

**SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES
HELD VIA ZOOM
MONDAY, JANUARY 26, 2026
APPROVED**

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

Also Virtually Present: Mark Haddad, Town Manager; Kara Cruikshank, Executive Assistant to the Town Manager; Patricia DuFresne, Assistant Finance Director/Town Accountant; Megan Foster, Principal Assessor; Katie Kazanjian, Treasurer/Tax Collector; Melisa Doig, Human Resources Director; Attorney Sherrill Goul and Applicant Jennifer Nicosia, Welcome Home Furnishings; Anna Eliot, Park Commission Vice Chair; Grace Bannasch, Town Clerk.

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Ms. Pine explained that the Board voted to send out a fundraising letter in December. Ms. Katie Berry, Assistant Town Accountant, provided Ms. Pine with a breakdown of the contribution comparisons between 2024 and 2025. Ms. Pine wanted to share the results with the Board. She stated that the increase was quite substantial. Mr. Pine was pleased with the results and would like to hold this fundraiser every year.

Mr. Cunningham acknowledged that the Department of Public Works did an excellent job handling the snowstorm.

Mr. Haddad and the Finance Team met with Wall Street to prepare for a bond issue to secure funding for the remaining costs of the Florence Roche Elementary School Project, the PFAS Water Main Project, and a Bond Anticipation Note (BAN) for a few additional projects. He announced that Wall Street has confirmed the Town's AAA bond rating. Mr. Haddad took a moment to thank Ms. Patricia DuFresne, the Assistant Finance Director/Town Accountant, for her outstanding efforts and to thank the Finance Team. He emphasized that this is great news for the taxpayers.

Mr. Reilly shared the news of the passing of longtime Groton resident Bob Hargraves. He extended his condolences to his family.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

None

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

1. FY 2027 Budget Update.

Mr. Haddad said he will be issuing the Town Manager's Proposed Fiscal Year 2027 Operating Budget this week. The Select Board will meet in Joint Session with the Finance Committee on February 2nd for the Town Manager to present the Proposed Operating Budget.

2. Select Board Meeting Schedule through the 2026 Spring Town Meeting.

Monday, February 2, 2026 -	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, February 9, 2026 -	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, February 16, 2026 -	No Meeting – (President’s Day Holiday)
Monday, February 23, 2026 -	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, March 2, 2026 -	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, March 9, 2026 -	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, March 16, 2026 -	No Meeting
Monday, March 23, 2026 -	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, March 30, 2026	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, April 6, 2026 -	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, April 13, 2026 -	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, April 20, 2026 -	No Meeting – (Patriot’s Day Holiday)
Mon., April 27, or Sat., May 2, 2026 -	2026 Spring Town Meeting

ITEMS FOR SELECT BOARD CONSIDERATION AND APPROVAL

1. Consider Appointing Bob Hill to the Town Forest Committee.

Mr. Cunningham made a motion to appoint Bob Hill to the Town Forest Committee, with a term to expire on June 30, 2028. Mr. Reilly seconded the motion.

Ms. Pine requested that we obtain a statement regarding the Committee's recommendation or their committee interest forms moving forward. In the future, Mr. Haddad will send the committee interest forms to the Board along with his Town Manager’s Report.

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

2. Consider Appointing Ellen Wetmore to the Local Cultural Council.

Ms. Manugian made a motion to appoint Ellen Wetmore to the Local Cultural Council, with a term to expire on June 30, 2030. Ms. Pine seconded the motion. Roll Call: Pine — aye; Reilly — aye; Cunningham — aye; Manugian — aye; Pisani — aye.

3. Review, Approve, and sign the Grant of the Conservation Restriction for the Shepley Hill Project.

A copy of the Grant of Conservation Restriction from Shepley Hill Capital Partners LLC to the Conservation Commission was provided to the Board for review. Mr. Haddad explained that the Select Board needed to approve and sign the document. Mr. Haddad recommended approval, contingent upon the Conservation Commission's approval.

