

SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, MAY 5, 2025
APPROVED

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

Also Present: Mark Haddad, Town Manager; Kara Cruikshank, Executive Assistant to the Town Manager; Patricia DuFresne, Assistant Director of Finance/Town Accountant; Bud Robertson, Finance Committee Chair; Raquel Majeski and Fran Stanley, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee Members.

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mr. Cunningham announced that UMass will hold a public outreach event for the Nashoba Region on Tuesday, May 6th, at 6:30 p.m. at the Performing Arts Center. He encouraged everyone to attend.

Ms. Pine announced that Early In-Person Voting will begin on Saturday, May 10th, from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., and will continue during regular business hours of the Town Hall the week of May 12th. Mr. Haddad stated that the Town Clerk has mailed out 127 ballots, and 14 residents have voted absentee.

Mr. Haddad announced that the Florence Roche Elementary School ribbon-cutting ceremony will take place on Tuesday, June 3rd, at 4:00 p.m., with a rain date of Thursday, June 5th, at 4:00 p.m.

Mr. Haddad reported that the town received a check for \$22,520 from the Groton Hill Music Center. This amount represents the proceeds from the Groton Community Fund for Quarter 1 of 2025. He stated that the Community Fund continues to be very successful.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

None

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

- 1. Ratify the Town Manager's Appointments of Luke Duhamel, Matthew Roche, Niklaus Dapcic as Golf Staff to the Groton Country Club, Kyle Courtemanche as a Truck Driver/Laborer, and Craig Hovey as a Highway Mechanic.**

Mr. Pisani made a motion to ratify the Town Manager's Appointments of Luke Duhamel, Matthew Roche, Niklaus Dapcic as Golf Staff to the Groton Country Club, Kyle Courtemanche as a Truck Driver/Laborer, and Craig Hovey as a Highway Mechanic, effective immediately. Ms. Pine seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

- 2. Town Meeting Follow-up, Recap, and Update.**

Mr. Haddad said now that the Town Meeting has been completed, he wanted to call attention to the following issues/action items relative to the meeting:

Article 5- Operating Budget- The Balanced Budget was approved without any amendments. The additional funding for the School District and the Fire Department was approved, contingent on overrides of Proposition 2 ½. He explained that there are two questions on the Ballot for the May 20, 2025, Annual Election for these purposes. He said, regardless of the outcome, the Balanced Budget is intact and will go into effect on July 1, 2025.

Article 8-CPA Funding Recommendations-

Project #4- Cow Pond Brook Fields Improvements-

Mr. Haddad will continue the contract with Activitas to schedule public forums and start preliminary designs in conjunction with the Park Commission. The Park Commission will meet with Activitas on June 2nd.

Project #8- Town Field Improvements-

Mr. Haddad said that they have gone out to bid, and M.J. Cataldo, Inc. of Littleton has been awarded the Bid. The Park Commission has voted to authorize spending funds from their FY 2025 Capital Budget to make up the difference between the actual project cost of \$378,850 and the funding provided from CPA Funds (\$352,963). The contract has been finalized with M.J. Cataldo, and they will commence work after July 1, 2025.

Article 9- Proposed Amendments to the Charter-

Mr. Haddad stated that, unfortunately, this Article was defeated. He said the Charter Review Committee is still a standing Committee and asked the Board whether it should continue to review the Charter and either bring the proposal back to Town Meeting, make changes to the recommendations, or leave the Charter as is. Ms. Pine agreed that the Charter Review Committee should continue to meet and review the Charter. Mr. Haddad will work with Mr. Cunningham to schedule a Charter Review Committee meeting.

Other Issues:

- The Town Clerk will file all Bylaw Amendments with the Attorney General for review and approval.
- Town Counsel will file the necessary paperwork for accepting Monarch Path as a Town Way.
- The Department of Public Works will award the contract for the Town Hall Sprinkler repairs.

Mr. Haddad stated that the Town Meeting was a great success and commended the Moderator for doing an excellent job. Ms. Pine suggested that when planning future Town Meetings, they should plan and prepare attendees in advance to allow for a longer meeting time on Saturdays. Ms. Pine also explained that the Ballot Booklet was mailed out.

