

MINUTES

Warrant, Summary, and Recommendations

TOWN OF GROTON



2024 FALL TOWN MEETING

**Marion Stoddart Building Auditorium
344 Main Street, Groton, Massachusetts 01450**

Beginning Saturday, October 5, 2024 @ 9:00 AM

Attention Voters

Please bring this Document to Town Meeting

Introduction to Groton Town Meeting

Voters are familiar with casting ballots in local and state elections, but they have another important civic duty in towns, the Town Meeting.

What is Town Meeting?

The Town Meeting is the legislative body in the town form of government in Massachusetts. Town Meeting is a formal gathering of registered voters who propose, debate and vote on measures. Groton holds at least two Town Meetings per year.

What is a warrant?

The warrant is the official notice to voters that a Town Meeting is scheduled. The warrant includes the date, time, location and a description of each subject to be acted on at Town Meeting. In Groton, the warrant must be posted in two public places and mailed to each household 14 days in advance of Town Meeting. “The warrant must contain a sufficient description of what is proposed so as to constitute an adequate warning to all the inhabitants of the town.”¹ “Every action taken at the meeting must be pursuant to some article in the warrant and must be within the scope of such article.”²

How does Town Meeting proceed?

Voters attending Town Meeting must first check in with the clerks and receive an electronic voting handset which is required to vote. The meeting typically acts on the articles in the order they are printed in the warrant. For each article, a main motion is made and seconded by voters and placed by the Moderator on the floor for debate. Permission of the Moderator is required to speak. The Moderator presides and regulates the proceedings, decides all questions of order, and calls and declares all votes. After debate has ended, the Moderator will call for a vote by use of the electronic voting handset.

¹ *Town Meeting Time: A Handbook of Parliamentary Law* (page 12) Johnson, Trustman and Wadsworth, Third Edition, 2001.

² *Id.*

Who can attend?

Town Meeting is open to the public. Only Groton voters are entitled to attend, speak and vote. Non-voters may be required to sit in a separate section. Non-voters may ask the Moderator to speak on the topic of the debate.

How long is Town Meeting?

Town Meeting concludes when all articles on the warrant have been acted upon. Town Meeting may conclude in one session or adjourn for subsequent sessions.

Explanation of a Consent Agenda

A consent agenda is a procedure to group multiple main motions into a single motion for voting. A consent agenda saves time by eliminating the reading of multiple motions and explanations when there are no objections or questions. In Groton, a consent agenda generally consists of articles unanimously supported by the Select Board and Finance Committee. Articles that change by-laws or introduce new spending are typically not included. In this warrant, the Select Board has grouped articles in consent agendas and labeled them for easy reference.

How Consent Agendas Work

As the first step to act on a consent agenda, the Moderator will read the titles of the included articles. A voter who wishes to remove an article from the consent agenda for separate debate and vote should state "hold." The held article will be set aside and acted on after the vote on the consent agenda. After the meeting agrees on the contents of the consent agenda, there will be no debate and the Moderator will immediately call for a vote. Every motion included in the consent agenda will either pass or fail as a group. Voters should read the warrant and review the proposed consent agendas to identify articles they wish to remove for separate consideration.

Electronic Voting at Town Meeting



Voting at Town Meeting will be conducted using an electronic voting system purchased by the Town of Groton as authorized by Town Meeting in October, 2022. Instead of using placards to be raised and counted, voters will use wireless handsets to cast their vote quickly, accurately and privately.

Voter Check-In

At check-in, voters will be given a handset. No record is made of which voter receives which handset. All handsets will be tested prior to the meeting. Voters physically unable to use a handset will be seated in a manual-count section and their votes will be counted by tellers. For those with visual impairments, large handsets with braille are available.

Test Vote

At the beginning of the meeting, the Moderator will conduct a test vote to get everyone comfortable with the voting procedures.

Proxy Voting Prohibited

The handset given to a voter at check-in is for the exclusive use of that voter. Voting with a handset that has been issued to another individual is strictly forbidden.

Voting

When the Moderator announces it is time to vote:

- Press 1A (green button) for YES →
- Press 2B (red button) for No →
- If you wish to not vote, press no buttons



Handset Display

- The display on the handset:
- OK means the system receiver has received your vote
 - A "1" for Yes or "2" for No shows the vote the system received.
 - The small "R" at the top of the screen indicates the handset is communicating with the receiver
 - The icons in the top left indicate the WiFi signal strength.

Help Desk

A Help Desk will be able to assist voters who have trouble with using the handset. If a handset malfunctions, a voter will receive a new handset.

Handset Return

If you leave the meeting temporarily, please keep the handset with you. If the meeting ends or you leave, return the handset to the check-in table.



