

**SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2025
APPROVED**

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

Also Present: Mark Haddad, Town Manager; Kara Cruikshank, Executive Assistant to the Town Manager; Melisa Doig, Human Resource Director; Patricia DuFresne, Assistant Finance Director; Grace Bannasch, Town Clerk; Bud Robertson, Finance Committee Chair; Tom Delaney, Department of Public Works Director; Brian Callahan, Department of Public Works Director in Training; Olin Lathrop, Conservation Commission; Takashi Tada; Land Use Director/Town Planner; Andres Correa, Energy Manager; Megan Foster, Principal Assessor; Roger Kanniard, Developer of Bluebird Lane; Frank McPartlan, Engineer from Dillis and Roy; Arthur Cheeks, Groton Fire Chief; Shawn Campbell, General Manager/Golf Pro of the Groton Country Club; Steve Lane, Bruce Easom, and Jack Petropoulos, Citizens Petitioners; Jim Geminer, Groton Sewer Commissioner; Tom Orcutt, Groton Water Superintendent; Michael Luth, Groton Police Chief.

Chair Pisani called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. and reviewed the agenda.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mr. Cunningham announced that the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) will hold a meeting on Tuesday, October 7th, at 6:00 P.M. at the Groton Center. Representatives from the DCR, along with a consulting firm responsible for permitting and engineering the Nashua River Rail Trail, will discuss and present an overview of their plans for reconstructing the trail.

Mr. Haddad introduced the Town of Groton's newest hire, Regional Energy Manager Andres Correa, to the Select Board. He said that Mr. Correa was doing an excellent job for the four Towns and welcomed him.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

None

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

1. Update from the Town Manager on the Capital Planning Advisory Committee.

Mr. Haddad explained that on Monday, September 8th, he met with the Capital Planning Advisory Committee to discuss their Charge and to develop a recommendation for the Select Board on whether to amend their Charge or disband. After a lengthy discussion, the Committee recommended to the Select Board that they continue "as is" for at least one more year and then revisit the issue. Mr. Haddad stated that, to that end, the Committee will continue to assist him, as it has for the last several years, in developing the proposed FY 2027 Capital Plan/Budget.

Mr. Reilly made a motion to accept the recommendation from the Capital Planning Advisory Committee. Mr. Cunningham seconded the motion.

Discussion

Ms. Pine asked if the Committee should add a fifth member since there are currently only four. Mr. Haddad said they are actively searching for one.

The motion carried unanimously.

2. Authorize the Town Manager to Sign a Grant Agreement Between the Historical Commission, Community Preservation Committee, and the Webber Family for the Bancroft Castle Project.

Mr. Haddad explained that, similar to the Grant Agreement approved by the Select Board for the Affordable Housing Trust's FY 2026 Community Preservation Funding, the Historical Commission received a CPA Grant for the stabilization and restoration of the masonry remnants of Bancroft Castle on Gibbet Hill Farm, and they have drafted a Grant Agreement for this project. Mr. Haddad provided a copy of the Grant Agreement to the Board for review and respectfully requested that the Select Board authorize the Town Manager to sign the Grant Agreement on behalf of the Board.

Ms. Pine made a motion to authorize the Town Manager to sign a grant agreement on behalf of the Select Board, between the Historical Commission, Community Preservation Committee, and the Webber Family for the Bancroft Castle Project. Ms. Manugian seconded the motion.

Discussion

Ms. Pine asked whether the Webbers were signing the Grant Agreement because they own the property. Mr. Haddad confirmed that it was true.

The motion carried unanimously.

3. Consider Ratifying the Town Manager's Appointment of Ashley Wickfield as the Production Assistant to the Cable Department.

Mr. Haddad explained that David Germaine was an outstanding Groton Cable Production Assistant whose goal was to become a reporter. He worked for the Town for four years and was loved by everyone. Mr. Haddad said that David has left the Town and accepted a position as a news reporter and editor at a television station in Springfield, MA.

The position was advertised, interviews were conducted, and Ms. Ashley Wickfield was selected as the chosen candidate. Mr. Haddad respectfully requested that the Select Board consider ratifying the appointment of Ms. Wickfield as the Production Assistant in the Cable Department.

