

**SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, JANUARY 27, 2025
APPROVED**

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

Also Present: Mark Haddad, Town Manager; Kara Cruikshank, Executive Assistant to the Town Manager; Patricia DuFresne, Assistant Director of Finance/Town Accountant; Hannah Moller, Treasurer/Tax Collector; Dawn Dunbar, Town Clerk; Megan Foster, Principal Assessor; Mary Linskey.

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mr. Cunningham stated that Representative Scarsdale has rescheduled a presentation on both the closure of the Nashoba Valley Medical Center and Chapter 70 Aid to Sunday, February 16th, at the Center at 2:00 p.m. for anyone interested in attending.

Mr. Reilly asked Mr. Haddad about the recent Press Release regarding Nashoba Valley Medical Center. Mr. Haddad explained that the President of UMass Medical Center announced they are looking for a location to establish a stand-alone emergency department within the radius of Nashoba Valley Medical Center.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD #1

Resident Mr. Bruce Plunkett wanted to learn more about the recommendation of a 15% PILOT Payment to the Non-Profit Partners. Mr. Haddad explained that he would address this during his PILOT Report Presentation.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

1. Update from the Town Manager on the Florence Roche Elementary School Construction Project.

Mr. Haddad said he was extremely pleased to announce that when they complete the Florence Roche Elementary School Construction Project, the Town is projected to come in approximately \$2.4 million under budget. He said this is a testament to the quality of the hard work done by the Florence Roche Elementary School Building Committee, Gilbane Building Company, Leftfield, and Studio G. He emphasized that this was great news for the taxpayers of Groton. He said because the Project used the Construction Manager at Risk approach, they could order materials early which allowed the project to deal with the various supply chain issues brought about by the COVID pandemic. This kept the project moving forward which allowed it to finish on-time and under budget. He provided the Board with a Budget Summary and reviewed it with them. He explained that the Town has already permanently borrowed \$28 million at low interest rates. The remainder of the borrowing, approximately \$27 million, will be permanently financed within the next couple of years once the Town receives the final reimbursement from the MSBA.

2. Review the Draft of the Proposed Police Chief, Fire Chief, and Town Clerk Appointment Policy, as well as the Proposed Charter Amendment on Appointments.

Mr. Haddad provided a draft of the proposed policy for the appointment of the Police Chief, Fire Chief, and Town Clerk for the Board’s review and consideration. He explained that this policy would be in conjunction with the proposed Charter Amendments, which will have the Town Manager appoint these positions. Mr. Haddad reviewed and discussed the draft policy with the Board that would allow this change, which included Ms. Pine’s suggested edits (see draft policy dated January 21, 2025). Mr. Haddad believed the proposed policy does everything they discussed during the January 13th meeting.

Ms. Pine explained that she was initially reluctant to the proposal regarding the Town Manager’s authority to appoint the Police Chief, Fire Chief, and Town Clerk. After discussing the matter with Mr. Haddad, she reconsidered her position and thought the Town Manager should handle the appointments. If there are concerns about performance, the Town Manager could deal with them privately rather than bringing them up in a public meeting. Ms. Pine believes this approach serves the town Better.

Mr. Haddad inquired if the Board would like to vote on adopting the policy. Ms. Manugian asked about the Board's procedure for adopting policies; she understood there is a policy requiring a review of a policy twice before it can be adopted.

Mr. Haddad said he would bring this back to the Select Board’s February 3rd meeting.

3. Review the Draft Warrant Article on Setting the Date of the Annual Election.

The Board asked Mr. Haddad to draft a Warrant Article to amend the Bylaw that sets the date of the Annual Town Election. Mr. Haddad submitted a draft Warrant Article to the Board that would be included in the 2025 Spring Town Meeting Warrant. The Bylaw would be amended to set the election on the third Tuesday of May each year. The Board was in favor of this proposal.

