

**SELECT BOARD HYBRID MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, JUNE 30, 2025
APPROVED**

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

Select Board Members Virtually Present: Becky Pine, Vice Chair;

Also Present: Mark Haddad, Town Manager; Kara Cruikshank, Executive Assistant to the Town Manager; Bud Robertson, Finance Committee Chair; Patricia DuFresne, Town Accountant; Tom Orcutt, Groton Water Superintendent; Megan Foster, Principal Assessor; Greg Sheldon, Jeff Gordon, Joni Parker Roach, Brian Bolton, Destination Groton Committee Members; Karen Tucker Barisano, Destination Groton Sub-Committee Member.

Chair Pisani called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and reviewed the agenda.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mr. Cunningham announced that the Fourth of July fireworks will take place on Monday, July 7th, at Town Field. Mr. Haddad mentioned that construction of the new major league diamond at Town Field will begin after the fireworks event.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

None

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

- 1. Consider Ratifying the Town Manager's Appointment of Ambrose Harriman, Caroline Chaland, and Syndney Bain as Groton Country Club Lifeguards; Matthew Lesser to the Groton Country Club Camp Staff; and Shuan Wagner to the Civilian Traffic Unit.**

Mr. Cunningham made a motion to ratify the Town Manager's Appointment of Ambrose Harriman, Caroline Chaland, and Syndney Bain as Groton Country Club Lifeguards; Matthew Lesser to the Groton Country Club Camp Staff; and Shuan Wagner to the Civilian Traffic Unit. Ms. Manugian seconded the motion. Roll Call: Manugian-aye; Pine-aye; Cunningham-aye; Pisani-aye; Reilly-aye.

- 2. Finalize and Approve the Town Manager's Recommendation on PILOTs.**

Mr. Haddad explained that the Attorney General's Office ruled on the Open Meeting Law Complaint filed by Paul Fitzgerald, stating that the Town Manager is allowed to hold Working Group Meetings and that there was no violation of the Open Meeting Law. He emphasized that this was an important issue, as Town Manager Working Group meetings are held frequently.

Mr. Haddad explained that at the previous Select Board meeting, he presented a recommendation on how to address the PILOTs moving forward. He recommended that the Board vote to take no action on the Report of the Working Group and direct him to continue engaging with the Non-Profit Partners, as he has since 2008, with an emphasis on cooperation, goodwill, and respect. Ms. Manugian had requested that Mr. Haddad provide a comparison showing what the Town has

received in Fiscal Year 2025 versus what it would have been under the PILOT Working Group's recommendation of a PILOT based on 15% of their assessed value. Mr. Haddad presented a comparison of PILOTs for FY 2024 and FY 2025 to the Board and reviewed it. He explained that the Town received \$435,058 in PILOTs for FY 2024 and \$478,629 for FY 2025. The chart indicated that if they implemented the PILOTs at 15% of the property values, it would total \$1,271,592, resulting in a difference of \$832,693, or a 10% increase.

Mr. Haddad requested direction from the Board on how to proceed.

Comments/Suggestions

Mr. Haddad informed the Board that he had Kara Cruikshank contact communities in which UMass Memorial Hospital has facilities to inquire if they paid a PILOT to those communities. Thus far, they do not pay a PILOT to those communities. Mr. Cunningham said he would support his recommendation, but moving forward, he would like Mr. Haddad to emphasize the Town's hardships to the Non-Profits, hoping they would feel compelled to contribute more. Mr. Haddad explained that he will schedule meetings with Groton's Non-Profit Partners over the summer and continue his collaboration with them.

Mr. Reilly wished all Non-Profit Partners would give a percentage increase annually, similar to the one at Groton School.

Ms. Pine agreed with everything discussed. She said that resident Mr. Paul Fitzgerald suggested setting a percentage goal as part of the Select Board's Goals, and she was unsure whether that should be implemented. Ms. Pine said they have had success with the variety of strategies used over the years.

Ms. Manugian agreed with everyone, but her main concern was for students from the private schools attending the Groton-Dunstable schools. She would like to explore a way for some PILOT funding to be allocated directly from private schools to the Regional School District. She would like to arrange a meeting with the GDRSD Superintendent and the private schools. She believes it's important to address this issue directly with the schools to help reduce tuition costs and other related expenses.

Mr. Cunningham made a motion to accept the recommendation to continue down the path, similar to the one taken over the last several years. Mr. Reilly seconded the motion.

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

6:15 P.M. Destination Groton Committee-Update on Town Center Visioning.

Destination Groton Committee members Brian Bolton, Joni Parker Roach, Jeff Gordon, and Greg Sheldon attended, along with subcommittee member Karen Tucker Barisano. The members were there to provide an update on their Town-Wide Center Visioning initiative and the work they have accomplished so far under the \$50,000 grant received from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Mr. Sheldon walked the Board through a PowerPoint presentation outlining the year's accomplishments and goals. He explained that the Destination Groton Committee (DGC) is in the early stages of a visioning process. The goal is to submit a final ten-year vision plan that creates a viable, walkable Town Center experience for Groton, while encouraging potential alternative development sites around the Town. This process also supports the goals of the Master Plan. The DGC shared a timeline for their Town Center Vision Plan and addressed current questions.