Ms. Manugian made a motion to ratify the Town Manager's appointment of Ashley Wickfield as the Production Assistant to the Cable Department, effective immediately. Ms. Pine seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

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

Monday, September 22, 2025 No Meeting (Rosh Hashana Holiday)

Monday, September 29, 2025 Regularly Scheduled Meeting (Approve Warrant)

Monday, October 6, 2025	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, October 13, 2025	No Meeting (Indigenous Peoples' Day)
Saturday, October 18, 2025	2025 Fall Town Meeting
Monday, October 20, 2025	Regularly Scheduled Meeting (Possibly No Meeting)
Tuesday, October 28, 2025	Regularly Scheduled Meeting (Budget Guidance)
Monday, November 3, 2025	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, November 10, 2025	No Meeting
Monday, November 17, 2025	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, November 24, 2025	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, December 1, 2025	No Meeting
Monday, December 8, 2025	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, December 15, 2025	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, December 22, 2025	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, December 29, 2025	No Meeting
Monday, January 5, 2025	No Meeting
Monday, January 12, 2026	Regularly Scheduled Meeting

ITEMS FOR SELECT BOARD CONSIDERATION AND APPROVAL

1. Consider Reducing the Number of Members on the Sustainability Commission from 12 to 7.

Mr. Haddad explained that the Sustainability Commission voted to reduce the number of members on the Commission from twelve (12) to seven (7). Over the past year, they have lost some members, but currently have a solid working committee of seven (7). He stated that the Committee believes seven (7) members are enough for them to complete their work. Mr. Haddad respectfully requested that the Select Board amend the Sustainability Commission's Charge to reflect this reduction.

Ms. Pine made a motion to amend the Sustainability Commission's Charge from twelve (12) members to seven (7) members. Ms. Manugian seconded the motion.

Discussion

Ms. Pine thought the committee had taken steps a few years ago to make its process more flexible, allowing it to bypass the Board. Mr. Haddad explained that, due to their Charge, they are required to go through the Select Board. Ms. Manugian asked if they were at large; Mr. Haddad confirmed that they were.

The motion carried unanimously.

2. Consider Appointing Ben Wolfe to the Conservation Commission.

Mr. Haddad explained that there is a vacancy on the Conservation Commission due to Alison Hamilton's recent resignation. The vacancy was advertised, and the Conservation Commission held interviews and are unanimously recommending that Mr. Ben Wolfe be appointed by the Select Board to fill the vacancy. Mr. Haddad respectfully requested that the Board make this appointment.

Ms. Pine made a motion to appoint Ben Wolfe to the Conservation Commission, with a term to expire on June 30, 2027. Mr. Reilly seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

6:45 P.M. Public Hearing- Road Layout Hearing- Bluebird Lane.

Mr. Haddad read the Public Hearing notice into the record.

Mr. Haddad asked the Board to open the public hearing.

Ms. Pine made a motion to open the public hearing for Bluebird Lane. Ms. Manugian seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Roger Kanniard, developer of Bluebird Lane, Mr. Takashi Tada, Town Planner, Tom Delaney, DPW Director, Brian Callahan, DPW in Training, and Frank McPartlan, Engineer from Dillis and Roy, were all in attendance for the public hearing. Mr. Haddad explained that this was the first time in his career that a road layout had met all the requirements by the Planning Board and Department of Public Works (DPW) without any contingencies at the public hearing stage. He stated that this was built to Road Layout standards. Ms. Manugian explained that she was a bit surprised by the limited frontage of some of the lots and asked if it was typical. Mr. Tada explained that it was a flexible development of a subdivision that allows for little frontage. Bluebird Lane Engineer, Mr. McPartlan, explained that there is a significant amount of backland. Mr. Delaney had no comments.

Public Comment

None

Close the Public Hearing on the Road Layout for Bluebird Lane

Mr. Cunningham made a motion to close the public hearing on the road layout for Bluebird Lane. Ms. seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Adopt the Layout of Bluebird Lane and recommend that the October 18, 2025, Fall Town Meeting accept it as a Town Way at the October 18, 2025, Fall Town Meeting.

Ms. Manugian moved to approve the Road Layout for Bluebird Lane and to recommend that the October 18th Fall Town Meeting accept it as a Town Way. Ms. Pine seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Pine wanted to share that eight years ago, Mr. Kinniard planned to build affordable housing on the land. However, during a review with Natural Heritage, they identified turtles on the property, which significantly reduced the amount of land available for development. After changing his plan, Mr. Kinniard built market-rate housing using flexible development provisions and created nine homes in this subdivision. Ms. Pine said under flexible development rules, lot sizes do not have to meet the standard of two acres. She also mentioned that this development took longer than eight years, which is not unusual in Groton due to endangered species and wetlands. Ms. Pine wanted to make the point that it is very difficult to build affordable housing in Groton, given the restrictions on the land.

7:00 P.M. Public Hearing on the Warrant for the 2025 Fall Town Meeting.

Mr. Haddad read the Public Hearing notice into the record.

Mr. Haddad asked the Board to open the public hearing.

Ms. Manugian made a motion to open the public hearing for the October 18, 2025, Fall Town Meeting Warrant. Ms. Pine seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Haddad explained that there are twenty-three (23) Articles on the Fall Town Meeting Warrant. He recommends that the first sixteen (16) Articles could be a consent agenda, but he stated that it is ultimately up to the Board.

Article 1: Prior Year Bills- UMASS Memorial Health- Requested Amount: \$85.00

The Board was unanimously in favor to support.

