

**SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2026
APPROVED**

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

Select Board Members Virtually Absent: John Reilly

Also Present: Mark Haddad, Town Manager; Kara Cruikshank, Executive Assistant to the Town Manager; Patricia DuFresne, Assistant Finance Director/Town Accountant; Katie Kazanjian, Treasurer/Tax Collector; Tom Delaney, Squannacook River Dam Consultant; and Brian Callahan, DPW Director.

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Ms. Pine announced the third Annual Town Report Art Contest for the Town of Groton. Submissions must be sent to the Town Manager's Office by February 18th. She also announced that the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee, in collaboration with Lawrence Academy, will sponsor an event featuring a speaker from the Nipmuc Tribe on Wednesday, April 8, 2026, at 7:00 p.m. The event will take place at the Groton Center.

Mr. Haddad announced that the town received a record-breaking check from the Groton Hill Music Center in the amount of \$39,226 for the 2025 Fourth Quarter proceeds from the Groton Community Fund. He emphasized that this payment was a 10% increase compared to the donation received for the corresponding quarter in 2024. Mr. Haddad thanked Groton Hill Music Center for its continued collaboration with the Town of Groton.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

None

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

- 1. Consider Ratifying the Town Manager's Appointment of Lois Young to the Commission on Accessibility.**

Mr. Cunningham made a motion to ratify the Town Manager's Appointment of Lois Young to the Commission on Accessibility. Ms. Pine seconded the motion.

Discussion

Ms. Pine stated that Ms. Young would be an excellent candidate for the Commission on Accessibility.

The motion carried unanimously.

2. FY 2027 Budget Update.

Mr. Haddad updated the Board on issues raised during the Budget Presentation. He explained that Member Manugian had requested a summary of Capital Items that have already been procured and are being paid off over several years. He provided the Board with a memo under separate cover containing that information.

Mr. Haddad also addressed another issue raised: the percentage of full-time equivalents (FTEs) reduced at the Groton-Dunstable Regional School District over the past three years. He is currently working with the School District to obtain that information and will discuss it further as he receives more details.

There were several questions about per-pupil costs at Nashoba Tech vs the Groton-Dunstable Regional School District. Mr. Haddad provided this information to the Select Board and Finance Committee under separate cover.

Town Accountant/Assistant Finance Director Ms. Patricia DuFresne attended the Town Official Breakfast at Nashoba Tech and reported a preliminary \$30,000 budget increase, which is about \$9,000 more than Mr. Haddad set aside in his proposed budget. He believes that the increase in State aid contained in the Governor’s budget will cover that increase.

Mr. Haddad stated that he would invite the Nashoba Associated Boards of Health to a future Select Board meeting, as requested by Member Manugian, to discuss their 30% Assessment increase for FY 2027.

Member Manugian inquired about the impact of the School District's funding cuts on the delivery of education. Superintendent Dr. Geoff Bruno provided a summary detailing how these cuts have affected educational services. This summary is contained in the Town Manager’s Report.

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

Tuesday, February 10, 2026-	Meet in Joint Session with the Finance Committee
Monday, February 16, 2026 -	No Meeting – (President’s Day Holiday)
Monday, February 23, 2026 -	First Review of 2026 Town Meeting Warrant
Saturday, February 28, 2026-	Joint Session with Finance Committee
Monday, March 2, 2026 -	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, March 9, 2026 -	2026 Town Meeting Warrant Public Hearing
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 – (Patriots’ Day Holiday)
Saturday, May 2, 2026 -	2026 Spring Town Meeting

ITEMS FOR SELECT BOARD CONSIDERATION AND APPROVAL

1. Approve Letter of Support to the CPA for Affordable Housing Trust Application.

Mr. Haddad provided a draft letter of support to the Select Board for their review. He explained that the letter is intended to support the Affordable Housing Trust's Application before the Community Preservation Committee. Mr. Haddad respectfully requested that the Board authorize the Town Manager to sign the letter on behalf of the Select Board.

Mr. Cunningham made a motion to authorize the Town Manager to sign the letter of support to the CPA for the Affordable Housing Trust application, on behalf of the Select Board. Ms. Manugian seconded the motion.

Discussion

Mr. Haddad stated that the request is for \$300,000. Ms. Pine believes they currently have approximately \$800,000 in the Affordable Housing Trust account at this time.

The motion carried 3 in Favor, 1 Against-Manugian.

2. Discussion on Vote on Deed to Bluebird Lane for Public Way Acceptance.

Mr. Haddad explained that there was an issue with the acceptance of Bluebird Lane. Bluebird Lane was accepted as a Town Way at the 2025 Fall Town Meeting. He said the conveyance of the real estate for the way is the final step in the street acceptance process. The deed from R.D. Kanniard Homes, Inc., conveys the developer's retained interest in Bluebird Lane and "Parcel B". Mr. Haddad provided a copy of the Street Acceptance Plan to the Board for their review. He said the deed from James N. Tedesco conveys the abutting lot owner's interest in Bluebird Lane, which the developer inadvertently failed to retain when that parcel was sold. Mr. Haddad said this deed cures that issue for purposes of street acceptance, and the Select Board would need to sign off on both deeds.

