

SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2025
APPROVED

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

Also Present: Mark Haddad, Town Manager; Kara Cruikshank, Executive Assistant to the Town Manager; Patricia DuFresne, Assistant Finance Director/Town Accountant; Melisa Doig, Human Resource Director; Hannah Moller, Treasurer/Tax Collector; Senator John Cronin; Representatives Scarsdale and Sena; Russell Burke, Planning Board Vacancy Applicant; Tom Orcutt, Groton Water Superintendent; Jim Gmeiner, Groton Sewer Commission Chair; Paul Brinkman, Pepperell DPW Business Manager; Takashi Tada, Land Use Director/Town Planner;

Planning Board Members Present: Paul Hathaway; Phil Francisco; Scott Wilson;

Planning Board Members Virtually Present: George Barringer; Lorayne Black.

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Ms. Pine announced that the Non-Profit Council will meet on Thursday, February 27th, at the Groton Public Library at 9:00 a.m. She said this would be an open meeting for any non-profit organization representatives in Groton.

She also announced that Congresswoman Lori Trahan will hold a Telephone Town Hall meeting on Tuesday, February 25th at 5:30 p.m. to discuss what is happening in Washington, D.C.

Lastly, Ms. Pine acknowledged the third anniversary of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. She stated that the Board had voted in favor of a statement supporting the people of Ukraine following that event. She also stated that the Board continues to offer its support.

Mr. Cunningham announced that the Open House at Florence Roche School will take place this Saturday, March 1st, from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Mr. Haddad said that the School Committee will hold a budget forum during the Open House from 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD #1

Groton Water Superintendent Mr. Tom Orcutt updated the Board on the PFAS construction project to bring potable water to the Groton Dunstable Regional High School. He said that the contractor will be making a connection on Chicopee Row between the two construction crews this week and that they are ahead of schedule.

Mr. Orcutt thanked Ms. Patricia DuFresne and Ms. Hannah Moller for their hard work on the SRF paperwork. He also thanked DPW Director Tom Delaney and DPW Director in Training Brian Callahan for their coordination with the detours, as well as the Police Chief and Deputy Police Chief for coordination with the detours during the project. He said that the residents have been very understanding, and the project is moving right along.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

1. Vote to Approve the Issuance and Details of a Loan from the Massachusetts Clean Water Trust (Loan No. DWEC-24-80) and Sign Related Closing Documents.

Treasurer/Tax Collector Ms. Moller was in attendance to answer any questions. Mr. Haddad explained that the Town was in the process of finalizing the interim loan, which required the Town's approval for the issuance. He stated that the Select Board must vote to approve the issuance and details of the note and subsequent bond that would be issued by the Trust. Mr. Haddad said it would be 0% interest, and they would not start paying the principal until the project was done.

Ms. Pine motioned to authorize the loan issuance from the Massachusetts Clean Water Trust (Loan No. DWEC-24-80) and details as outlined in the attached document. Mr. Pisani seconded the motion. Roll call: Manugian- aye; Pine-aye; Reilly- aye; Pisani-aye; Cunningham-aye.

2. Review the First Draft of the 2025 Spring Town Meeting.

Mr. Haddad provided the Board with the first draft of the 2025 Spring Town Meeting Warrant. He requested a few minutes to review the Warrant with the Board and informed them that it closed on February 21st at the end of the business day. A public hearing on the warrant is scheduled on Monday, March 10th. The articles included are as follows:

Articles 1-4 will be presented as one Consent Motion.

Article 1: Hear Reports

Article 2: Elected Officials Compensation

Article 3: Wage and Classification Schedule

Article 4: Appropriate FY 2026 Contribution to the OPEB Trust Fund

Article 5: Fiscal Year 2026 Annual Operating Budget

Article 6: Fiscal Year 2026 Capital Budget

Mr. Haddad reviewed the Capital Budget items with the Board.

Article 7: Community Preservation Funding Accounts

Article 8: Community Preservation Funding Recommendations

Article 9: Proposed Amendment to the Groton Charter-Park Commission

This is a placeholder.

