SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2026
APPROVED

Select Board Members Present: Peter Cunningham, Chair; Nick Degaitas Jr., Clerk; John Reilly; Matt Pisani; Becky Pine, Vice Chair;
Also Present: Mark Haddad, Town Manager; Kara Cruikshank, Executive Assistant to the Town Manager; Patricia DuFresne, Assistant Director of Finance/Town Accountant; Fran Stanley, Groton Housing Coordinator.

Chair Cunningham called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM and reviewed the agenda.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mr. Degaitas announced that he attended a Groton Lakes Association meeting, found it informative, and appreciated all the work they do to preserve the lakes.

Ms. Pine said the Groton Herald ran an article about the Affordable Housing units owned by the Groton Housing Authority at Sandy Pond. She said the article was based on minutes from about a year ago. She explained that there has been further development over the past year, and that Russ Harris will write an updated article. Ms. Pine also explained that Ken Martin, since taking over the management of the Groton Affordable Housing is bringing in a lot of grant money.

Mr. Cunningham said there has been significant discussion about the MDM Transportation Study. He announced a public forum on Thursday, November 19th, at the Marion Stoddart Building at 7:00 p.m. to discuss the Report's findings in more detail and gather public feedback. He asked residents to take a moment and allow the public process to move forward.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD - Zoom

None

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

1. **Consider Ratifying the Town Manager's Appointment of Mary Clay to the Greenway Committee.**
   Mr. Reilly moved to ratify the Town Manager's appointment of Mary Clay to the Greenway Committee, with a term expiring on June 30, 2027. Ms. Pine seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

2. **Update on the Approval of the Groton Charter by the Legislature and Governor.**
   Mr. Haddad announced to the Select Board and Groton residents that Governor Healey signed into law Chapter 234 of the Acts of 2026 into law, "An Act Amending the Charter for the Town of Groton." He thanked the Charter Review Committee, Senator Cronin, and Representative Margaret Scarsdale for their efforts in getting the Charter approved. Mr. Haddad then reviewed the major amendments now in effect:

1. One member of the Select Board and the Town Manager can now sign all payroll and expense warrants.
2. The Town Manager will appoint the Police Chief, Fire Chief, and Town Clerk, pursuant to Select Board Policy and subject to ratification by the Select Board.
3. The Town Manager now appoints members of the Boards and Committees, subject to Select Board ratification, rather than nominating them for appointment by the Board.
4. The position of Principal Assistant Assessor is retitled Principal Assessor to conform with state law.
5. The Personnel Board is eliminated.
6. The Town Manager's Capital Budget is now due on January 31, at the same time as the Operating Budget.

Ms. Pine further explained that the appointment policy for the Police Chief, Fire Chief, and Town Clerk is designed to require collaboration between the Town Manager and the Select Board throughout the process. Mr. Haddad said the Town Clerk is preparing printed copies of the updated Charter, which will also be posted on the Town website.

3. Update from Town Manager on Fall Town Meeting Follow-Up.

Now that the Fall Town Meeting has concluded, Mr. Haddad wanted to update the Board on the actions his office took in response to the votes and decisions made at Town Meeting. He took a moment to recognize and thank his Executive Assistant, Kara Cruikshank, for her exceptional attention to detail, organizational skills, and coordination. He said her contributions are greatly appreciated. Mr. Haddad addressed the electronic voting, explaining that additional protocols and testing procedures are now in place to prevent a recurrence of the electronic voting issues. He said that Moderator Jason Kauppi and Town Clerk Grace Bannasch were well prepared to handle any challenges that arose. He added that, thanks to their planning and quick response, Town Meeting continued with very little disruption. Mr. Haddad thanked them both.

Mr. Haddad reviewed several articles from the Fall Town Meeting and summarized the actions taken. The Town Manager's Report is included with these minutes for reference and further explanation.