Article 2: Amend the Fiscal Year 2026 Town Operating Budget—Mr. Haddad provided information and recommendations regarding the Articles seeking funding in the 2025 Fall Town Meeting Warrant. He reviewed the proposed amendments to the Operating Budget and explained the summary of available funds. He stated that Free Cash was expected to be certified within the next week. The memorandum provided to the Board included the balances of the Town's available funds, which he listed as follows:

FY 2026 Levy Capacity:	\$89,142
Local Cable Receipts Reserved for Appropriations:	\$41,020
Anticipated Free Cash:	\$2,500,000
Stabilization Fund:	\$2,728,838
Capital Stabilization Fund:	\$109,199
GDRSD Capital Stabilization Fund:	\$22,868
Stormwater Excess and Deficiency:	\$142,245

Mr. Haddad explained that the Board of Assessors estimates New Growth will come in at \$31.5 million, which will add an additional \$99,125 to the FY 2026 Anticipated Levy Limit. He said, unfortunately, the Final State Aid allocation for Groton was reduced by \$9,982 from the last estimate, leaving \$89,1542 in available Levy Capacity.

Mr. Haddad summarized the Line-Item Transfers with the Board (please refer to the attached memorandum).

He then explained the total amounts requested by category:

Free Cash:	\$122,098
Tax Levy:	\$ 77,872
Cable Receipts:	<u>\$ 11,617</u>
Total:	\$211,587

Ms. Manugian stated that she was struggling with adding the hours for new positions in the Fall and believed this should be addressed in the context of the Annual Budget discussion. Mr. Haddad said if the position of Treasurer/Collector remained unchanged after the start of the fiscal year and the same person continued in that role, as well as the fact that the part-time Assistant Treasurer Collector notified him after the start of the Fiscal Year that he was retiring in December he would not have proposed adjusting the hours. He explained that given these facts, he was presented with a unique opportunity to do a top to bottom review of the Department and that is why is recommending the additional hours mid-year. Ms. Pine added that the Board has just set the Annual Select Board Goals, with one being to discuss the number of employees needed to live within the budget without requiring an override. She recognizes that the timing of the uninitiated changes would put them in a position where it would make sense to make these changes, as some of them are small. She hopes they can take a comprehensive look at all Departments. Mr. Haddad wanted to clarify that funding this would be offset by reducing another line item, making this change budget neutral. Mr. Manugian stated that the reduction is due to employees who did not take insurance. Mr. Haddad mentioned that two of the three new hires opted out of the Town's insurance, which was already accounted for in the budget. Mr. Reilly stated that the employees who have left Groton have done so for better pay and emphasized the need to pay employees a competitive wage.

Article 3: Transfer Money into Capital Stabilization Fund - Requested Amount: \$900,000 from Free Cash to fund the anticipated Capital Budget.

Mr. Haddad explained that if all the line-item transfers in Article Two are approved, the total FY 2026 Operating Budget will be approximately \$52,730,000. He stated this would require a Capital Stabilization Fund balance of about \$681,000. He is requesting an additional \$215,889, bringing the total transfer to \$900,000 from Free Cash to fund the Capital Budget. Ms. Manugian asked Mr. Haddad if he could resend last year's Capital Plan to the Board.

Article 4: Transfer Money into the Stabilization Fund—Requested Amount: \$0

Article 5: Transfer Money into the GDRSD Capital Stabilization Fund- Requested Amount: \$250,000 from Free Cash.

Mr. Haddad explained that Senators Cronin and Kennedy were able to provide earmarks in the FY 2026 State Budget for capital projects at the schools: \$250,000 from Senator Cronin and \$150,000 from Senator Kennedy. He said those funds are being used to address some of their capital needs. Additionally, if they receive the Green Communities grants, these would help further meet their school capital requirements.

Article 6: Transfer Within the Water Enterprise Fund- Requested Amount: \$70,000

Mr. Tom Orcutt, Groton Water Superintendent, stated that one of their department's pickup trucks has a rotting utility body that needs significant repairs. This transfer request would come from Water Surplus.

The Board was unanimously in favor to support.

Article 7: Transfer Within the Center Sewer Enterprise Fund- Requested Amount: \$30,000

This Article seeks a transfer of \$30,000 from the Four Corners Sewer Enterprise and Deficiency Fund to balance the FY 2025 budget. Mr. Haddad explained that \$10,000 is allocated for budget adjustments based on usage. The remaining \$20,000 is to go out to bid for a company to perform emergency repairs.

The Select Board was unanimously in favor to support.

Article 8: Transfer Within the Stormwater Enterprise Fund- Requested Amount: \$50,000

Mr. Brian Callahan, DPW Director in Training, stated that the detention basins require maintenance, and this funding will help support the necessary work to ensure compliance with the federal grant.

The Select Board was unanimously in favor to support.