3. Fiscal Year 2025 Third Quarter Financial Update.

Mr. Haddad presented the Fiscal Year 2025 Third Quarter Financial Report, which Patricia DuFresne, the Assistant Director of Finance/Town Accountant, prepared. Ms. DuFresne and Mr. Bud Robertson, the Finance Committee Chairman, attended the meeting. Mr. Haddad reviewed the Report with the Board and explained that the town had collected 75.99% of the anticipated total revenue of \$49,963,365. At

the same time last year, he said the collection rate was 76.95%. He noted that investment income was exceptionally high last year; it currently stands at \$430,000, which is still a lot. Mr. Haddad highlighted the Local Option Meals Tax and Local Option Room Occupancy Tax, and said that Marijuana and the Country Club Revenues are performing well.

Mr. Haddad explained that the Minuteman Nashoba Health Group has closed out the runoff period, resulting in approximately \$369,000 that will be returned to the Town and added to Free Cash, which can be reflected in the fourth quarter. He said financially, the Town is in excellent shape. Ms. DuFresne pointed out that Licenses and Permits Revenues are up over last year, due to a single permit for the Lawrence Academy Grey Building, which was in the amount of \$120,000. She clarified that Licenses and Permits Revenue is not on an upward trend; the increase is a one-time occurrence.

Mr. Haddad explained that there are some notable outliers in expenses that the Board is aware of: Legal Fees, Snow and Ice, and Debt Service have increased due to payments related to the Florence Roche Elementary School. He reiterated that, overall, they are in good financial standing.

4. Update on Select Board's 2025 Goals.

Mr. Haddad reviewed the Board's goals and objectives and provided updates (reference the attached Fiscal Year 2025 Goals of the Groton Select Board).

Ms. Pine asked about the status of the Squannacook Sportsman Club. Mr. Cunningham explained that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) had spent over \$2 million to clean up the site to their standards. However, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MA DEP) has a lowered threshold for lead, so they wanted additional work conducted. Mr. Cunningham said further testing will be conducted. A grant is available through the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC) to help fund this effort. Mr. Cunningham said it is a lengthy process. Once they get approval from MA DEP, they will take ownership of the property and take the Sportsman Club building down.

5. Proposed Select Board Meeting Schedule through Labor Day.

Monday, May 12, 2025	No Meeting
Monday, May 19, 2025	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, May 26, 2025	No Meeting (Memorial Day)
Monday, June 2, 2025	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, June 9, 2025	Regularly Scheduled Meeting (Re-Organization of the Board)
Monday, June 16, 2025	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, June 23, 2025	No Meeting
Monday, June 30, 2025	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, July 7, 2025	No Meeting
Monday, July 14, 2025	Regularly Scheduled Meeting (L.I. Transfers/Call for FTM)
Monday, July 28, 2025	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, August 4, 2025	No Meeting
Monday, August 11, 2025	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, August 18, 2025	No Meeting
Monday, August 25, 2025	Regularly Scheduled Meeting

Monday, September 1, 2025
Monday, September 8, 2025

No Meeting (Labor Day)
Regularly Scheduled Meeting

ITEMS FOR SELECT BOARD CONSIDERATION AND APPROVAL

- 1. Consider Approving a Special One Day All Alcoholic Beverages License for the New England Ringers Celebratory Reception to be held on Saturday, May 17, 2025, from 4:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.**

Ms. Pine made a motion to approve a Special One Day All Alcoholic Beverages License for the New England Ringers Celebratory Reception to be held on Saturday, May 17, 2025, from 4:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Mr. Pisani seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

6:15 P.M. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee- Update

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee Chair Raquel Majeski and member Fran Stanley were present to update the Board on their activities and plans over the next several months.

Ms. Majeski thanked the Board for having them and wanted to express the importance of the Board's ongoing support for the Committee. The Committee feels strongly that the name of the Committee continues to include the words diversity, equity, and inclusion. They believe that representing the variety of races, religions, socioeconomic status, accessibility, and all identity-based identifiers was important to their work. The Committee will continue to provide opportunities for education, celebration, and inclusion for everyone. Ms. Pine said that Groton has a long-standing history of supporting its residents. Ms. Majeski requested continued support for the Committee's educational and celebratory activities. Ms. Pine expressed her wholehearted support for the Committee's work.