Board Questions/Comments

Ms. Manugian asked where she could find the information. The members responded that it was preliminary. Mr. Gordon stated that they planned to meet with different committees first, then return to the Select Board. Mr. Cunningham asked if the presentation could be made publicly available. The members said that it absolutely could. Ms. Pine clarified that money coming into the regional economy is not the same as local revenue. Mr. Gordon said that hearing public input on what they can and can't do, so they don't change the town's character, was important feedback to receive.

Public Comments

Ms. Julie Andrews of 17 Station Avenue expressed her disappointment that the residents of Station Avenue have not yet been contacted. Mr. Gordon said they do not have enough information to discuss potential plans. They have just hired a consultant, and the DGC will gather public input through a forum. Ms. Andrews thanked the Board. Mr. Sheldon said this was a vision exercise, and they want to be transparent. Ms. Parker Roach said these were just ideas and that they are for the entire Town Center, not just Station Avenue.

Mr. Pisani expressed his appreciation for all the work the Destination Groton Committee does and wants to ensure they don't get discouraged in their efforts.

3. Proposed Select Board Meeting Schedule through Labor Day.

Monday, July 7, 2025	No Meeting
Monday, July 14, 2025	Regularly Scheduled Meeting (L.I. Transfers/Call for FTM)
Monday, July 21, 2025	No Meeting
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	No Meeting (Labor Day)
Monday, September 8, 2025	Regularly Scheduled Meeting

ITEMS FOR SELECT BOARD CONSIDERATION AND APPROVAL

1. Vote to Dispose of Playground Equipment at Prescott School.

As discussed at the June 9th Select Board Meeting, Mr. Haddad advertised the disposal of surplus playground equipment behind Prescott School. The only interest came from Grotonwood, which is

willing to remove the equipment at its own expense. Based on this, Mr. Haddad respectfully asked that the Board authorize him to dispose of the equipment by allowing Grotonwood to remove it.

Mr. Haddad stated that Ms. Manugian had asked him whether they would provide liability insurance, listing the Town as additional insured, and he replied that they would be. Ms. Manugian also inquired about the removal of the foundation cement structures that support their equipment, and he informed her that the Department of Public Works (DPW) would need to handle that removal.

Mr. Cunningham made a motion to authorize the disposal of the equipment to Grotonwood. Mr. Reilly seconded the motion. Roll Call: Manugian-aye; Pine-aye; Cunningham-aye; Pisani-aye; Reilly-aye.

2. Update Meetings on Holiday Policy

While reviewing the Town's various Policies, the Town Clerk noticed that the Meetings on Holiday Policy needs updating to include Juneteenth and change Columbus Day to Indigenous Peoples' Day. Mr. Haddad provided the revised Policy to the Board (see attached to these minutes).

Mr. Haddad respectfully requested that the Board waive the Policy that requires bringing back policies and policy amendments to another meeting for approval consideration.

Mr. Cunningham made a motion to waive the Policy and allow the Board to consider approving the proposed changes at the same meeting that it is presented. Ms. Manugian seconded the motion. Roll Call: Manugian-aye; Pine-aye; Cunningham-aye; Pisani-aye; Reilly-aye.

Mr. Cunningham made a motion to amend the Policy as presented. Ms. Manugian seconded the motion. Roll Call: Manugian-aye; Pine-aye; Cunningham-aye; Pisani-aye; Reilly-aye.

Discussion

Ms. Pine noted that the Board was supposed to review the Policy annually. She suggested not holding a Select Board meeting on Rosh Hashanah.

3. Review and Approve Liaison Assignments for FY 2026.

Mr. Haddad provided the Board with the Liaison Assignments. The Select Board did not recommend any changes (see the attached document) and left all Liaison assignments the same.

4. Consider Approving a One Day All Alcoholic Beverages License for the Groton Business Association for GrotonFest to be held on Saturday, September 27, 2025, from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

The Groton Business Association will return for consideration at a later date.

6:30 P.M. PFAS Issue at Groton Dunstable Regional High School- Update from Town Manager

Groton Water Superintendent Mr. Tom Orcutt was in attendance for the discussion.