Article 2- Budget Amendments/Appropriation

The Board approved the job description for the part-time Economic Development Director position (15 hours per week, $25,000 appropriated on a trial basis). The position will be advertised, and Mr. Haddad will form an interview committee.

Ms. Pine moved to approve the job description for a Part-Time Economic Development Director. Mr. Degaitas seconded the motion.

Discussion

Jeff Gordon of the Destination Groton Committee asked whether a few members could join the Economic Development Director interview committee. Mr. Haddad said absolutely.

The motion carried unanimously.

Article 10- Cow Pond Brook Fields

The low bidder for this project is M.J. Cataldo. Mr. Haddad explained that the contract is being prepared and a kickoff meeting is scheduled for Thursday, October 22nd. Work is projected to begin on November 1st. The state grant contract has been received and covers up to $1 million in eligible costs for the $3.9 million project. Mr. Haddad said the project must be completed by December 31, 2027.

Article 11- Country Club Irrigation System/Course Improvements

National Lawn Sprinkler, Inc. is the low bidder on this project, and the Contract was awarded to them. Mr. Haddad said the work is expected to begin at the Country Club by December 1st, so the irrigation system will be operational and the course can open on time in April 2027.

Article 12- Means Tested Senior Citizen Property Tax Exemption

The Town has filed the special legislation with the state delegation. Mr. Haddad clarified that the exemption would be funded through the overlay, rather than shifting the cost to other residential taxpayers. When setting the tax rate, Tammi Mickel, Principal Assessor, would recommend setting the percentage at 50% of the circuit breaker amount for the first year, with the Board able to re-evaluate it annually. Mr. Haddad said it would run for three years and would expire unless renewed by Town Meeting. He reiterated that this will not raise residents' taxes more than allowed under Proposition 2½.

Article 16-Citizens' Petition- Study of Housing Opportunities

Mr. Cunningham thought resources might be available to prepare a report. Ms. Pine has been considering who could bring the Committee together and move the effort forward. She spoke with a Planning Board member, who said they are beginning to revise the existing multifamily zoning bylaw, potentially creating more opportunities. Ms. Pine suggested involving the Housing Partnership and possibly meeting with Russ Harris, the Citizen Petitioner. Mr. Cunningham agreed that the Housing Partnership could lead the study. Mr. Degaitas asked whether representatives from various committees and boards could lead it. Mr. Haddad advised Mr. Degaitas to contact various boards to find volunteers, then bring a group of members back to the Board to formalize the group. Mr. Cunningham will contact the Housing Partnership members and begin the process.

4. **Fiscal Year 2028 Update.**

The Town Manager stated that the Select Board will meet with the Finance Committee in joint session next Monday, October 26, at the Groton Center to establish Budget Guidance for Fiscal Year 2028. He sent a memorandum to both the Select Board and the Finance Committee under separate cover in advance of the meeting, and it will be included in next week's packet.

Ms. Pine took a few moments to review ballot questions #5, #6, and #8, noting that they would significantly affect the Town's Budget.

5. **Update on Select Board Schedule through the End of the Year.**

Monday, October 26, 2026-	Provide Budget Guidance to the Town Manager
Monday, November 2, 2026-	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, November 9, 2026-	No Meeting
Monday, November 16, 2026-	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Thursday, November 19, 2026-	Public Hearing on Main Street Study (PAC)

Mr. Haddad briefly discussed the Main Street Study by MDT Transportation and emphasized that it was just the start. Ms. Pine said that, based on the Study, they believe the Town meets the criteria for a traffic light. Email questions and comments to mainstreetstudy@grotonma.gov. Comments will be forwarded to MDM for response. The Board suggested a Q&A handout for the public forum would help share information.