4. Update on Fiscal Year 2026 Budget.

The Town Manager’s Proposed Fiscal year 2026 Operating Budget is being finalized. Mr. Haddad will deliver it to the Select Board and Finance Committee later this week. On February 3rd, the Select Board and Finance Committee will meet in Joint Session for the Town Manager to present the Budget. The Finance Committee has set Saturday, February 22, 2025, from 8:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. for the budget review meetings with the various Departments.

5. Update on Select Board Meeting Schedule through the 2025 Spring Town Meeting.

Monday, February 3, 2025	Presentation of the FY 2026 Budget
Monday, February 10, 2025	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, February 17, 2025	No Meeting- President’s Day Holiday
Monday, February 24, 2025	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, March 3, 2025	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, March 10, 2025	Public Hearing on the Spring Town Meeting
Monday, March 17, 2025	No Meeting

Monday, March 24, 2025	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, March 31, 2025	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, April 7, 2025	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, April 14, 2025	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, April 21, 2025	No Meeting- Patriot's Day Holiday
Saturday, April 26 th	Spring Town Meeting

ITEMS FOR SELECT BOARD CONSIDERATION AND APPROVAL

- 1. Consider Approving a One Day Wine and Malt Beverage License for Allegra Harris for a Rehearsal Dinner to be held at First Parish Church on Friday, March 7, 2025, from 5:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.**
Mr. Pisani made a motion to approve a One Day Wine and Malt Beverage License for Allegra Harris for a Rehearsal Dinner to be held at First Parish Church on Friday, March 7, 2025, from 5:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. Ms. Pine seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.
- 2. Consider Approving a One Day All Alcohol Liquor License for the Annual Taste of Nashoba Valley to be held at Lawrence Academy on Tuesday, March 25, 2025, from 5:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.**
Mr. Cunningham made a motion to approve a One Day All Alcohol Liquor License for the Annual Taste of Nashoba Valley on Tuesday, March 25, 2025, from 5:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Mr. Pisani seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

6:15 P.M.- Presentation by the Town Manager on the PILOT Report

Mr. Haddad provided the Board with a copy of the Final PILOT Report for their review. He explained that the Report was released to the public two weeks ago and was mailed to the Non-Profit Partners in Groton. Mr. Haddad shared that there was one change to the PILOT Report since it was released to the public. The Assessors Office assigned a value to the Groton Hill Music Center. He explained that the Groton Hill Music Center disagreed with the value and asked for it to be reconsidered after raising valid points. The Assessors went back out and did another inspection of the property, and the Groton Hill Music Center provided more information to the Assessors. The value was reduced by \$120 million. Mr. Haddad explained that Groton Hill Music Center and the Assessor's Office worked cooperatively.

The Town Manager, with the support of the Working Group, has developed a criterion to request a voluntary payment from the twenty-eight (28) Non-Profit Partners. The proposal is that the Town reach out to its Non-Profit Partners and ask that they enter into a PILOT Agreement with the Town of Groton that would provide a voluntary payment based on fifteen (15%) of their property value.

Mr. Haddad presented a PowerPoint Presentation on PILOTs to the Board (see attached Presentation).

Mr. Haddad thanked the Working Group for their work on the Report with him and hopes that the Select Board appreciates the effort put into this.

Questions About the Process

Mr. Cunningham wanted to applaud the efforts of the Working Group and believes that it was well done. He thought this exercise was necessary based on the feedback from the public. Ms. Pine thanked the group as well. She emphasized that Groton is fortunate to have many non-profit organizations in town. She explained

that she could not support the recommendation of a voluntary payment based on 15% of their property value. Ms. Pine read a statement into the record expressing her thoughts on PILOT payments. She suggested considering a different approach that focuses on the various contributions the non-profits make in Town and their ability to contribute financially to the Town. She believes it is important to work regularly with larger non-profit partners to ensure continued payments to the Town while building positive relationships with them. For the smaller non-profit partners, she recommends the approach of politely asking for donations or making fundraising appeals. She hopes the Board will not support the Working Group's recommendation to seek a 15% PILOT payment and instead commit to negotiating with the Non-Profit Partners based on their ability to pay. Ms. Manugian asked who would determine which non-profits can afford to make a PILOT payment. Ms. Pine acknowledged that this was a challenging question and recommended looking at whether the potential donors have sources of income beyond Groton. Mr. Reilly stated that they don't want the non-profits to leave. He said the process used to complete the Report is excellent and gets all the necessary information out there. Mr. Haddad said there was a lot of public feedback and the office had received some letters from various non-profits. Ms. Manugian said that maybe the recommendation of 15% isn't ideal, but a lot of time and effort went into developing it and it should be given due consideration.