Mr. Haddad explained there was one proposal left to discuss for the Charter Review Committee: the proposal to change the Park Commission from elected to appointed. The Charter Review Committee will discuss this at their March 6th meeting.

Article 10: Proposed Amendments to the Groton Charter

This is a placeholder.

Mr. Haddad explained that the Charter Review Committee had approved a proposed amendment to allow paid, benefited employees to serve on the Select Board. The Committee had approved this amendment by a vote of 5-1 (Mr. Cunningham was opposed). After further consideration, Mr. Haddad is no longer in favor of this amendment and plans on asking the Charter Review Committee to reconsider this amendment at their next meeting.

Article 11: Amend Chapter 81, "Town Meetings" of the Code of the Town of Groton

Article 12: Amend Chapter 125, “Demolition Delay” of the Code of the Town of Groton

Article 13: Adopt Resolution- Reduce Statewide Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Article 14: Reduce the Four Corners Sewer District

Article 15: Amend Flood Plain Zoning District

Article 16: Endorse Master Plan

Article 17: MBTA Communities Multi-Family Overlay District (MCMOD)

Article 18: Accessory Dwelling Unit Amendments

Article 19: Accept Monarch Path as a Town Way

This is a placeholder.

Article 20: Citizens Petition-Town Wide Speed Limit

Mr. Haddad stated that Articles 21 through 31 will be presented as one motion.

Article 21: Funding For Destination Groton Committee

Article 22: Funding For Sustainability Committee

Article 23: Transfer Within the Water Enterprise Fund

Article 24: Transfer Within the Sewer Enterprise Fund

Article 25: Transfer Within Four Corner Sewer Enterprise Fund

Article 26: Prior Year Bills

There are no bills for the prior year at this time.

Article 27: Current Year Line-Item Transfers

Article 28: Appropriate Funding to Offset Snow and Ice Deficit

Article 29: Debt Service for the Middle School Track

Article 30: Transfer Bond Proceeds

Article 31: Establishing Limits for Various Revolving Funds

3. Vote to Authorize the inclusion of the Various Elected Committee Vacancies on the 2025 Town Election Ballot.

Town Clerk Ms. Dunbar attended the meeting. Mr. Haddad said that pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 42, §10, the Select Board needed to vote on adding the following vacancies to the 2025 Spring Election Ballot. The following positions need to be added: Planning Board, Sewer Commission, Trustee of the Groton Public Library, and the Groton Housing Authority.

Ms. Pine made a motion to add the vacancies for the Planning Board, Sewer Commission, Trustee of the Groton Public Library, and the Groton Housing Authority to the 2025 Spring Election Ballot. Mr. Pisani seconded the motion. Roll call: Manugian-aye; Pine-aye; Reilly- aye; Pisani-aye; Cunningham-aye.

4. Update on Fiscal Year 2026 Budget.

Mr. Haddad said the Department Heads did a great job presenting their budgets during the Saturday, February 22nd meeting. He believes that there is still more to learn regarding the Fire Department. He said the Board needs to decide on March 3rd whether they plan on pursuing an override of Proposition 2 ½ to balance the FY 2026 Proposed Budget. The Finance Committee will meet with the Groton Dunstable Regional School District Officials on Tuesday, February 25th, in the First Floor Meeting Room of the Groton Town Hall.

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

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| Monday, March 3, 2025 | Joint Budget Meeting at the Groton Center |
| Monday, March 10, 2025 | Public Hearing on the Spring Town Meeting |
| Monday, March 17, 2025 | No Meeting |
| Monday, March 24, 2025 | Review Prescott Building Assessment- Determine if any Action Needs to be taken |
| 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. In Joint Session with the Planning Board-Consider Appointing Russ Burke to the Planning Board to Fill a Vacancy on the Board.

Chairman Scott Wilson called the Planning Board meeting to order.

Mr. Haddad explained that three candidates applied for a vacancy on the Planning Board due to a resignation. These candidates were interviewed by the Planning Board. The position was properly advertised pursuant to Select Board Policy. The Planning Board recommended that Russell Burke be appointed to the vacancy until the 2025 Annual Town Election. He explained that there are two years left on the term.