Article 9: Cable Department Equipment Grant-Requested Amount: \$16,000

Mr. Haddad explained that when the Town closed the Cable Enterprise last year, funding designated for this equipment grant was returned to the General Fund and certified as Free Cash. The funding needs to be returned to the Cable Department for equipment only. This Article will transfer \$16,000 from Free Cash to the Equipment Grant Fund.

The Select Board was unanimously in favor to support.

Article 10: Assessors Quinquennial Certification-Requested Amount: \$34,900 from Free Cash.

Ms. Megan Foster, the Principal Assessor, attended the meeting. Ms. Foster stated she is requesting funding for their five-year certification for the fiscal year 2027. She wants to secure the funds so she can begin working on their certification with Vision. Every fifth year, the Massachusetts Department of Revenue requires a full re-certification of values.

The Select Board was unanimously in favor to support.

Article 11: Repair to Fitch's Bridge Headwall- Requested Amount: \$60,000 from Free Cash.

Mr. Tom Delaney, DPW Director, and Mr. Brian Callahan, DPW Director in training, attended the meeting. This Article will authorize funding to repair Fitch's Bridge Headwall. Mr. Haddad said this is the second time the Headwall has needed repairs.

The Select Board was unanimously in favor to support.

Article 12: Provide Funding to Maintain the Former Nod Road Landfill- \$100,000 from Free Cash.

Mr. Delaney stated that the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is requesting the Town to conduct a third-party inspection to verify that the former Nod Road Landfill was "capped" properly, along with other monitoring efforts. The DPW estimates that this work will cost about \$100,000 over

the next couple of years. Mr. Haddad explained that, under current DEP standards, capping the landfill would cost approximately \$1 million.

The Board was unanimously in favor to support.

Article 13: Repair Fire Alarm- Function Hall and Restaurant at the Country Club-\$60,000 from Free Cash.

Mr. Shawn Campbell, the General Manager and Golf Pro of the Groton Country Club, was present. He explained that the Fire Alarm system in the Function Hall and Restaurant is in need of repair. There have been several false alarms and this upgrade is necessary. It is in the current capital plan for FY 2027, but should be done earlier than next year.

The Select Board was unanimously in favor to support.

Article 14: Engineering Funds for Complete Streets Grant Work – Mr. Takashi Tada, the Town Planner, attended the meeting. If the Complete Streets Grant is received, the Town will need funding (\$30,000 from Free Cash) for engineering purposes. Mr. Tada explained that if the grant is awarded, two projects will be carried out: a sidewalk/multi-use path from Boston Road to the Country Club on Lovers Lane, and improvements on Sandy Pond Road. Mr. Haddad stated that the funds would be used to design these two projects.

The Select Board unanimously supported the article if the Complete Streets Grant is received, or will withdraw it if the town does not get the grant.

Article 15: Debt Service for Middle School Track- Requested Amount: \$33,000

Mr. Haddad stated that the Community Preservation Committee will pay an additional \$33,000 in debt service and apply it to the principal.

The Select Board was unanimously in favor to support.

Article 16: Establishing Limits for Various Revolving Funds - Mr. Haddad explained that this article is to increase the spending limit of the Home Recycling Equipment Revolving Fund and the Senior Center Fitness Equipment Revolving Fund from \$10,000 to \$25,000.

Vote to increase the Limit.

Mr. Cunningham moved to raise the limit of the Home Recycling Equipment Revolving Fund and the Senior Center Fitness Equipment Revolving Fund from \$10,000 to \$25,000 and to remove this article from the Warrant. Ms. Pine seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Article 17: Proposed Amendments to the Groton Charter -Mr. Haddad explained that the Charter Review Committee held a public hearing on the Proposed Amendments to the Charter on Thursday, September 4th. The Committee will present the same amendments proposed at the 2025 Spring Town Meeting, with one exception: they will not request the removal of the provision that prohibits Select Board members from serving on other elected boards. That provision will remain unchanged.

Mr. Haddad then explained that the Charter Review Committee will propose two motions under this Article: one regarding the Town Manager's Appointing Authority of the Police Chief, Fire Chief, and Town Clerk, and a second covering all other non-controversial items in the Charter.

The Select Board was unanimously in favor to support.

Article 18: Replace Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) for the Fire Department—
Requested Amount: \$500,000.

Mr. Haddad recommends borrowing these funds and repaying them over five years if the Town does not receive the grant. Chief Cheeks attended the discussion and stated that the apparatus is currently being used and is a critical part of their jobs and life safety. Mr. Cunningham asked if all of them needed to be replaced, and Mr. Haddad confirmed they were all purchased at the same time.

The Select Board was unanimously in favor to support.