Town Meeting Access for Voters with Disabilities

Parking – Universally accessible parking spaces are available in the parking lot in front of the Groton Dunstable Middle School South. There is a ramp providing access from the parking lot to the front door of the Middle School.

Wheelchair Accessible & Companion Seating – Wheelchair spaces, seating for people with mobility issues and companion seats are available in the center aisle on both sides of the auditorium.

Sign Language – A Sign Language Interpreter will be provided for the hearing impaired, upon request, at least one week prior to the meeting.

Speaking at Town Meeting – There will be volunteers available to bring hand-held microphones to voters who have mobility issues or cannot stand in line and wait at the microphones.

Restrooms – Accessible restrooms are available near the entrance to the auditorium.

Transportation to Town Meeting - The Council on Aging van will be available to Groton residents attending Town Meetings at no charge. All riders will be at the meeting prior to the start. The van is wheelchair accessible. Your reservation can be made by calling the Senior Center at 978-448-1170. Seats will be filled on a first come, first serve basis.

Questions or concerns - If you or a member of your household has questions or would like to request a sign language interpreter, please contact the Select Board's Office at Town Hall at 978 448-1111 at least one week before the Town Meeting.

**FALL TOWN MEETING WARRANT
OCTOBER 5, 2024**

Middlesex, ss.
Commonwealth of Massachusetts
To any Constable in the Town of Groton

Greetings:

In the name of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, you are hereby required to notify and warn said inhabitants of the Town of Groton qualified to vote on Town affairs to assemble in the Marion Stoddart Building Auditorium, 344 Main Street, Groton, Massachusetts in said Town on Saturday, the fifth day of October, 2024 at Nine O'clock in the morning, to consider the following:

ARTICLE LISTINGS

			Disposition
Article 1*	Prior Year Bills	6	PASSED
Article 2*	Amend the Fiscal Year 2025 Town Operating Budget	6	PASSED
Article 3*	Transfer Money Into Capital Stabilization Fund	7	PASSED
Article 4*	Transfer Money Into Stabilization Fund	7	PASSED
Article 5*	Transfer Money Into the GDRSD Capital Stabilization Fund	8	PASSED
Article 6*	Revoke Opioid Settlements Special Purpose Stabilization Fund	8	PASSED
Article 7*	Transfer Within the Water Enterprise Fund	9	PASSED
Article 8*	Transfer Within the Center Sewer Enterprise Fund	9	PASSED
Article 9*	Transfer Within the Four Corners Sewer Enterprise Fund	9	PASSED
Article 10*	Debt Service for Middle School Track – Fiscal Year 2025	10	PASSED
Article 11	Water Supply System for Heritage Landing	10	FAILED
Article 12	Funding for Security Improvements at Sargisson Beach	11	PASSED
Article 13	Funding To Purchase Budget Software for the Town of Groton	11	PASSED
Article 14	Engineering Funds for Complete Streets Grant Work	12	PASSED
Article 15	Amend Purpose of CPA Project for Improvements to Baseball Diamond	12	PASSED
Article 16	Squannacook River Dam	13	PASSED
Article 17	Authorize the Lease of Town Owned Land	14	PASSED
Article 18	Amend Chapter 81 “Town Meetings” of the Code of the Town of Groton	14	FAILED
Article 19	Zoning Amendment - Firearms Retail Sales Establishments	15	PASSED
Article 20	Zoning Amendment – Solar Parking Canopies	20	PASSED
Article 21	Zoning Amendment – Accessory Dwelling Units	21	PASSED
Article 22	Amend Chapter 198 Stormwater Management – Low Impact Development	25	PASSED
Article 23	Accept Monarch Path as a Town Way	25	NO ACTION
Article 24	Citizens’ Petition – Reduce Statutory Speed Limit from 30 MPH to 25 MPH	26	FAILED
	Report of the Town Manager to the 2024 Fall Town Meeting	28	

*Will be presented as one motion as a Consent Agenda

2024 FALL TOWN MEETING OFFICIALS
MEETING DATE – OCTOBER 5, 2024

Town Moderator:

Jason Kauppi

Deputy Moderator:

Ed McNierney

Board of Selectmen:

Alison Manugian, Chair
Becky Pine, Vice-Chair
Peter Cunningham, Clerk
Matt Pisani
John Reilly

Finance Committee:

Bud Robertson, Chair
Colby Doody, Vice Chair
Gary Green
Mary Linskey
David Manugian
Michael Sulprizio
Scott Whitefield

Town Manager:

Mark W. Haddad
Kara Cruikshank, Executive Assistant

Town Clerk:

Dawn Dunbar

Proceedings:

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 AM on October 5, 2024 at the Marrion Stoddart Building Auditorium. Moderator Jason Kauppi presided. 148 voters were in attendance for the meeting as of 9:03 AM.