Ms. Manugian made a motion to approve the Grant of the Conservation Restriction for the Shepley Hill Project, contingent upon approval of the Conservation Commission. Ms. Pine seconded the motion. Roll Call: Pine — aye; Reilly — aye; Cunningham — aye; Manugian — aye; Pisani — aye.

4. Consider Approving a One-Day Wine and Malt Beverages License for the Friends of Prescott for the “Art of Wine Tasting” Event to be held on Friday, February 13, 2026, from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Mr. Cunningham moved to approve the One-Day Wine and Malt Beverages License for the Friends of Prescott for the “Art of Wine Tasting” Event to be held on Friday, February 13, 2026, from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. Ms. Pine seconded the motion. Roll Call: Pine — aye; Reilly — aye; Cunningham — aye; Manugian — aye; Pisani — aye.

5. Consider Approving a One-Day Wine and Malt Beverages License for the Friends of Prescott for the “Paint and Sip: The Starry Night” Event to be held on Friday, February 28, 2026, from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Ms. Manugian moved to approve the One-Day Wine and Malt Beverages License for the Friends of Prescott for the “Paint and Sip: The Starry Night” Event to be held on Friday, February 28, 2026, from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. Mr. Cunningham seconded the motion. Roll Call: Pine — aye; Reilly — aye; Cunningham — aye; Manugian — aye; Pisani — aye.

6:15 p.m.- Public Hearing- Liquor License Application- Off-Premises Wine and Malt Beverages License- 9 West Main Street

Attorney Sherrill Gould, along with applicant Jennifer Nicosia of Welcome Home Furnishings & Décor, LLC., at 9 West Main Street, were virtually present.

Mr. Haddad read aloud the public hearing notice into the record.

Mr. Reilly moved to open the public hearing. Mr. Cunningham seconded the motion. Roll Call: Pine — aye; Reilly — aye; Cunningham — aye; Manugian — aye; Pisani — aye.

Attorney Gould introduced Ms. Nicosia to the Board. She is seeking an Off-Premises Wine and Malt Beverage License for Welcome Home Décor & Furnishings at 9 West Main Street. She explained that the license would be used to create gift baskets. Ms. Nicosia explained that her new store has a unique flair and that the community has been wonderful. Mr. Haddad explained that there had previously been a wine and malt license at that location.

Comments/Questions from the Board

Mr. Pisani inquired whether this license would alter the current hours of operation. Ms. Nicosia confirmed it would not. Ms. Pine raised a discrepancy in the square footage on the application, noting that it had been corrected to a different number. The attorney said that the lease differed from the assessor's property record card. She suggested that closet space with slanted ceilings might be the source of the discrepancy. Attorney Gould believes the space is approximately 2,500 to 2,700 sq. feet. Ms. Pine also asked if Ms. Nicosia would hold sip-and-shops. Mr. Haddad stated that she was allowed to have wine tastings under this license. Mr. Cunningham said he was in favor of granting this application. Ms. Nicosia stated that the store's current hours of operation are as follows: Closed on Monday and Tuesday; Wednesday through Friday from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.; and Saturday and Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Mr. Haddad thanked his Executive Assistant, Ms. Kara Cruikshank, for her efforts in sending an additional public

hearing notice to abutters after the hearing was rescheduled from in-person to Zoom because of the snowstorm.

There were no public comments, but one letter of support was sent via email for the license.

Mr. Cunningham made a motion to close the public hearing. Mr. Reilly seconded the motion. Roll Call: Pine — aye; Reilly — aye; Cunningham — aye; Manugian — aye; Pisani — aye.

Ms. Pine moved to grant the Off-Premises Wine and Malt Beverages License to Welcome Home Furnishings & Décor, LLC., for 9 West Main Street, with Jennifer Nicosia as Manager, with hours of operation Monday through Friday, 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday, 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 pm. Mr. Cunningham seconded the motion.