Article 19: Chapter 202 of the General Bylaws—"Transient Merchants"—Police Chief Michael Luth attended to discuss Articles 19 and 20. Mr. Haddad explained that these two articles cover door-to-door solicitation and allow the Police Department to manage organizations that want to conduct door-to-door solicitations. He said that Chief Luth and Kara Cruikshank, the Executive Assistant, conducted numerous surveys of various towns' bylaws, selected their preferred options, and then had Town Counsel make significant refinements. Chief Luth said the Police Department has received numerous complaints about solicitors, and the current application process is very basic. This will provide applicants with a set of rules to follow and will require a background check. He explained that he likes the part of the bylaw that includes a do-not-solicit list, which residents can sign up for, preventing solicitors from visiting their homes. Mr. Haddad and the Chief reviewed the bylaws. Chief Luth stated that if this bylaw is passed, they can always revisit the hours in the future. Mr. Haddad stated that Article 20 is the Article that allows the Police Department to conduct a background check.

The Select Board was unanimously in favor to support.

Article 20: Amend Chapter 161- Licenses and Permits of the Groton Code-

The Select Board was unanimously in favor to support.

Article 21: Special Legislation- Prohibit the Use of Second-Generation Anticoagulant Rodenticides-

Mr. Haddad said the Select Board approved a local policy to ban the use of Second-Generation Anticoagulant Rodenticides on municipal property. This article asks whether the town will vote to authorize the Select Board to petition the General Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for a special act to prohibit the use of Second-Generation Anticoagulant Rodenticides throughout the town on both public and private property.

The Select Board was unanimously in favor to support.

Article 22: Accept Bluebird Lane as a Town Way – The Select Board held a public hearing earlier in the meeting, voted to approve the Road Layout for Bluebird Lane, and recommended that the October 18th Fall Town Meeting accept it as a Town Way.

The Select Board was unanimously in favor to support.

Article 23: Citizens' Petition - Authorization to Create an Advisory Committee-

Mr. Jack Petropoulos, Mr. Steve Lane, and Mr. Bruce Easom, the petitioners, were in attendance.

This article proposes whether the Town should vote to establish an Advisory Committee tasked with developing and recommending a process for delivering Major Initiative Cost-Benefit Reports to the Town Meeting. Mr. Petropoulos explained that this enhancement would be implemented in two phases. He stated that the first step would be to ask if the Town Meeting is interested in an unbiased approach to the process. Mr. Petropoulos proposed that the first five individuals who signed the petition would serve on this Committee and report back to a future Town Meeting.

Mr. Easom stated that this is an opportunity for the Town Meeting to receive advice from residents. Mr. Lane pointed out that several capital items could have been analyzed, and he said that the Town is being asked to consider whether this approach would be beneficial. Ms. Manugian questioned why go through this process of forming a new committee. Mr. Lane responded that if townspeople say no, then they will drop it. Mr. Cunningham noted that much of the activity listed in the Article is already happening. Mr. Petropoulos said this effort would provide more in-depth, enhanced information to Town Meeting. Ms. Pine believes this is a good opportunity for people to step up and sees a benefit in doing so. Mr. Robertson, the Finance Committee Chair, thinks the Finance Committee does a good job at what they do. He was unclear on what this meant and could not form an opinion at this time whether he agreed or disagreed with the Citizens' Petition. Mr. Lane clarified that it is an exploratory committee. Mr. Pisani said it would make more sense if they served as advisors to the Finance Committee. Mr. Reilly stated that the biggest problem at Town Meeting is that some attendees are unaware of what's happening. Mr. Delaney mentioned that they struggle to fill committees, which could lead to confusion in the end.

Mr. Pisani would like to discuss this Article further with the Finance Committee.

Close the Public Hearing on the October 18, 2025, Fall Town Meeting Warrant

Mr. Reilly made a motion to close the public on the October 18, 2025, Fall Town Meeting Warrant.

Ms. Manugian seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

OTHER BUSINESS

On-Going Issues

- A. PFAS Issue- None
- B. UMass Satellite Emergency Facility –None
- C. Fire Department Staffing – None
- D. West Groton Dam-None

SELECT BOARD LIASON REPORTS

None

Approval of the Regularly Scheduled Meeting of September 8, 2025

Ms. Pine made a motion to approve the regular meeting minutes of September 8, 2025, as presented. Ms. Manugian seconded the motion. The motion carried 4 in favor and 1 abstained-Reilly.

The Select Board adjourned at 8:37 p.m.

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



TOWN OF GROTON

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Select Board

Matthew F. Pisani, *Chair*
Rebecca H. Pine, *Vice Chair*
Alison S. Manugian, *Clerk*
John F. Reilly, *Member*
Peter S. Cunningham, *Member*

Town Manager
Mark W. Haddad

To: Select Board
Finance Committee

From: Mark W. Haddad – Town Manager

Subject: Proposed Fall Town Meeting Expenditures

Date: August 13, 2025
Revised: 09-11-2025

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide the Select Board and Finance Committee with a summary of the proposed Fall Town Meeting Expenditures based on the proposed Warrant Articles, along with a summary of available funds (*please note that the Warrant closes on August 21st. I will be on vacation when the Warrant closes. Attached is the latest draft. I will update it, if necessary when I return from vacation*).