Monday, November 23, 2026-	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, November 30, 2026-	No Meeting
Monday, December 7, 2026-	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, December 14, 2026-	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, December 21, 2026-	Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Monday, December 28, 2026-	No Meeting (Christmas Holiday)
Monday, January 4, 2027-	No Meeting (New Year's Holiday)
Monday, January 22, 2027-	Regularly Scheduled Meeting

ITEMS FOR SELECT BOARD CONSIDERATION AND APPROVAL

1. **Consider Appointing Carole Carter and Doug Dubois to the T.R.E.A.D. Committee.**
   Mr. Pisani moved to appoint Carole Carter and Doug Dubois to the T.R.E.A.D. Committee, terms expiring on June 30, 2027. Mr. Degaitas seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

2. **Consider Request from the Groton Housing Authority to Waive Fees Related to Project at Petapawag Place.**
   The Board received a letter from Ken Martin, Executive Director of the Groton Housing Authority, requesting a waiver of local board and committee fees for several projects underway at Petapawag Place. Mr. Haddad explained that while the Housing Authority is not a Town department, it is a governmental entity, like the Groton Dunstable Regional School District and the West Groton Water District. Because the Board's fee waiver policy does not specifically include the Housing Authority, he brought the request to the Select Board for approval. The waiver would cover only filing and review fees charged by boards such as the Historic District Commission and the Planning Board—not building permit or electrical fees. The project, funded with approximately $3 million in state funds, includes an elevator, door upgrades, and parking lot and accessibility improvements.

   Ms. Pine moved to waive the Groton Housing Authority fees related to the Petapawag Place project. Mr. Pisani seconded the motion.

   Discussion
   Ms. Pine explained that Ken Martin has been an incredible asset.

The motion carried unanimously.

OTHER BUSINESS

On-Going Issues

A. PFAS Issue – Letters were sent last week to 84 residents in the towns of Groton and Dunstable. The inspection process is underway to determine how to connect the properties that must be connected. He said contractor DeFelice and engineer Apex will conduct site visits at individual homes with Water Superintendent Dan Stoneking and DPW Director Brian Callahan.

B. UMass Satellite Emergency Facility – On October 6th, Congresswoman Trahan and the Governor visited the facility. The facility is scheduled to open on February 1st.

C. Fire Department Staffing – None

D. West Groton Dam Removal-None

E. Main Street Study –None

F. Flock Cameras – None

SELECT BOARD LIAISON REPORTS

Ms. Pine reported that the Non-Profit Council met last week and was very well attended.

Approval of the Regularly Scheduled Meeting of September 28, 2026.

Mr. Reilly made a motion to approve the minutes from the regularly scheduled meeting on September 28, 2026. Mr. Pisani seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Approval of the Prior Meeting to Town Meeting on October 3, 2026.

Mr. Reilly made a motion to approve the minutes from the Prior Meeting to Town Meeting on October 3, 2026. M. Pisani seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Approval of the Special Meeting on October 13, 2026.

Mr. Reilly made a motion to approve the special meeting on October 13, 2026. Mr. Pisani seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Pine moved to move into Executive Session and not return to open session. Mr. Reilly seconded the motion. Roll Call: Pine-aye; Reilly-aye; Degaitas-aye; Pisani-aye; Cunningham-aye.

The Select Board adjourned at 7:03 p.m.

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

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Select Board

Peter S. Cunningham, *Chair*
Rebecca H. Pine, *Vice Chair*
Nicholas J. Degaitas, Jr., *Clerk*
John F. Reilly, *Member*
Matthew F. Pisani, *Member*

Town Manager
Mark W. Haddad

To: ***Select Board***

From: ***Mark W. Haddad – Town Manager***

Subject: ***Weekly Agenda Update/Report***

Date: ***October 19, 2026***

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

Other than the Town Manager's Report, Items for Select Board Consideration and Action and a review of the On-going Issues List, there is nothing specifically scheduled on Monday's Agenda.

1. The Greenway Committee has requested that I appoint Mary Clay to the Committee. I have, in fact, made this appointment and would respectfully request that the Select Board ratify this appointment at Monday's meeting.