Ms. Pine moved to approve the deeds for Bluebird Lane for public way acceptance, as outlined in the packet. Mr. Cunningham seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

2. Consider Approving a One-Day Wine and Malt Beverage License for Karen Lilgegren for Jackson and Annika's Barn Dance to be held on Friday, August 21, 2026, from 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.

Ms. Manugian moved to approve the One-Day wine and Malt Beverages License for Karen Lilgegren for Jackson and Annika's Barn Dance to be held on Friday, August 21, 2026, from 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. Mr. Cunningham seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

6:15 P.M.-In Joint Session with the Park Commission- Consider Appointing an Individual to Fill a Vacancy on the Park Commission until the 2026 Annual Town Election.

Due to a scheduling conflict, this discussion has been postponed until the February 23rd Select Board meeting.

6:20 P.M.- Squannacook River Dam Discussion- Review Study to remove the Dam and Bids to Consider the Repair of the Dam.

Mr. Tom Delaney, Consultant, and Mr. Brian Callahan, DPW Director, attended the discussion.

Mr. Haddad explained that the 2024 Fall Town Meeting allocated funds to hire two consultants: one to conduct a study on the removal of the Squannacook River Dam (Horsley Witten) and another to hire an engineer to prepare bid specifications for the dam's repair (Haley & Aldrich). Mr. Haddad was pleased with the reports provided for both the removal and repair, and they are posted on the Town's website.

Mr. Haddad stated that state grant funding might be available for the Dam's removal, which would cost approximately \$2 million to \$2.5 million. He also explained that Haley & Aldrich did a great job preparing the bid specifications for the dam repair. He emphasized that 24 firms obtained the specifications, and 8 submitted bids. When the bids were opened, they ranged from \$502,500 to \$1,421,000. The primary concern in the bids was controlling water during construction. The lowest bid included \$150,000 for water control, while the average cost was \$310,000. All the bid specs were sent to the engineer from Haley & Aldrich for review. The engineer was concerned that the low bid didn't include enough to cover the cost of controlling water during the repair work. He suggested carrying \$150,000 as a contingency for this purpose; in addition, Mr. Haddad and Mr. Delaney would prefer \$250,000, as the Shirley side of the Dam has never been addressed, which makes them nervous. He proposed the following budget for the repair of the Dam based on the Bids:

Low Bid (R. Bates & Sons, Inc)	\$502,550
Contingency	\$250,000
Engineering/Construction Administration	<u>\$ 60,000</u>
Total	\$812,000

Mr. Haddad was pleased with the results of the dam repair bids. He stated that the low bidder, R. Bates & Sons, Inc., must hold the \$502,550 appropriation until the May Town Meeting. Mr. Haddad recommended that the Board present Town Meeting with one option on the Dam, and that it would be to repair the Dam. To pay for this, he recommended either a debt exclusion or a capital exclusion. Mr. Haddad recommended including an Article for the dam repair at the 2026 Spring Town Meeting, seeking \$812,500. He said an override would be necessary to fund this project. Should this Article fail, the Select Board can consider moving forward with the removal.

With regards to funding the repair, he explained two Options for funding:

Option #1 would be to borrow the funds, ask voters at Town Meeting and the Annual Election in May for a Debt Exclusion, and pay off the loan over eleven years. Option #2 would be a Capital Exclusion in which the Town Meeting would raise and appropriate the entire amount and pay it off in Fiscal Year 2027 by placing a Capital Exclusion (authorizing a one-time increase in the levy Limit to raise the full amount) on the ballot at the Annual Election in May. (See the attached memo: Proposal to Pay for the Cost of Repairing the Squannacook River Dam.)

During the discussion, there was a public comment period when members of the public could state their comments and concerns.

Ms. Pine stated that she was a strong environmentalist, and restoring the river to its natural state is not possible by removing the Dam. She thinks it will become a swamp with mosquitoes and be the center of a neighborhood in town. She is not in favor of removing the Dam, is in favor of holding a public hearing, and bringing this Article to the Spring Town Meeting. Ms. Manugian disagreed with Ms. Pine. She said, from an investment and liability perspective, taking the Dam down is the way to go. Mr. Cunningham said he was in favor of putting this Article on the warrant. Mr. Haddad will schedule the public hearing on the Dam for Tuesday, March 3rd, at 7:00 p.m., at the Groton Center.

OTHER BUSINESS

Authorize the Town Manager and One Member of the Select Board to Sign Warrants for the Next Thirty Days.

Ms. Pine made a motion to authorize the town manager and one member of the select board to sign warrants for the next thirty days. Ms. Manugian seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

On-Going Issues

- A. PFAS Issue – None
- B. UMass Satellite Emergency Facility – None
- C. Fire Department Staffing – The Select Board will hold a joint meeting with the Finance Committee on Tuesday, February 10th, to discuss staffing.
- D. West Groton Dam- None
- E. Main Street Study – None

SELECT BOARD LIASON REPORTS

Ms. Pine said the Non-Profit Council is meeting on February 10, 2026, at 9:00 am at the Groton Hill Music Center.

Approval of the Regularly Scheduled Meeting of February 2, 2026

Ms. Pine made a motion to approve the regular meeting minutes of February 2, 2026. Ms. Manugian seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

The Select Board adjourned at 7:16 p.m.

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