As of the writing of this memorandum, the following is a summary of available funds:

FY 2026 Levy Capacity:	\$89,142*
Local Cable Receipts Reserved for Appropriation:	\$41,020
Anticipated Free Cash:	\$2,500,000
Stabilization Fund:	\$2,728,838
Capital Stabilization Fund:	\$109,199
GDRSD Capital Stabilization Fund:	\$22,868
Stormwater Excess and Deficiency:	\$142,245

**The Board of Assessors is estimating that New Growth will come in at \$31.5 million, which will add an additional \$99,125 to the FY 2026 Anticipated Levy Limit. Unfortunately, the Final State Aid allocation for Groton was reduced by \$9,982 from the last estimate, leaving \$89,142 in available Levy Capacity. Attached to this memorandum is the latest Levy Limit Calculation for your review and information.*

The following is a summary of the submitted Warrant Articles, along with proposed expenditures and recommended revenue source to fund the request:

Article 1 – Unpaid Bills

Requested Amount: \$85

Currently, we have one unpaid bill from UMass Memorial Health (Water Department Employee Physical) in the amount of \$85. Since this is a Water Department Bill, I am recommending that the bill be paid from Water Surplus.

Article 2 – Amend Fiscal Year 2026 Budget

Requested Amount: \$211,587

I am proposing the following amendments to the Operating Budget:

Line Item 1070 – Treasurer/Tax Collector Salaries

Request: \$17,658

This amount is needed to cover the vacation payout for former Treasurer/Tax Collector Hannah Moller. I am recommending that this amount come from Free Cash as it is a one-time expenditure.

Line Item 1070 – Treasurer/Tax Collector Salaries

Request: \$39,334

I had previously written to you with my proposal to adjust hours within the Treasurer/Tax Collector's Office. As part of the transition to a new Treasurer/Collector and the retirement of current part-time Assistant Treasurer/Collector (Michael Hartnett), I am recommending that we increase the position from 19 hours per week to 40 hours per week (full-time). I am recommending that funding come from the Tax Levy as it is a permanent increase in the Line Item.

Line Item 1071 – Treasurer/Tax Collector Wages

Request: \$16,086

This is a request to increase the Assistant to the Treasurer/Collector/Payroll Coordinator position to 40 hours (from the current 35 hours) to add additional duties to the position. Currently, the Human Resources Director is a Department of one. The office is very busy and in desperate need of administrative support to help with benefit administration, onboarding, recruitment, training, maintaining personnel records, etc. Initially, the Finance Team and I considered creating a fifteen hour Human Resources Generalist position. However, it makes more sense to add hours to existing staff and evaluate whether or not that makes a difference in the overall operation. The requested amount covers the additional five hours per week, plus a salary adjustment to reflect the added responsibilities. Since this will be a permanent expense, I am recommending that it come from the Tax Levy.

Line Item 1130 – Town Clerk Salaries

Request: \$19,040

This amount is needed to cover the vacation payout of former Town Clerk Dawn Dunbar. I am recommending that his amount come from Free Cash as it is a one-time expenditure.

Line Item 1160 – Insurance & Bonding

Request: \$40,000

This amount is needed to cover the increase cost in the Town's liability, property, auto and worker's compensation premiums. The cost of insurance increased by approximately 9% and we did not budget a sufficient amount in the Spring. Since this will be a permanent expense, I am recommending that it come from the Tax Levy.

Line Item 1210 – Planning Board Salaries

Request: \$21,808

Based on the outcome of the Collins Center Salary Study, it was determined that the Land Use Director/Town Planner is significantly below similar positions in our comparable communities. To that end, the Salary of the current employee needs to be increased from \$93,192 to \$115,000. Since this is a permanent increase in the Line Item, I am recommending that this come from the Tax Levy.

Line Item 1310 – Fire Department Salaries

Request: \$5,400

Due to the closure of the Nashoba Valley Medical Center and the shortfall in personnel within the Fire Department to deal with the additional travel times, the Fire Chief was unable to take vacation for over seven months. He ended up losing two weeks of accrued time. To address this, the Select Board and Town Manager allowed the Chief to buy back two weeks of vacation time as a one-time adjustment. I am recommending that this come from Free Cash It is a one-time expenditure.

Line Item 1500 – Highway Department Salaries

Request: \$80,000

As you will recall, at the June 23, 2025 Special Town Meeting, one of my recommendations to balance the budget was to use Free Cash to cover Tom Delaney's FY 2026 Salary (\$55,000) since it is was a one-time expenditure. Unfortunately, I failed to put that expenditure in the motion that balanced the Budget. In addition, we will need \$25,000 to cover Tom Delaney's vacation payout when he retires in November. I am recommending that the total amount of \$80,000 come from Free Cash since it is a one-time expenditure.

