. Pisani seconded the motion. The vote carried unanimously.*

The meeting was adjourned at 6:29 p.m. Respectively submitted by Kara Cruikshank, Executive Assistant to the Town Manager.