



TOWN OF GROTON

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Board of Selectmen

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Town Manager
Mark W. Haddad

To: *Board of Selectmen*

From: *Mark W. Haddad – Town Manager*

Subject: *Weekly Report*

Date: *July 10, 2017*

1. Schedule on Monday's Agenda is one item. The Housing Partnership will be in attendance to request that the Board consider adopting a "Friendly 40B" process for Local Initiative Program Projects. There is a project proposed for Townsend Road that the Partnership is interested in and they will be seeking the Board's support.
2. As you know, we have been searching for a Conservation Administrator to replace Takashi Tada, who was recently appointed as our Land Use Director/Town Planner. To fill this vacancy, I appointed a Search Committee made up of me, our Human Resources Director Melisa Doig, Land Use Director/Town Planner Takashi Tada, Selectmen Becky Pine, Personnel Board Member Bud Robertson, Conservation Commission Member Peter Morrison and Executive Assistant Dawn Dunbar. We received 19 applications and narrowed it down to five preliminary interviews by the Search Committee. Based on these interviews, we selected three finalists to send to the Conservation Commission for them to interview as well. One of the applicants dropped out after meeting with the Commission. The Commission ranked the final two applicants and we brought them before the Department Heads for an interview as well. Based on this extensive process, I am pleased to report that I have appointed Nikolas Gualco of Nashua to the position of Conservation Administrator for the Town of Groton. Nikolas is currently the Conservation Administrator for the Town of Townsend. I have enclosed a copy of his resume to this report for your review. Pursuant to Section 4-2(c) of the Groton Charter, please consider this as official notification of this appointment. I would respectfully request that the Board consider ratifying this appointment at Monday's meeting.
3. I have appointed Meera Iyengar-Gupta as a Lifeguard and James Allen as a Camp Counselor at the Groton Country Club. I would respectfully request that the Board consider ratifying these appointments at Monday's meeting.
4. The Zoning Board of Appeals has recommended that the Board appoint Daniel McLaughlin as an Alternate to the Zoning Board of Appeals. I would respectfully request that the Board consider making this appointment at Monday's meeting.

5. As you are aware, we are facing some vacancies here at the Town Hall. Specifically, we have vacancies in the position of Principal Assessor and Assistant Town Clerk. At your last meeting, several members of the Board asked if it were possible to look at consolidation and reconfiguration/redistribution of resources. Obviously, this is something we discuss and look at each time there is a vacancy. It is not possible to always consolidate, but it is always best management practices to review each vacant position when the opportunity arises. To that end, our management team has thoroughly examined these two vacancies and we have developed a consolidation/redistribution of resources that are in the best interests of the taxpayers and residents of the Town of Groton. This plan will allow us to deliver the same level of services while decreasing expenses. Section 5-1 of the Groton Charter allows the Town Manager to create such proposals and bring them forward to the Board of Selectmen for approval. At your last meeting, the Board ratified the appointment of Jonathan Greeno as the Interim Principal Assessor for the Town of Groton. At that time, I told the Board that we would begin a search process for a permanent Principal Assessor. Based on the Board's input, a re-examination of the vacancies and taking into consideration the conflicting-challenge of saving money while maintaining services, I think that the best approach is to make the appointment permanent (after posting the job internally for five days) and move forward with a reconfiguration. The reasons in support of this proposal are as follows:
- a. Jonathan Greeno was hired five years ago as the Assistant Assessor with the intent of training him to take over the Principal Assessors' Position when Rena Swezey retired. Rena has spent the last five years training Jonathan. He proved himself last winter when Rena went on medical leave. Jonathan got the Town through a very difficult revaluation. Due to his efforts, tax bills went out on time, saving the Town thousands of dollars in TAN (tax anticipation notes) expenses
 - b. Please note that the Greeno situation is similar to the Town Accountant situation, where our current Town Accountant was trained to take over after a retirement.
 - c. The Board of Assessors voted unanimously at their meeting of June 14, 2017 to recommend Jonathan Greeno as the permanent replacement upon Rena Swezey's retirement.
 - d. It would cost the Town in excess of \$2,000 in advertising costs to go through a search for a Principal Assessor. Once done, a new search would have to be created for an Assistant Assessor's position, with added cost in time and expenses.
 - e. Appointing Jonathan immediately allows us to enact a tactical plan to create a hybrid position and save yet more taxpayer funds while creating fundamental cross-training and preparing for any future outcomes of the Municipal Audit.