2. It is with great pleasure that I inform the Select Board and the residents of Groton that Governor Healey signed into law H4795 "An Act amending the Charter for the Town of Groton. I want to thank Senator Cronin and Representative Scarsdale for their efforts in getting the Charter approved. I would like to take some time at Monday's meeting, explaining the major amendments that are now in effect. Please note the following:

    a. One member of the Select Board and the Town Manager shall sign all payroll and expense warrants.
    b. The Town Manager, pursuant to the Policy established by the Select Board, shall appoint the Police Chief, Fire Chief and Town Clerk, subject to ratification by the Select Board.
    c. The Town Manager no longer "nominates for appointment" various Boards and Committees. The Town Manager now appoints, subject to ratification by the Select Board, these Boards and Committees.
    d. The position "Principal Assistant Assessor" is now entitled "Principal Assessor".
    e. The Personnel Board has been abolished.
    f. The Capital Budget from the Town Manager is now due at the same time as the Operating Budget (January 31st).

    We can discuss this in more detail at Monday's meeting.

3. With the conclusion of Fall Town Meeting, I would like to take some time at Monday's meeting to provide an update on the actions undertaken by my office in response to the votes and decisions made at Town Meeting. Before doing so, I would like to take this opportunity to recognize and thank Kara Cruikshank for her outstanding efforts in ensuring the smooth and efficient conduct of Town Meeting. Her exceptional attention to detail, organizational skills, and coordination are second to none, and her contributions are greatly appreciated. We are also putting additional protocols and testing procedures in place to prevent similar issues with electronic voting at future Town Meetings. As I said following Town Meeting, Moderator Jason Kauppi and Town Clerk Grace Bannasch were well prepared to handle any challenges that arose. Thanks to their planning and quick response, Town Meeting continued with very little disruption. I want to thank them both as well. That said, please note the following:

Article 2 – Budget Amendments/Appropriations

Town Meeting appropriated $25,000 to hire a Part-Time Economic Development Director on a trial basis to determine if the position should be permanently established. I have drafted the attached job description for the Board's approval. Once the Board approves this description, I will advertise and start the search process. I would respectfully request that the Board consider approving this Job Description at Monday's meeting.

Article 10 – Cow Pond Brook Fields

The low bidder on this project is MJ Cataldo. For the Board's information, they are the company that renovated Town Field. They did a great job for the Town and we are all excited that they won this bid as well. I am in the process of negotiating the contract with MJ Cataldo. It is our hope to have the contract wrapped up next week so that they can commence work on November 1st. In addition, Megan Buczynski, Kara and I have been filing all of the necessary paperwork with the State for the $1 million Grant.

Article 11 – Country Club Irrigation System/Course Improvements

The low bidder on this project is National Lawn Sprinklers, Inc. We are also in the process of negotiating the contract with them and should have it wrapped up next week as well. They are planning on commencing work by December 1st with the intent of completing the work in time for next season (April, 2027).

Article 12 – Means Tested Senior Citizen Property Tax Exemption

We have filed the special legislation with our State Delegation. I will keep the Board apprised of its progress through the legislative process. The intent is to have this legislation in place for Fiscal Year 2028. That said, I want to correct an error in the Warrant concerning this Special Act.

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3. ***Continued:***

Specifically, the Summary stated that "The cost of the exemption would be funded through a proportional shift within the residential property tax levy, resulting in an increase in the residential tax burden shared among all other residential taxpayers." Unfortunately, we copied that summary from another community that implemented the Exemption. That is not how it will be funded in Groton. It will come from the Overlay and not through a shift within the residential property tax levy. Individual taxpayers will not see an increase in their tax bill (other than the normal increase allowed under Proposition 2½, or if an override is approved). The following illustrative summary provides a further explanation:

Means Tested Senior Property Tax Exemption

Illustrating the impact of overlay funding on taxes and the Town budget

When funded through a larger overlay within an unchanged tax levy, the exemption does not increase the tax bills of taxpayers who are not eligible. The Town instead reserves more of its existing levy for tax relief, leaving less available for other budget purposes. This illustration assumes the Town offsets the additional overlay with spending reductions.