Line Item 1710 – Local Access Cable Salaries

Request: \$8,819

Similar to the issue with Land Use Director/Town Planner, the position of Cable Director is also below similar positions in our comparable communities. To that end, the Salary of the current employee needs to be increased from \$73,181 to \$82,000. I am recommending that this funding come from the Local Access Cable Receipts Reserved for Appropriation since that funding is available to cover the cost of funding the Cable Department.

Line Item 1711 – Local Access Cable Wages

Request: \$2,798

The final position that was below similar positions in comparable communities is the Cable Production Technician. The hourly wage of the current employee needs to be increased from \$23.66 to \$25.09 . Similar to the Cable Director's funding source, I am recommending that this funding come from the Local Access Cable Receipts Reserved for Appropriation since that funding is available to cover the cost of funding the Cable Department.

Line Item 3010 – Health Insurance/Employee Expenses

Request: (\$36,000)

Now that Open Enrollment is completed, an audit was completed on the Health Insurance Account and we will be able to reduce this line item by \$36,000 to reflect actual enrollment in the Town's Health Insurance program.

Line Item 2005B – Short Term Interest Debt – Excluded**Request: (\$146,313 - <\$3,356 Levy>)**

Due to the lower Interest rate received on the FloRo BAN renewal in June, we can reduce Excluded Debt by \$142,958 and short term Non-Excluded Debt by \$3,356, for a total debt reduction of \$146,313.

The Total Amounts Requested By Category:	Free Cash:	\$122,098
	Tax Levy:	\$ 77,872
	Cable Recelpts:	\$ 11,617
Total		\$211,587

Article 3 – Capital Stabilization Fund**Requested Amount: \$900,000**

The current balance in the Capital Stabilization Fund is \$109,199. The Town's financial policies call for a balance in this fund of 1.5% of the total Operating Budget. Should Article 2 pass as presented, the total FY 2026 Operating Budget will be \$52,887,349, requiring a Capital Stabilization Fund Balance of \$793,310. Ordinarily, this would require a transfer of \$684,111. I am requesting an additional \$215,889 for a total transfer of \$900,000 from Free Cash to fund the anticipated Capital Budget.

Article 4 – Stabilization Fund**Requested Amount: \$0**

The current balance in the Stabilization Fund is \$2,728,838. The Town's financial policies call for a balance in this fund of 5% of the total Operating Budget. Should Article 2 pass as presented, the total FY 2026 Operating Budget will be \$52,887,349, requiring a Stabilization Fund Balance of \$2,644,367. At this time, we do not need to add money to the Fund.

Article 5 – GDRSD Capital Stabilization Fund**Requested Amount: \$250,000**

At this time, I have not received a preliminary capital budget from the School District. For now, I am recommending we match what we paid last year and transfer \$250,000 from Free Cash into the Fund. We can use Free Cash at next year's Spring Town Meeting if a larger appropriation is needed.

Article 6 – Water Enterprise Fund**Requested Amount: \$70,000**

The Water Department is requesting a transfer from Water Surplus of \$70,000 to replace one of their pickup trucks that has over 125,000 miles and is in need of serious repair. This was included in their Capital Plan and they are moving it up a year.

Article 7 – Four Corner Sewer Enterprise Fund**Requested Amount: \$30,000**

The usage data at Four Corners has been volatile due to vacancies, etc. It is becoming more consistent, which will help with budgeting. This Article seeks to transfer \$30,000 from the Four Corner Sewer Enterprise Excess and Deficiency Fund to balance the budget for FY 2025.

Article 8 – Stormwater Enterprise**Requested Amount: \$50,000**

The Department of Public Works is requesting that \$50,000 be transferred from the Stormwater Excess and Deficiency Fund to pay for additional engineering assistance to meet State Reporting requirements.

Article 9 – Cable Equipment Grant**Requested Amount: \$16,000**

From the Summary in the Warrant: The Town's Cable Television License agreements with Verizon New England Inc. and Spectrum Northeast, LLC include Public, Educational, and Government Grants to be used for capital funding (equipment) purposes. The Town currently collects all cable revenue in the "Cable Department Receipts Reserved for Appropriation Fund" that was established at the 2024 Special Town Meeting. This Article will create a new fund for these PEG Grant payments so that they can be separated from the general PEG Access Support fees that both entities provide on a quarterly basis. When the Town closed the Cable Enterprise last year, funding designated for this equipment grant was returned to the General Fund and certified as Free Cash. It should have been set aside for equipment. This Article will transfer \$16,000 from Free Cash to the Equipment Grant Fund.

Article 10 – Assessors Quinquennial Certification**Requested Amount: \$34,900**

From the Summary in the Warrant: Assessors in every city and town are responsible for developing a Revaluation program to completely analyze and revalue all property within its borders every year. Revaluation annually, is required under Massachusetts law and is regulated by the Massachusetts Department of Revenue's Bureau of Local Assessment (BLA). The rationale for revaluation is to always maintain property at fair market or fair cash value to ensure equity for all classes of property. Every fifth year the Massachusetts Department of Revenue requires a full certification with BLA oversight. The Assessors are seeking \$34,900 to cover the cost for appraisal services of Real Property to be conducted by Vision Government Solutions. I am recommending that this funding come from Free Cash.