Mr. Cunningham asked Mr. Burke about any changes that might have led to his resignation. Mr. Burke stated that he had served on the Planning Board for over 18 years and received a lot of negative feedback regarding his resignation. He was persuaded to reconsider. He said that he was committed to public service.

Mr. Reilly made a motion to appoint Mr. Russell Burke to the Planning Board until the 2025 Annual Town Election. Mr. Cunningham seconded. Roll call: Cunningham-aye; Reilly-aye; Pisani-aye; Pine-aye; Manugian-aye; Black-aye; Barringer-aye; Wilson-aye; Francisco-aye; Hathaway-aye.

Mr. Wilson adjourned the Planning Board Meeting.

2. Consider Approving the Intermunicipal Agreement (IMA) between the Town of Groton Sewer Commission and the Town of Pepperell Department of Public Works.

Groton Sewer Commissioner Chair Jim Gmeiner and Pepperell DPW Business Manager Paul Brinkman were in attendance.

Mr. Haddad provided the Board with the proposed Intermunicipal Agreement between the Groton Sewer Commission and the Pepperell Department of Public Works for the Town to continue to send Waste from the Groton Center Sewer District to the Pepperell Wastewater Treatment Plant. Mr. Gmeiner explained that this Agreement is set up so the system acts as one, not separated by Pepperell and Groton. Mr. Haddad said Town Counsel reviewed the IMA, and the Groton Sewer

Commission adopted it. Mr. Haddad respectfully requested that the Select Board vote to approve the IMA.

Mr. Reilly made a motion to approve the Intermunicipal Agreement between the Town of Groton Sewer Commission and the Town of Pepperell Department of Public Works, as presented. Ms. Pine seconded the motion.

Discussion

Ms. Manugian inquired about the decision-making process for upgrades to the plant and how decisions are made. Mr. Brinkman responded that they are working together throughout the year and keeping Groton informed of decisions in advance. Mr. Haddad said it is a partnership. She also asked about the current capacity of the plant. Mr. Brinkman replied that the plant and Groton operate at 50% of their allotted capacity. He mentioned that there is still available capacity.

Roll call: Manugian- aye; Pine-aye; Reilly- aye; Pisani-aye; Cunningham-aye.

3. Consider Approving a One Day Wine and Malt Beverage License for the Groton Neighbors for their Spring Member Party to be held on Friday, May 30, 2025, at the First Parish Church from 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

Mr. Pisani made a motion to approve a One Day Wine and Malt Beverages License for the Groton Neighbors for their Spring Member Party on Friday, May 30, 2025, at the First Parish Church from 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. Ms. Pine seconded the motion. Roll call: Manugian- aye; Pine-aye; Reilly- aye; Pisani-aye; Cunningham-aye.

4. Consider Approving a One Day Wine and Malt Beverage License for the Friends of Prescott's 10th Anniversary Celebration (Forge and Vine to Supply and Manage the Alcohol) to be held at the Groton School on Thursday, March 13, 2025, from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Mr. Reilly made a motion to approve a One Day Wine and Malt Beverages License for the Friends of Prescott's 10th Anniversary Celebration to be held at the Groton School on Thursday, March 13, 2025, from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. Ms. Pine seconded the motion. Roll call: Manugian- aye; Pine-aye; Reilly- aye; Pisani-aye; Cunningham-aye.

6:15 Legislative Update with Senator Cronin, Representative Scarsdale, and Representative Danillo Sena.

Mr. Haddad thanked Senator Cronin, Representative Scarsdale, and Representative Danillo Sena for attending. Mr. Haddad said he had invited them to provide a Legislative Update to the Board.