Ms. Manugian made a motion to confirm the existence of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee and to reaffirm the Board's support and appreciation of their efforts. Mr. Pisani 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. Pisani made a motion to authorize the Town Manager and one member of the Select Board to sign Warrants for the next 30 days. Mr. Cunningham seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

SELECT BOARD LIASON REPORTS

None

Ongoing issues

- A. PFAS Issue-** Mr. Haddad provided a positive update regarding the class action lawsuits against 3M and DuPont. He said a few years ago, he requested the Board to join these lawsuits. The town hired a law firm called Baron & Budd, based in Dallas, Texas, to represent Groton. The agreement is for the law firm to receive 17% of any settlement amount and cover their costs. Mr. Haddad said they have been very successful.

He announced that the town received its first settlement payment in the amount of \$67,022, which will be allocated to the Water Commission in a special fund to be used on the treatment of PFAS only. The Town of Groton is expected to receive between \$400,000 and \$600,000, which will go to the Groton Water Department. This is the settlement for the town's drinking supply wells.

As part of the lawsuit, there is a second round of lawsuits concerning special incidents. Mr. Haddad said that the PFAS at the high school is considered a special incident. If the town receives any settlement payments, Mr. Haddad will discuss them with the Board, so they can decide how to allocate those funds. By the end of 2025, the Groton Water Commission will receive all settlement payments. Mr. Haddad said Baron & Budd has been phenomenal to work with.

- B. UMass Satellite Emergency Facility- UMass will hold a public outreach event for the Nashoba Region on Tuesday, May 6th, at 6:30 p.m. at the Performing Arts Center.
- C. PILOTs- PILOTs will be discussed during a June Select Board meeting.

Approval of the Regularly Scheduled Meeting Minutes of April 14, 2025, Budget Forum Minutes of April 16, 2025, and the Special Meeting Minutes of April 26, 2025.

Ms. Pine made a motion to approve the regularly scheduled meeting minutes of April 14, 2025, the budget forum minutes of April 16, 2025, and the special meeting minutes of April 26, 2025. Mr. Cunningham seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:52 p.m.

Respectively submitted by Kara Cruikshank, Executive Assistant to the Town Manager.

FISCAL YEAR 2025

GOALS OF THE GROTON SELECT BOARD

1. Support Boards and Committees

Select Board Member Assigned: Becky Pine

Goal:

Provide guidance, support and/or oversight of the various Boards and Committees, including the Sustainability Commission, the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee, Affordable Housing Trust and the Planning Board.

Sustainability Commission – Provide guidance with regard to identifying pathways to achieve carbon footprint reductions in both municipal and residential settings. Identify and support non-motorized vehicle alternatives for transportation. Determine and work with the Committee in the development and implementation of a Carbon Action Plan (CAP).

11-04-24 Update

The Town Manager created a working group to investigate and make a recommendation to the Select Board on the Carbon Action Plan. It is anticipated that they will make a recommendation in the next couple of months.

2-10-25 Update

The Working Group provided a report and recommendation to the Select Board at their meeting of December 16th. At the meeting, the Working Group Recommended that the Select Board bring an Article to Town Meeting recommending adoption of a resolution supporting the goal by the Commonwealth of reducing state-wide greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. The Select Board voted unanimously to bring this to the 2025 Spring Town Meeting.

5-5-25 Update

Town Meeting approved the Greenhouse Gas Emissions Resolution and the Town received a three year grant to hire an Energy Manager in conjunctions with the Towns of Shirely, Harvard and Ayer

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee – Provide guidance and assistance in identifying policies and documents that have worked to suppress cultural and socioeconomic diversity. Collaborate with the Select Board to create consistent unified responses to incidents

of hatred, bigotry, or injustice. Develop a phased approach to create inclusionary practices toward individuals, groups, and cultures in Groton now and in our history who may have previously been unrecognized or marginalized.