How the overlay works

The overlay is a reserve for property tax abatements and exemptions. Under the funding approach described in Groton's Article 12 supporting materials, the senior exemption would be funded through this reserve. Increasing the overlay does not itself increase the levy limit or authorize additional taxation.

Illustrative Town budget

Assume a $20 million levy limit and an actual levy of $20 million in both scenarios. Other revenues and funding requirements remain unchanged. The figures below show only the allocation of that levy, not the Town's entire budget.

Allocation of the levy	Current overlay	Increased overlay
Total property tax levy	$20,000,000	$20,000,000
Overlay reserve	$100,000	$200,000
Available for other budget purposes	**$19,900,000**	**$19,800,000**

Result: The overlay increases by $100,000 and the amount available for other budget purposes decreases by $100,000. The total levy remains $20 million.

Illustrative taxpayer bill

A taxpayer who is not eligible has a $10,000 tax bill. If the total levy, taxable valuations, and allocation of the tax burden remain unchanged, that bill remains $10,000 when the senior exemption is funded through the larger overlay. The exemption adds $0 to that taxpayer's bill. This does not promise that the bill will remain unchanged in future years for other reasons.

What Proposition 2½ limits

Proposition 2½ generally allows the levy limit to grow by 2.5% annually plus new growth. A permanent increase beyond that calculation generally requires a voter approved override; debt and capital outlay exclusions are separate mechanisms. The law limits the Town's levy, not the annual increase in an individual tax bill. The exemption itself creates no additional taxing authority.

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3. ***Continued:***

Article 16 – Citizens' Petition – Study of Housing Opportunities

This Article calls for the Town to undertake a coordinated study of realistic opportunities to increase and diversify Groton's housing stock, with the goal of expanding the property tax base and improving the Town's long-term financial stability. The Article further requests that the results of the study be presented to the 2027 Fall Town Meeting. It is important to note that this Article is advisory in nature, as Town Meeting cannot compel the Select Board or other Town boards to undertake specific work. I firmly believe that we have an obligation to respect and make every reasonable effort to carry out the will of Town Meeting. However, I need to be candid with the Board about my ability to take on and lead this effort. We are about to enter what I anticipate will be an extremely challenging budget season. At the same time, I am overseeing two major capital projects, in addition to managing the day-to-day operations of the Town. These responsibilities require a significant amount of my time and attention. Furthermore, even if this study were completed by the Fall of 2027, its findings would have no immediate impact on the FY 2028 Budget. In my opinion, addressing the Town's immediate financial challenges and developing a responsible FY 2028 Budget must remain my highest priority. Over my 18 years as your Town Manager, I have taken great pride in carrying out every assignment and responsibility given to me by the Board and Town Meeting. I take this responsibility very seriously and I certainly do not want to give the impression that I am unwilling to undertake this effort. Rather, I believe it is important to be realistic about our current workload and competing priorities. That said, I am seeking the Board's guidance and direction on how best to proceed with this Article. We can discuss this in more detail at Monday's meeting.

4. With regard to the Fiscal Year 2028 Budget, please note that we will be meeting in joint session with the Finance Committee next Monday (at the Groton Center) to establish Budget Guidance for Fiscal Year 2028. I have sent out a memorandum to both the Select Board and Finance Committee under separate cover in advance of this meeting. I will be happy to answer any questions the Board may have concerning next weeks' meeting.

5. Please see the update to the Meeting Schedule that will take the Board through the end of the year:

Monday, October 26, 2026 -	Provide Budget Guidance to the Town Manager (at Groton Center)
Monday, November 2, 2026 -	Regularly Scheduled Meeting

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