Discussion

Ms. Manugian suggested setting the hours of operation from Sunday through Saturday, 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The Board agreed with this suggestion and amended the hours of operation to Sunday through Saturday, 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 pm.

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

6:30 p.m. -Consider Request from Park Commission to Support CPA Project- Cow Pond Brook Field Improvements

Park Commissioner Ms. Anna Eliot was virtually in attendance for the discussion.

Mr. Haddad provided and reviewed a map of the proposed Project improvements with the Board. Mr. Haddad, Ms. Megan Buczynski, Activitas Project Consultant, and Ms. Cruikshank met earlier that day with the Park Commissioners, who voted unanimously in support of the Project and recommended it. Ms. Eliot was present to ask the Select Board to consider writing a letter of support for the Project as required by the Community Preservation Committee (CPC). Ms. Eliot noted that Ms. Buczynski is a resident of the Town and thanked the Working Group.

Questions/Suggestions

Ms. Manugian asked how much parking this proposal would add. Mr. Haddad explained that 150 spaces will be added, bringing the total to approximately 300 spaces. The Police and Fire Departments were concerned about events ending at the same time there, and the means of egress. In response to their concerns, there will now be two additional means of egress, for a total of three entrances/exits. *Ms. Pine said she attended the public hearing for this project and has two suggestions, stating that the project was expensive. She suggested that, when it goes out to bid, the playground area be downgraded or removed. Mr. Haddad said the playground will be downgraded based on feedback, and the cost of the newly proposed entrance will be covered by the money saved from reducing the playground. She also suggested that the walking path not be paved and use stone dust similar to the handicap accessible trail installed last yea. The path would still be accessible. She believes this would save funds on the project. Ms. Pine does support this project. Mr. Cunningham agreed with a stone dust trail in place of a paved path, and said it is also ADA-compliant. Ms. Manugian inquired about maintenance for the stone dust surface vs. pavement.*

Mr. Haddad said there are many things he and Megan Byuczynski need to work out prior to going out to bid on the project.

Mr. Reilly stated that he supports the project and that it was long overdue.

Mr. Cunningham motioned to authorize the Town Manager to send a letter of support to the CPC on behalf of the Select Board. Ms. Pine seconded the motion. Roll Call: Pine — aye; Reilly — aye; Cunningham — aye; Manugian — aye; Pisani — aye.

OTHER BUSINESS

None

On-Going Issues

- A. PFAS Issue –None
- B. UMass Satellite Emergency Facility – None
- C. Fire Department Staffing –Mr. Haddad said he is working on a plan for a separate joint meeting that would address the staffing issue. He would provide more information to the Board soon.
- D. West Groton Dam— None

Mr. Haddad applied for a grant to hire an engineer for a traffic study on Main Street and has not yet received a response from the state. The DPW Director, Mr. Brian Callahan, has received permission from MassDOT to fund up to \$50,000 from Chapter 90 Funds. Mr. Haddad and the MDM transportation consultants will meet to form a working group to review traffic patterns, parking, and the potential for installing roundabouts on Main Street. Ms. Manugian requested that this topic be added to the list of ongoing issues. Mr. Haddad will keep the Board updated.

Ms. Pine would like the police to come in to discuss the flock camera located at Townsend Rd. and 119 that has raised some concerns. Mr. Haddad will schedule a time to add this discussion to the agenda. Ms. Pine mentioned that AI records meetings unless instructed otherwise. She expressed concern regarding the Executive Session. Mr. Haddad stated that Mike Chaisson, the IT Director, fixed this feature.

SELECT BOARD LIASON REPORTS

None

Approval of the Regularly Scheduled Meeting of January 12, 2026

Ms. Pine made a motion to approve the regular meeting minutes of January 12, 2026. Mr. Cunningham seconded the motion. Roll Call: Pine — aye; Reilly — aye; Cunningham — aye; Manugian — aye; Pisani — aye.

The Select Board adjourned at 6:54 p.m.

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