Article 11 – Repair Fitch's Bridge Headwall**Requested Amount: \$60,000**

From the Summary in the Warrant: The head wall that supports the bridge abutment for Fitch's Bridge is collapsing and needs to be repaired. The Department of Public Works will oversee the repairs of this head wall in compliance with Massachusetts State Law with regards to procurement. This Article will authorize the funding for this repair. The Department of Public Works is estimating that this repair will cost approximately \$60,000. I am recommending that this funding come from Free Cash.

Article 12 – Maintain Former Nod Road Landfill**Requested Amount: \$100,000**

From the Summary in the Warrant: Recently the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) inspected the former Nod Road Landfill and has required the Town to begin mowing the Landfill. DEP is requesting that the Town conduct a third party inspection to ensure the Landfill was "capped" properly. The DPW Director has requested funds be put aside for maintenance, mowing, inspections and monitoring well installation, along with engineering and survey work. The purpose of this Article is to provide the necessary funding. The Department of Public Works is estimating that this work will cost approximately \$100,000. I am recommending that this funding come from Free Cash.

Article 13 – Repair Fire Alarm at Function Hall/Restaurant**Requested Amount: \$60,000**

From the Summary in the Warrant: *During a recent inspection, it was determined that the current Fire Alarm System at the Function Hall and Restaurant at the Groton Country Club needs to be replaced to provide proper fire protection at these facilities. The purpose of this Article is to provide the necessary funding for this purpose. It is estimated that these repairs will cost \$60,000. I am recommending that this funding come from Free Cash.*

Article 14 – Engineering for Complete Streets**Requested Amount: \$30,000**

From the Summary in the Warrant: *The Complete Streets Committee has successfully received over \$750,000 in grant funding from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts under their Complete Streets Program. Some of the projects covered by the funding have been sidewalks on West Main Street and Lowell Road, along with Pedestrian Crossing Devices along Main Street. The Committee is in the process of preparing another Grant Application this Fall. One of the requirements for this program is that the Town has to cover engineering costs for any approved project. The Committee is seeking \$30,000 for this purpose. I am recommending that this funding come from Free Cash.*

Article 15 – Debt Service for Middle School Track**Requested Amount: \$33,000**

From the Summary in the Warrant: *This Article appropriates the debt service payment for the Middle School Track Project. Article 7 of the May 21, 2021 Spring Town Meeting appropriated \$1,405,374 for the project. The Community Preservation Committee will pay an additional \$33,000 in debt service (all towards the principal). The entire amount will come from the Unallocated Reserve.*

Article 18 – SCBA Equipment for the Fire Department**Requested Amount: \$500,000**

From the Summary in the Warrant: *Self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) is a critical component of the safety gear utilized by Fire Department personnel. The ability to breathe clean air and operate in hazardous atmospheres where smoke, heat, and toxic gases are present and may be the difference between life or death during emergency incidents. The Groton Fire Department has policies and procedures in place requiring SCBA's to be worn by personnel on structure fires, vehicle fires, hazardous materials incidents, and other incidents deemed necessary by company officers. The Town had hoped that this purchase would be covered by a Federal Grant, but the Grant Funding has not been received and the SCBA equipment has reached its useful life and needs to be replaced immediately. The cost of this replacement is approximately \$500,000. I am recommending that these fund be borrowed and paid off over five (5) years.*

Based on these recommendations, if all recommendations are accepted by the Select Board and Finance Committee and Town Meeting approves the Articles, each account will have the following balances:

<u>Account</u>	<u>Beginning Balance</u>	<u>Requested Amount</u>	<u>Final Balance</u>
Levy Capacity	\$ 89,142	\$ 77,872	\$ 11,270
Local Cable Receipts	\$ 41,020	\$ 11,617	\$ 29,403
Anticipated Free Cash	\$ 2,500,000	\$ 1,572,998	\$ 927,002
Stabilization Fund	\$ 2,728,838	\$ -	\$ 2,728,838
Capital Stabilization Fund	\$ 109,199	\$ 900,000	\$ 1,009,199
GDRSD Capital Stabilization Fund	\$ 22,868	\$ 250,000	\$ 272,868
Stormwater Excess and Deficiency	\$ 142,245	\$ 50,000	\$ 92,245

I look forward to reviewing this with the Select Board and Finance Committee in more detail. In the meantime, please feel free to contact me with any additional questions or concerns.

MWH/rjb

cc: Patricia DuFresne – Assistant Finance Director/Town Accountant
Katie Kazanjian – Treasurer/Collector
Megan Foster – Principal Assessor
Michael Harnett – Acting Town Treasurer
Melisa Doig – Human Resources Director
Kara Cruikshank

enclosures