Public Comments/Questions

Resident Bruce Plunkett said he listened to the explanation regarding the 15%. He suggested providing a chart similar to the Northampton document to show how the 15% recommendation was determined. He also suggested excluding churches from the PILOT payments. He asked if anything could be included in the annual budget when a nonprofit contributes a payment. The Board explained that these contributions are always acknowledged during meetings and are greatly appreciated.

Mr. Haddad said he hoped some of the non-profits were watching and would like to put this on a future Select Board agenda in a few weeks for a final determination by the Board. The Board agreed to bring this matter back in a few weeks.

OTHER BUSINESS

On Going issues

- A. PFAS Issue- The construction for the waterline is well underway, and the contractor, DeFelice, is moving right along and faster than anticipated.
- D. Florence Roche Elementary School Construction Project- The Open House at Florence Roche Elementary School is scheduled for March 1, 2025, from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

SELECT BOARD LIASON REPORTS

Public Comment Period #2

None

Approval of the Regularly Scheduled Meeting Minutes of January 13, 2025

Mr. Cunningham made a motion to approve the minutes of the regularly scheduled meeting of January 13, 2025. Mr. Reilly seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:37 p.m. Respectively submitted by Kara Cruikshank, Executive Assistant to the Town Manager.



SELECT BOARD POLICY

Policy Category:	Board
Policy Number:	BOA – 2025-1
Latest Revision Date:	January 21, 2025

POLICY NAME: Police Chief, Fire Chief, Town Clerk Appointment Policy

I. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy outlines the process for the appointment of the Police Chief, Fire Chief, and Town Clerk by the Town Manager, subject to ratification by the Select Board. It aims to ensure a transparent and collaborative approach to filling these critical positions within the town.

II. POLICY

The Town Manager shall have the authority to appoint the Police Chief, Fire Chief, and Town Clerk, with all appointments subject to ratification by the Select Board. The following procedures shall be followed to ensure an effective and inclusive search process.

III. PROCEDURES

1. Initial Meeting:

- Prior to initiating the search process for any of the aforementioned positions, the Town Manager shall meet with the Select Board to discuss the potential for an interim appointment and the consideration of any internal candidates for the position.

2. Search Process Determination:

- Based on the initial meeting, the Select Board will provide direction to the Town Manager regarding the following:

- a. Whether a full search process will be conducted.



SELECT BOARD POLICY

b. The formation of a search committee, including: 1) The number of Select Board members to serve on the committee. 2) The inclusion of area Police Chiefs, Fire Chiefs, or Town Clerks to participate in the interview process. 3) The use of an assessment center for candidate evaluation.

3. Assessment Center Participation:

- If an Assessment Center is used, the Select Board shall participate in the process and will subsequently meet with the Town Manager to discuss the candidates.

- The Town Manager and Select Board will determine how many candidates should be considered for appointment.

4. Appointment:

- Upon completion of the search process, the Town Manager shall make the final appointment of the Police Chief, Fire Chief, or Town Clerk. The appointment shall be subject to ratification by the Select Board.

5. Policy Flexibility:

- Nothing in this policy shall prohibit the Town Manager and the Select Board from mutually agreeing to alter the procedures outlined herein on a case-by-case basis, as deemed necessary for the effective governance of the town.

6. Conclusion:

This policy is designed to foster collaboration between the Town Manager and the Select Board in the appointment of key town officials, ensuring that the process is thorough, transparent, and in the best interest of the community.