

SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 2025
APPROVED

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

Select Board Members Absent: Alison Manugian, Clerk;

Also Present: Mark Haddad, Town Manager; Kara Cruikshank, Executive Assistant to the Town Manager; Patricia DuFresne, Assistant Finance Director/Town Accountant; Bud Robertson, Finance Committee Chair.

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mr. Cunningham reminded everyone that the Community Spelling Bee will be held on Friday, November 14th, at the Prescott Community Center.

Mr. Haddad reported to the Board that the Florence Roche Elementary School project has come in \$3.1 million under budget. Initially, he projected the project would come in \$2 million under budget. The final cost of the project was \$81 million, with the Town responsible for \$54 million. A final meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, November 4th, during which the Florence Roche Building Committee will formally disband. Mr. Haddad explained that the Town will not realize the full savings until such time as the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) completes its audit. He noted that when the Town permanently finances the project, the total amount financed will be lower than initially expected. Instead of the \$55 million that taxpayers might have had to pay, the new amount is \$54 million. Ms. Pine clarified that these funds cannot be allocated for any other purposes. Mr. Haddad added that taxpayers will benefit from this.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

None

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

1. Fiscal Year 2026 First Quarter Financials Update.

Mr. Bud Robertson, the Finance Committee Chair, and Ms. Patricia DuFresne, Assistant Finance Director/Town Accountant, attended the discussion. Mr. Haddad provided the Board with a copy of the Fiscal Year 2026 First Quarter Financial Report. He noted that last year, receipts were at 24.4% and that this year they have slightly decreased to 24.07%. Overall, the Town has brought in more money in the first quarter than it did at this time last year. Mr. Haddad reported that revenues from the Motor Vehicle Excise Tax, Local Option Meals Tax, and Local Option Room Occupancy Tax continue to perform well. Additionally, revenue from marijuana sales has tripled year over year. Contributions from the Groton Hill Music Community Fund and Groton School have also increased. However, revenue from the Country Club has decreased by \$5,000 compared to last year's record-breaking year. Licenses and permits are tracking as expected, and property tax revenue is currently ahead. Mr. Haddad stated that tax bills are due today. Ms. DuFresne

mentioned that the Groton Electric Light Department (GELD) pension reimbursement of \$134,000 will be added to the next quarter under "other departmental revenue." Overall, Mr. Haddad is pleased with the progress of revenue collection.

Mr. Haddad stated that the Town's operating budget for the first quarter is currently at 38.34% of total expenses. He explained that this increase is mainly due to vacation payouts for employees who have left, as well as rising insurance and bonding costs. However, the Fall Town Meeting has allocated funds to cover these expenses. Mr. Haddad added that the public safety spending is at 24.88%, which reflects the Quinn bill payment negotiated with the Police Union this year. Mr. Haddad said he believes the Town is on track and thanked Ms. DuFresne and Mr. Robertson for their time.

2. Update on Select Board's 2026 Goals and Objectives.

Mr. Haddad explained that when the Board reviews the Financial Report, it also reviews the status of the current year's Goals and Objectives. He stated that these Goals were established in September 2025, and the Board has made some progress. The Select Board reviewed its 2026 Goals and Objectives (reference the attached Goals of the Groton Select Board).

Member Pine is assigned to the Structure of Government Goal. She informed the Board that she contacted Mr. Phil Francisco of the Planning Board regarding the Master Plan, asked for the list of "Suggested New Work Items for FY2026" for the Select Board and discussed it with the Board.

While discussing the ongoing goals, including the importance of advocating for a consistent increase in State support for education and municipal functions, Ms. Pine announced that an Education Funding Forum will be held on Thursday, November 20th, at the Marion Stoddart Performing Arts Center from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. She emphasized the community's efforts in organizing the forum and encouraged everyone to attend.

3. Fiscal Year 2027 Budget Update.

Mr. Haddad explained that, due to budgetary constraints, the Town will not implement ClearGov, a new budget software, for this year's budget development. He drafted the Fiscal Year 2027 Budget Preparation instructions based on the Guidance voted by the Select Board and Finance Committee at the October 28th meeting:

- A. The Town Manager shall provide a Balanced Budget with no consideration of an Override for Fiscal Year 2027. Any Municipal Spending Increase shall be kept to no more than forty (40%) percent of anticipated new revenues for Fiscal Year 2027. The remaining new revenues shall be set aside for the Fiscal Year 2027 Proposed Operating Assessment of the Groton Dunstable Regional School District.
- B. The Town Manager shall provide a complete listing/summary of any reductions to the Budget to comply with this Guidance.

Mr. Haddad explained that to get started on Budget Development, he scheduled a meeting with Dunstable Town Administrator Jason Silva, Groton Dunstable Regional School District (GDRSD) Superintendent Dr. Geoff Bruno, and GDRSD Director of Business Sherry Kersey, along with Members of the Finance Team, for Thursday, October 30th, to discuss the Budget Guidance and how to best proceed with creating the Budget. Mr. Haddad stated that he would keep the Board updated on their progress. He then reviewed the budget timeline:

- The Department Head Budget Kick-Off will take place on Thursday, November 13, 2025
- Budgets will be due in the Office of the Town Manager on December 1, 2025.
- Meetings with the Town Manager to review budgets are scheduled for December 8 through 10, 2025.
- The Proposed Operating Budget for Fiscal Year 2027 will be delivered to the Select Board and Finance Committee by January 31, 2026.