Representative Sena thanked the Select Board and Mr. Haddad for the opportunity to speak. He said his office focused on education, climate change, and immigration. He is working on bills to establish universal pre-kindergarten and improve public education, and they must look at the Chapter 70 formula, as it is not functioning effectively. He said that in the long term, they must establish a commission to study Chapter 70. He stressed the urgent need for immediate funding for the school district and full funding for regional transportation. Representative Sena explained that the closing of the Nashoba Valley Medical Center has created a demand for funding for

Groton's first responders, who are currently under significant stress. He said to please inform his office of any bills they would like him to support or advocate for.

Representative Scarsdale thanked the Board for their service. She wanted to address the fundamental issues regarding the school funding formula, which has been a long-standing problem. She said that the Student Opportunity Act was a significant piece of legislation and believes it has a lot of support. She said that there can be unintended consequences whenever you make adjustments to something very complex. She feels that the Student Opportunity Act has exacerbated the issues related to Chapters 70 and 71. She explained that in June of last year, representatives from all communities in the First Middlesex Legislative District came together to discuss the problem. She explained that they discussed the concepts of minimum aid, district designation, or hold harmless designation. She explained that 211 districts face similar situations, and a task force was formed to address these concerns. The task force came up with a list of recommendations that would provide short- and long-term relief by reviewing the formula. She said the Massachusetts Teachers Association was currently meeting to review the recommendations. Representative Scarsdale emphasized that the towns need assistance right now.

Senator Cronin stated that as a delegation, Chapter 70 is the number one priority for their offices. He said they plan to advocate for transportation improvements and that the issues discussed were complex. Senator Cronin explained that it has been a huge deal for UMASS to commit to opening a satellite facility. He said the area Chiefs approached the delegation seeking financial assistance of \$9.6 million to help address some of these issues. They are collaborating with the Department of Public Health and the Governor's office on these matters. Senator Cronin hopes to create community support until the UMASS facility opens.

Ms. Pine asked Representative Sena about his proposal of universal pre-kindergarten education and if it would be free. Representative Sena explained that there would be a cost associated with it. He explained the importance of providing education for everyone and increasing awareness of what can be done at the state level. He is considering long-term plans for implementing this initiative, saying this matter needs to be addressed. Ms. Pine said she was in favor of pre-kindergarten education but said the State must ensure full funding for the program.

Mr. Cunningham discussed the closure of Nashoba Valley Medical Center. He stressed the urgent need for relief, mentioning they might request an override from the townspeople to fund six new firefighters. Representative Scarsdale stated that a lot is going on behind the scenes concerning the hospital. Senator Cronin stated that discussions are ongoing, and the \$9.6 million will be distributed to each community based on their needs.

Mr. Pisani mentioned they face two overrides: one for the School District and another for Fire/EMS. He said that the Town was in trouble. He expressed concerns that they would lose experienced firefighters and about burnout among the staff.

Ms. Manugian said she appreciated everyone for attending the meeting, but she also shared her frustration and requested their recommendations on what the citizens were supposed to do. Mr. Reilly said they never want to create conflict between the schools and the municipality; however, this year, the Fire Department may be pitted against the Schools with two proposed overrides. Senator Cronin emphasized the importance of communicating with constituents.

The Select Board thanked Representative Scarsdale, Representative Sena, and Senator Cronin for attending the discussion.

On Going issues

- C. Charter Review Committee—Mr. Cunningham explained that a proposal was presented at the last Charter Review Committee meeting to change the Park Commission positions from elected to appointed or to eliminate the Parks Commission, assigning its responsibilities to other parties. He asked to receive feedback from the Select Board regarding this proposal. The Select Board was not in favor of this proposal.
- D. Florence Roche Elementary School Construction Project- The Open House for Florence Roche Elementary School is scheduled for Saturday, March 1, 2025, from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm.

OTHER BUSINESS

None

SELECT BOARD LIASON REPORTS

None

Approval of the Regularly Scheduled Meeting Minutes of February 10, 2025.

Ms. Pine made a motion to approve the minutes of the regularly scheduled meeting of February 10, 2025. Mr. Pisani seconded the motion. 4 in Favor, 1 Abstained- Reilly

The meeting was adjourned at 7:48 p.m. Respectively submitted by Kara Cruikshank, Executive Assistant to the Town Manager.