11-04-24 Update

The Select Board and the Diversity Equity and Inclusion Committee met on July 29th for an update on their activities. The Juneteenth Celebration was well done and they recommended to the Select Board that the restrooms in the various municipal buildings be converted to all-gender. The Board adopted this request. The DEI Committee will continue to work on their goal as established by the Select Board.

2-10-25 Update:

No New Update – This Goal is on-going.

5-5-25 Update:

The DEI Committee is on the May 5th Agenda and will provide an update at the Meeting.

Affordable Housing Trust – Continue to work with and support the Affordable Housing Trust in creating affordable housing in Groton.

11-4-24 Update

The Affordable Housing Trust is in the process of finalizing a proposal to create affordable housing on a town-owned parcel off of Hoyts Wharf Road. It is anticipated that an RFP will be issued next Spring with an Article on the Spring Town Meeting Warrant to accomplish this goal.

2-10-25 Update

No New Update – This Goal is on-going.

5-5-25 Update

Town Meeting rejected the request to dispose of the Hoyts Wharf Road Property to create affordable housing. The Affordable Housing Trust will need to meet and determine how to proceed.

Planning Board – Support the Planning Board in their proposed Master Plan update and MBTA Zoning amendments. Support the review of the Zoning Bylaw in the review of dimensional zoning and multi-family aged restricted housing.

11-4-24 Update

The Planning Board provided an Article to the Fall Town Meeting to update the Accessory Dwelling Unit Zoning Bylaw. The Planning Board is finalizing the Master Plan and MBTA Zoning amendment and will bring both to the 2025 Spring Town Meeting.'

2-10-25 Update: No new update. The Planning Board is still planning on bringing both matters to the 2025 Spring Town Meeting.

5-5-25 Update: Town Meeting approved the Master Plan and MBTA Zoning at Town Meeting. This goal is complete.

Measurable Benchmark: Schedule workshops by December 31, 2024 with the Sustainability Commission, DEI Committee and Affordable Housing Trust to receive annual reports and updates from the two Boards on their various initiatives. Provide guidance and feedback to them to carry out their charges. Invite the Planning Board to Select Board Meeting prior to the Fall Town Meeting to review the proposed Master Plan prior to submission to Town Meeting. Schedule workshop with Planning Board to review proposed MBTA Zoning amendment.

2. PILOTs

Select Board Member Assigned: Matt Pisani and Alison Manugian

Goal: Work with various non-profits to codify PILOT Agreements that support the strong relationships in place.

Summer 2024 -

- Identify Groton Non-Profit Entities & Determine which Non-Profits to Review
- Research other Municipal/Non-Profit Agreements
- Capture Understanding of Current Agreements
- Identify contributions of non-profit partners
- Identify municipal costs in support of non-profit partners

Fall 2024 -

- Provide Public Update on above information
- Discuss Groton financial outlook and PILOT contributions with non-profit partners

Winter 2024 -

- Finalize Agreements and Codify in Writing

FY 2026 -

- Implement new agreements

Measurable Benchmark: Implement Schedule as outlined above.

- 11-4-24 Update The Town Manager's PILOT Working Group has been working since the beginning of the Fiscal Year to address this issue and provide a recommendation to the Select Board on how to increase PILOTs from our non-profit partners. They have provided periodic updates to the Select Board on their progress. They plan on presenting another update to the Select Board in December.
- 2-10-25 Update The Town Manager's PILOT Working Group has completed its work and provided a Report and Recommendation to the Select Board at their January 27, 2025 Meeting. Select Board took the matter under advisement and will schedule it for further discussion at an upcoming meeting.
- 5-5-25 Update This issue will be scheduled for a meeting in June for the Board to consider adopting the recommendation of the Working Group and/or take any other action. In the meantime, the Treasurer's Office has issued the annual letter to Groton's non-profits seeking their annual PILOT payment.

