

**SPECIAL TOWN MEETING
APRIL 10, 2001
MINUTES**

The Special Town Meeting was called to order by Moderator Robert Gosselin at 7:35 pm. There were 139 voters in attendance which met the quorum requirement of 125 voters. A motion was made and seconded to waive the reading of the warrant. It passed unanimously. At 8:15, there were 384 voters in attendance.

ARTICLE 1: Moved and seconded that the Town vote to accept Mass General Laws Chapter 44 sections 3-7, known as the Community Preservation Act, which establishes a special "Community Preservation Fund" that may be appropriated and spent for certain open space, historic resources and affordable housing purposes, to approve a property tax surcharge in an amount of 3% of the taxes assessed annually on real property which shall be dedicated to the fund, such surcharge to be imposed on taxes assessed for fiscal years beginning on or after July 1, 2001, and to exempt from the surcharge the following:

- (1) \$100,000 of the value of each taxable parcel of Residential real property; valuation of Class One, Residential, parcels
- (2) property owned and occupied as a domicile by a person who would qualify for low income housing or low or moderate income senior housing in the Town

Selectman Chamberlin spoke about the bi-partisan agreement at the State level, and was in favor of "slowing the loss of the rural character of Groton". He supports the exemption for low and moderate-income level people. He feels that keeping open space will save the Town money in the long run.

Ms. Wood, Chair of the Selectmen, spoke of the CPA's matching state funds, that it supports the long term goals of the Town's Master Plan, and has a Historic Preservation aspect. Although she believed that it is a worthwhile objective, she did not support it at this time because of the many other projects the town is currently undertaking. She would prefer to wait a year to act on this measure.

Fincom voted unanimously *not* to support because of the burden it places on the taxpayer, and because of uncertain economic times. Fincom was concerned that too much power would be in the hands of too few people (The CPA committee).

Mr. Degen spoke on behalf of the Planning Board which voted in favor of the CPA 5-0, 1 abstention. The Board felt it was imperative that it be passed this year at the full 3 %.

Mr. Lyman, on behalf of the Housing Authority stated that we need more affordable housing in Groton, not just to avoid the Comprehensive Permit process but because it is the right thing to do.

The Conservation Commission voted to support the CPA at the 3% level.

The Historical Commission voted *not* to support because Historical Preservation needs were already being met at the local level and that the residents would continue to do meet those needs.

Mr. Kopec urged voters not to support, although the Assessors took no formal vote.

Mr. Belitsky reminded people that the burden is greater for Senior citizens on a fixed income. He was not in favor of supporting this article.

Mrs. Fucillo was strongly opposed to this article and felt that it was extremely unfair to the senior population.

Mr. Cunningham stated that one of the purposes of the CPA was to provide more affordable housing, a need keenly felt by seniors.

Mr. Hoch is strongly in favor of the CPA because of the pressure along the 495 belt, and especially Groton, to build on its open space. He feels it will be much more cost effective to purchase the land in the long run. He feels that the tax rate will be higher if we get to "build out." Mr. Kennedy questioned how much of a debt load the town is carrying. Mr. Hartnett, Treasurer, stated that it is approximately 22 million and that the school is approximately the same. Mr. Kennedy was opposed to this article.

Mr. McNierney stated that if you want to prevent tax increases, you must curb growth. He stated that the CPA is one tool to utilize to do just that. He was in favor of this article.

Mr. Hersh was opposed to this article due to the fact that we have too many other projects underway at this time.

Mr. Boles spoke about the administrative workload associated with this CPA, requiring further expenditures of the town.

Mrs. Swezey wanted the public to know that Groton is now ranked 41 out of 351 communities in the state for its tax rate. She was not in favor of this article.

Mr. Kennedy made a motion to move the question.

The question was moved by a 2/3 majority.

The main motion was called on a voice vote. Article 1 was defeated. The decision of the chair was challenged by 7 voters.

Tellers were called and sworn as follows:

Frank Bellitsky
Stephen Boczenowski
Melanie Hubbard
Robert Mignard
Christopher Mills
Thomas Pistorino

Article 1 was defeated: 160 in favor, 224 opposed.

ARTICLE 2: Moved and seconded that the Town vote to amend the Code of the Town of Groton by adding a new Chapter 22 **Community Preservation Committee** as printed in the warrant.

Motion made and seconded to postpone indefinitely. **Article 2 was indefinitely postponed.**

ARTICLE 3: Moved and seconded that the Town vote to recommend to the Board of Selectmen that the Selectmen proceed with capping the landfill with construction and demolition debris.

The Selectmen voted to support. Peter Cunningham stated that he felt the townspeople had a right to discuss this and that the Selectmen would consider the opinion of the Town as paramount in its decision.

Jamie Greacen, Landfill Capping, spoke regarding the process and the seeking of RFP's for the Construction and Demolition Debris (C&D) closure. He made a presentation regarding the entire process. He said the conventional closure would cost 1.2 million versus C&D closure earning the town 2 million.

Fincom voted to support, 6-1, feeling that the 1.2 million savings was worth the consideration of C&D closure.

Mr. Flynn, Fincom member in opposition, stated that he didn't see a good monitoring philosophy.

Mr. McManus, on behalf of the Board of Health, stated that the Board was unanimously opposed to article 3.

Mr. Paul spoke on behalf of the Greenway Committee stating that the Committee was opposed.

Mr. Lewis stated that the Conscom should have been involved in the decision making process. He stated that the site backs up to large parcels of wetlands.

Mr. Bruster made a presentation and stated that he was strongly opposed to the idea of a C&D closure. He asked each of the Selectmen to state whether he or she would follow the will of the people. Peter Cunningham stated that they would take the recommendation of Town Meeting. Mr. Chamberlin stated that if it should pass, the Selectmen would seek the least intrusive manner of C&D closure. If the will of the meeting opposed C& D closure, he would abide by that decision.

Rep Hargraves spoke in opposition to this article.

Mr. Hill spoke in opposition to this article.

Ms. Martin made a motion to move the question.

The question was moved.

Article 3 was defeated.

A motion was made and seconded to dissolve the meeting.

The motion carried unanimously.

The meeting was dissolved by unanimous consent at 10:05 pm.