As stated above, we would be left with two vacancies at Town Hall (Assistant Town Clerk and Assistant Assessor) once Jonathan takes over. Last year, we eliminated 20 hours within the Assessor's office. Currently, these two positions are scheduled for a combined 55 hours per week (35 in the Assessors' Office and 20 hours in the Town Clerk's Office). These are both benefited positions. The Board of Assessors would like to maintain the hours currently assigned to their office. It also serves the public's interest to maintain the current hours in the Town Clerk's office. In an effort to accommodate these requests and reduce expenses in Town Hall, I would like to propose the following:

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5. Continued:

- We create a new Position entitled "Assistant Assessor/Assistant Town Clerk (AA/AT).
 - o This would be a full time 40 hour per week position that would work 20 hours in the Assessors' Office and 20 in the Town Clerk's Office.
 - o This would leave the Town Clerk's Office with the same amount of hours as currently assigned.
- We would then add hours to an existing employee, assigning 15 hours per week in the Assessors' Office to cover the hours when the AA/AT is assigned to the Town Clerk's Office.
 - o We currently have a 25 hour per week employee that is looking for full-time work.
 - o This employee can be assigned to the Assessors' Office for the 15 hours.
 - o This employee's benefits are actually paid for out of a CPC grant each year.
 - o This gives recognition to one of our most dedicated employees who consistently provides value directly to our citizenry and many volunteer committees.
 - o The training time for this employee is reduced compared to a new hire, since this employee already understands how Groton works. There is very minimal work within HR or Payroll for adding hours to an existing employee.

Should the Board approve Jonathan's permanent appointment, we can proceed with the plan as outlined above. There are several benefits to this proposal that I would like the Board to consider:

- a. By maintaining 55 hours within the Town Clerk's Office and Board of Assessors' Office while implementing a creative structure within Town Hall, we reduce the risk of negative impact to the people who utilize the services of the Town Clerk's office or the Town Assessor's office.
- b. We eliminate one benefited position from Town Hall. Since the part-time hours are being absorbed by a current employee, we reduce total head-count by one.
- c. We cross train employees in two departments allowing us more flexibility in covering vacations/sick time.
- d. We begin instituting a culture of cross-functional value within our employee base.

I believe this proposal provides the Town with greater flexibility, accommodates the request of the Board of Assessors, and reduces expenses. I look forward to discussing this proposal with the Board in more detail at Monday's meeting.

6. State law allows the Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee to make various line item transfers at the end of the Fiscal Year to balance the budget and make sure that no line item has a deficit. To that end, I have scheduled time on the Agenda for the Board to consider approving various line item transfers. The proposed transfers are attached to this report for your review and consideration. The Finance Committee will be meeting on Tuesday, July 11th to consider approving these transfers as well. We can discuss this in more detail at Monday's meeting.

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7. It is that time of year for the Board to consider calling for the 2017 Fall Town Meeting. According to our Bylaw, the Fall Town Meeting by default shall be held on the third Monday in October. If the Board of Selectmen determine it infeasible or undesirable to hold the Fall Town Meeting on the third Monday in October, then, on a year-by-year basis, the Selectmen may establish a different date, sometime during September, October or November, upon which to hold the Fall Town Meeting so long as they provide formal public notice of that date at least six weeks prior to the date. The third Monday in October is the 16th. However, there are five Monday's in October this year. The Board may want to consider calling for the Town Meeting on October 23rd to give everyone more time to prepare for the meeting. Enclosed with this report is the proposed Fall Town Meeting Schedule based on the third Monday in October (16th). Should the Board decide to call for the meeting on October 23rd, we would adjust the schedule by one week. We can discuss this further at Monday's meeting.

8. As the Board is aware, we are in the process of negotiating a lease with the Friends of Prescott for the Prescott School. I hope to have an update for the Board on where this stands at Monday's meeting. That said, one of the proposals from the Municipal Building Committee for the Prescott School was to establish the Prescott Redevelopment Committee to assist in developing a business plan and oversee the lease with the selected operator. As part of our negotiations with the Friends of Prescott, we are requiring the Friends to develop their own business plan. Therefore, I have redrafted the Committee charge to be more of an oversight authority. I would ask the Board to review this proposed charge and consider adopting it either at Monday's meeting or a future meeting. We can review this in more detail at Monday's meeting.

MWH/rjb

enclosures