Mr. Haddad reminded the Board that the Capital Budget must be submitted to the Select Board and Finance Committee by December 31, 2025. Although the Charter has been amended, it has not yet been adopted by the legislature; hopefully, next year it will be aligned with the Proposed Operating Budget and due on January 31st. Mr. Haddad explained that Representative Margaret Scarsdale provided an update on the Charter and said that legislation has been filed in the House. Mr. Haddad stated that the Fiscal Year 2027 Budget Update will be included as an agenda item on every upcoming Select Board agenda. Mr. Haddad expressed pride in the work that the Town of Groton has accomplished with its budgets. He also mentioned that the School District is making every effort to control costs. He acknowledged that it was not easy.

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

Monday, November 10, 2025	No Meeting
Monday, November 17, 2025	Appointment of New Water Superintendent/Tax Classification Hearing
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, 2026	No Meeting
Monday, January 12, 2026	Regularly Scheduled Meeting

ITEMS FOR SELECT BOARD CONSIDERATION AND APPROVAL

1. Approve Intermunicipal Agreement (IMA) with the Towns of Ashby, Ayer, Boxborough, Dunstable, Groton, Littleton, Shirley, Townsend, and Westford for COIN Services and Authorize the Town Manager to Sign Said IMA.

Since 2026, the Town of Groton has successfully participated in the Community Outreach Initiative Network (COIN) program to support local Police Departments. Grant funds have been allocated to individual Police Departments to hire licensed social work clinicians. The COIN program has been

highly successful. Earlier this year, COIN was restructured, consolidating towns into a region, with the Town of Ayer serving as the Administrative Agent and Grant Administrator for the Department of Mental Health, which funds COIN. The region includes the Towns of Ashby, Ayer, Boxborough, Dunstable, Groton, Littleton, Shirley, Townsend, and Westford. This change took effect on July 24, 2025, with no service interruptions. The nine towns will need to sign an Intermunicipal Agreement (IMA) to implement this restructuring. Mr. Haddad provided the Board with a copy of the IMA for their review and consideration of approval. He stated that the Towns of Ayer, Westford, and Groton's Town Counsel have reviewed and approved it.

Ms. Pine asked why Pepperell was not included in the IMA. Mr. Haddad explained that Pepperell had chosen not to participate. Ms. Pine raised concerns about how this decision might affect the current services. Mr. Haddad reassured her that there would be no changes to the current services. He added that Police Chief Luth wholeheartedly supports this IMA.

Ms. Pine made a motion to approve the Intermunicipal Agreement (IMA) with the Towns of Ashby, Ayer, Boxborough, Dunstable, Groton, Littleton, Shirley, Townsend, and Westford for COIN Services and authorized the Town Manager to sign said IMA. Mr. Cunningham 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. Reilly made a motion to authorize the Town Manager and one member of the Select Board to sign the Warrants for the next 30 days. Ms. Pine seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

On-Going Issues

- A. PFAS Issue- None
- B. UMass Satellite Emergency Facility – Mr. Haddad explained that construction has begun and is progressing. They expect the facility to open in December 2026 or January 2027.
- C. Fire Department Staffing – None
- D. West Groton Dam—Mr. Haddad announced that DPW Director Tom Delaney will retire on Friday, November 7th. He clarified that Mr. Delaney will continue to serve as a consultant to assist Mr. Haddad with matters related to the West Groton Dam. Mr. Delaney will attend a Select Board meeting in December to provide an update. The Town is awaiting the dam repair report, but already has the removal report.

SELECT BOARD LIASON REPORTS

None

Approval of the Special Meeting of October 22, 2025, and Regularly Scheduled Meeting of October 28, 2025

Ms. Pine made a motion to approve the special meeting minutes of October 22, 2025, and the regular meeting minutes of October 28, 2025. Mr. Cunningham seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

The Select Board adjourned at 6:40 p.m.

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

FISCAL YEAR 2026

GOALS OF THE GROTON SELECT BOARD

Category - Public Safety **Select Board Member Assigned – Peter Cunningham**

In consultation with Police, Fire, and DPW Departments, establish a prioritized list of sidewalks, bicycle and roadway concerns and timelines for addressing them. Tasks to be considered:

- Striping Parking Spots on Main Street
- Narrowing Roads and/or other ways to create more pedestrian/bike access
- Paving section of roadway between Station Avenue and Broadmeadow Road
- Setting a Town wide speed limit

Budget Priorities – Funding **Select Board Member Assigned – Alison Manugian**

Operating Budget

- Establish the process to determine the minimal staffing needed in all departments to continue functioning without an override.
- Beginning with the Groton Fire Department, establish process and requirements for, and conduct an in-depth cost benefit analysis of any proposed increase in staffing

Capital Budget

- Considering input from the Town Manager and the Capital Planning Advisory Committee, review all town property and capital spending priorities for coming years

Grant Funding

- Conduct in-depth analysis of available grants to help offset operating budget pressures

Structure of Government **Select Board Member Assigned – Becky Pine**

- Review and determine action to be taken by the Select Board and staff on items identified in the Master Plan
- Develop a 3-year schedule to meet with all committees under the Select Board's purview. Consider combining or eliminating committees with similar or overlapping roles

Economic Development **Select Board Members Assigned – John Reilly and Matt Pisani**

- Work with Groton Business Association and Destination Groton Committee to develop new sources of revenue.
- Encourage efforts to establish more restaurants in Groton, specifically in the former Station House property and available commercial sites in the Four Corners area

Ongoing Goals

All Members

- Continue advocating for a predictable increase in State support for education and municipal functions
- Present a FY 2027 Budget in conjunction with Peer Boards that meets the Town of Groton and GDRSD needs
- Continue support of DEI Committee and Affordable Housing Trust