Mr. Haddad stated during the last meeting that he had provided the Board with an update on some potential issues the Town may be facing regarding the PFAS issue at the high school. He reviewed the Map provided by the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), which identifies impacted properties related to the spread of the PFAS plume. Mr. Haddad explained that he held a meeting with Mr. Orcutt, Apex engineers, and representatives from the Town of Pepperell. During the meeting, the Town asked if Pepperell would be willing to expedite the Phase Two work to include the connection from the Jersey Street well to the pipe on North Street. They also inquired about the possibility of starting the extension on Groton Street to address impacted properties. Mr. Haddad stated that they agreed to start the work. The Town of Pepperell is also open to hiring Groton's engineers, Apex. The Town of Groton will handle the design work, and the Town of Pepperell will reimburse Groton for these expenses. Town Counsel will draft an amendment to the IMA between Groton, Dunstable and Pepperell for Select Board consideration and approval.

Mr. Haddad said another question was raised about whether the Town Meeting appropriation can be used for the additional work without having to return to Town Meeting. Mr. Haddad stated that he had received confirmation from Bond Counsel that it was indeed the case. The Select Board can authorize the \$4 million for the next Phase.

Additionally, Mr. Haddad raised another issue with the Board regarding whether procurement laws permit issuing a negative change order to DeFelice. This change would involve removing the paving from DeFelice and having the Department of Public Works (DPW) complete the work instead. This would result in significant savings. He said that, due to the timing of the award and various changes throughout the year, Town Counsel was comfortable with the Town proceeding with this specific matter.

Ms. Manugian had provided Mr. Haddad with a few questions to have addressed by the Licensed Site Professional (LSP). Mr. Haddad contacted the LSP to ask whether there is a way to determine if the plume affects properties south of the High School or if they are affected by their private wells. The LSP explained that it is impossible to make this distinction and stated that there is no significant difference between the PFAS levels resulting from the firefighting foam. Mr. Haddad also asked the LSP when this would come to an end, as the plume continues to spread. The LSP responded that several steps need to be taken before it can come to an end, which may take two to three years. Mr. Orcutt responded that the sooner Town water is provided, the quicker they can close the project.

Apex provided a cost estimate for Phase Three of the project at approximately \$4 million, which is subject to bidding and design. Mr. Haddad explained that the Town Meeting approved \$16.8 million for the project, with \$12.2 million already spent. There is \$500,000 remaining in SRF funding and \$4.5 million left from the Warrant Article to be spent on the project. Mr. Haddad stated that if the Town had to make the individual connections to impacted properties, they would have to pay prevailing wages, which would cost approximately \$1.5 million. He asked the Town Counsel whether it would be permissible for the Town to reimburse private residences to avoid paying the prevailing wages. The Groton Water Commission will identify approved drain layers, and Mr. Orcutt will estimate the per-foot cost for laying the pipe, closing out their well, and making the connection. He will also provide a maximum reimbursement amount per property. Mr. Haddad mentioned that there are 79 properties involved and providing reimbursement will reduce the anticipated cost. Additionally, if the Department of Public Works (DPW) handles the paving, it

would also provide funds to cover the cost of the individual connections. Town Counsel stated that the Town could just reimburse the homeowners.

Mr. Haddad summarized how the funding is distributed for each phase of the project between Groton and the Town of Dunstable. He said that he is currently negotiating Dunstable's contribution for Phase Three. Mr. Haddad emphasized that they have no choice but to proceed, as the PFAS contamination is spreading and the federal government is providing less funding. It is unlikely they will receive another grant for this. The Town will need to work with DeFelice to process a change order for the paving, which Mr. Haddad indicated would be subject to negotiation.

Ms. Manugian indicated that homeowners will need to pay a significant amount of money out of pocket. Ms. Pine recommended that Mr. Haddad speak with the Commissioners of Trust Funds regarding available funding. She thanked Mr. Haddad for his work on this issue and expressed her support for moving forward with the project and suggested clarifying that it does not affect the entire Reedy Meadow Road.

Mr. Haddad stated that, with the Board's approval, he will proceed and return to the Board with the proposed IMA amendment with Pepperell and Dunstable. He will also provide a final cost estimate for the drain layers and the estimated reimbursement costs. Additionally, he will send out a letter to the abutters to inform them of the process. Mr. Orcutt will update the webpage with the information provided.

The Select Board approved Mr. Haddad to proceed with pursuing the Phase Three path.

OTHER BUSINESS

None

Ongoing issues

- A. PFAS Issue- Previously discussed.
- B. UMass Satellite Emergency Facility- Mr. Haddad explained that they are before the Planning Board and Stormwater Committee on July 17. Also, a site walk will take place on July 7 with the Conservation Committee.
- C. PILOTs- Previously discussed.

SELECT BOARD LIASON REPORTS

None.

Approval of the Special Meeting of June 10, 2025, Regularly Scheduled Meeting of June 16, 2025, and Special Meeting of June 23, 2025

Ms. Pine made a motion to approve the Special Meeting of June 10, 2025, the Regular Meeting of June 16, 2025, and the Special Meeting of June 23, 2025. Mr. Manugian seconded the motion. Roll Call: Manugian-aye; Pine-aye; Cunningham-aye; Pisani-aye; Reilly-aye.

The meeting adjourned at 7:24 p.m.

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