3. FY 2026 Budget Development/Implementation
Select Board Member Assigned: Alison Manugian

Goal: Work with Town Manager/Town Administrator Working Group, Department Heads and Peer Boards to develop a Fiscal Year 2026 Budget that meets the needs of the Town and Groton Dunstable Regional School District. Consider Financial alternatives to those in the current Groton Dunstable Regional School District Agreement to consider amendments that would address current inequities. Work with our State Delegation to find ways to increase state support.

Measurable Benchmark: Present a Balance Budget to the 2025 Spring Town Meeting to Fund the Town's and Districts Operations.

11-4-24 Update The Finance Committee and Select Board provided Budget Guidance to the Town Manager on October 29th. The TriCom has begun meeting and there was a joint meeting between the Town of Groton, Town of Dunstable and Groton Dunstable Regional School District to continue the collaboration that was established last year. The Groton Charter amendment extending the time for the Town Manager to complete the budget (now January 31st) has been signed into law.

2-10-25 Update The Town Manager has completed his proposed Budget and submitted it to the Select Board and Finance Committee in compliance with the Charter. The Budget is now under review.

5-5-25 Update The balanced budget was adopted and approved by Town Meeting. In addition, the Town Meeting approved two contingent budget amounts for the School District and the Fire Department. Both additional amounts will be voted on through Override Questions at the Annual Election to be held on May 20th.

4. Provide Tax Relief for Seniors
Select Board Member Assigned: John Reilly and Peter Cunningham

Goal: Work with Assessors to ensure every option to assist Seniors struggling to meet the growing property tax burden. Leverage relationships with our State Delegation to ensure passage of legislation for this purpose.

Measurable Benchmark: Schedule workshop with our State Delegation prior to the start of the next Legislative Session to discuss various bills before the Legislature providing tax relief to Seniors.

11-4-24 No update at this time.

2-10-25 Update: The Assessors have provided an update to the Select Board on the various pieces of legislation before the legislature to provide Tax Relief to Groton's Seniors. The status is as follows:

**AN ACT PROVIDING FOR A MEANS TESTED SENIOR CITIZEN
PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTION**

H. 2798

By local option, implements a standard senior citizen means tested property tax exemption based on the income tax Circuit Breaker Tax program.

Sponsor: Rep. William Galvin

Assigned to Revenue Committee

FAVORABLE vote from Committee

Passed by Steering and Policy

In House Third Reading Committee

Act expanding the senior property tax exemption

H. 2758

Right now seniors can get a \$500 property tax exemption (MGL 59, Section 5, Clause 41C) if they meet certain eligibility criteria. This can currently be increased to \$1,000 by a vote of the legislative

body of any municipality. This bill provides the option to increase that to \$2,000 (by a vote of the legislative body of any municipality).

Sponsor: Rep. Josh Cutler
Revenue Committee
FAVORABLE from Committee
Passed by Steering and Policy
In House Third Reading Committee

5-5-10 Update

No new update

5. Charter Review

Select Board Member Assigned: Peter Cunningham

Goal:

Update Charter to allow for changes in the way the positions of Police Chief, Fire Chief and Town Clerk are selected/filled. Institute 10 year Charter Review by calling for the establishment of the Charter Review Committee.

Measurable Benchmark:

Establish Charter Review Committee by September 1, 2024. Work with Committee to ensure Charter changes are submitted to either the 2025 Spring or 2025 Fall Town Meetings.

11-4-24 Update

The Select Board created the Charter Review Committee in August. All seven members have been appointed and the first meeting has been held. A public hearing will be held on December 5th to receive input from the public on the Charter.

2-10-25 Update:

The Charter Review Committee held its Public Hearing on December 5th and has begun finalizing their various recommendations on changes to the Groton Charter. The main recommendation is to change the way the Police Chief, Fire Chief and Town Clerk are appointed by having the Town Manager appoint them subject to ratification by the Select Board. The Select Board reviewed this proposal and developed an Appointment Policy for the Town Manager and Select Board to follow when filling these vacancies. The Select Board is in favor of this change. The Charter Review Committee will finalize its recommendations and provide a final report to 2025 Spring Town Meeting.

5-5-25 Update

Town Meeting rejected all proposed Charter Amendments. The Select Board will need to determine next steps.