Announcements:

It was announced that an event would be held in honor of Marion Stoddart to dedicate the Middle School Building and to commemorate her many achievements and efforts cleaning up the Nashua River.

The Moderator made an announcement about the upcoming State Election.

The Moderator reviewed instructions for the use of the electronic voting handsets. A test of the handsets was conducted.

The Moderator called for a moment of silence. The Meeting took the Pledge of Allegiance led by Fire Chief Art Cheeks.

MOTION – Limit Debate

MOVER: Michelle Collette

I move that debate during this town meeting be limited to three minutes for each speaker, with the exception of the main proponent and opponent of each article, and at the discretion of the Moderator.

A MOTION WAS MADE AND SECONDED TO LIMIT DEBATE.

Quantum of Town Meeting Vote: 2/3s Majority

Vote on Motion to Limit Debate: Yes – 188; No – 17; Motion Passed by 2/3s Majority Vote

The timekeepers were Bob Garside and Takashi Tada. The Moderator determined that the warrant was duly posted and entertained a motion to waive the reading of the warrant.

A MOTION WAS MADE AND SECONDED TO WAIVE THE READING OF THE WARRANT.

Quantum of Town Meeting Vote: Majority

Vote on Motion to Waive the Reading of the Warrant: Yes – 176; No –21; Motion Passed by Majority Vote

ARTICLES 1 THROUGH 10 WILL BE PART OF THE CONSENT AGENDA. PLEASE SEE EXPLANATION PROVIDED ON PAGE 2 OF THIS WARRANT.

There were 173 voters present at 9:23 AM.

There were 197 voters present at 10:18 AM.

Article 1: *Prior Year Bills*

To see if the Town will vote to transfer from available funds a sum or sums of money for the payment of unpaid bills from prior fiscal years, or to take any other action relative thereto.

Select Board

Select Board: *Recommendation Deferred Until Town Meeting*

Finance Committee: *Recommendation Deferred Until Town Meeting*

Summary: *Town Meeting approval is required to pay bills from a prior fiscal year. A list of unpaid bills will be provided at Town Meeting. Please see the Town Manager's Report starting on page 28 for additional information related to this Article.*

Article 2: *Amend the Fiscal Year 2025 Town Operating Budget*

To see if the Town will vote to amend the Fiscal Year 2025 Operating Budget as adopted under Article 15 of the May 18, 2024 Special Town Meeting and vote to raise and appropriate and/or transfer from available funds a sum or sums of money as may be necessary to defray the expenses of the Town for Fiscal Year 2025, or to take any other action relative thereto.

Finance Committee

Select Board

Town Manager

Select Board: *See Town Manager's Report for Recommendation Beginning on Page 28*

Finance Committee: *See Town Manager's Report for Recommendation Beginning on Page 28*

Summary: *The Fiscal Year 2025 Town Operating Budget was approved at the May 18, 2024 Special Town Meeting. Any changes to this Budget would have to be made prior to setting the tax rate. The purpose of this article is to make any necessary changes to balance the FY 2025*

Operating Budget. Please see the Town Manager's Report starting on page 28 for additional information related to this Article.

Article 3: *Transfer Money Into the Capital Stabilization Fund*

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, transfer from available funds and/or borrow, pursuant to any applicable statute, a sum or sums of money to be added to the sum already on deposit in the Capital Stabilization Fund, or to take any other action relative thereto.

Select Board

Select Board: *Recommended Unanimously*

Finance Committee: *Recommended Unanimously*

Summary: *As of the printing of this Warrant, the Fund has a balance of \$90,394. The financial management goal is to achieve and maintain a balance in the Capital Stabilization Fund equal to 1.5% of the total annual budget. The target amount for the Capital Stabilization Fund will be provided at Town Meeting. Please see the Town Manager's Report starting on page 28 for additional information related to this Article.*

Article 4: *Transfer Money into the Stabilization Fund*

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, transfer from available funds, and/or borrow, pursuant to any applicable statute, a sum or sums of money to be added to the sum already on deposit in the Stabilization Fund, or to take any other action relative thereto.

Select Board

Select Board: *Recommended Unanimously*

Finance Committee: *Recommended Unanimously*

Summary: *As of the printing of this Warrant, the balance in this fund is \$2,649,705. The financial management goal is to achieve and maintain a balance in the Fund equal to 5% of the total annual budget. The target amount for the Fund will be provided at Town Meeting. Please see the Town Manager's Report starting on page 28 for additional information related to this Article.*

Article 5: *Transfer Money into the GDRSD Capital Stabilization Fund*

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, transfer from available funds, and/or borrow, pursuant to any applicable statute, a sum or sums of money to be added to the sum already on deposit in the Town of Groton Capital Stabilization Fund for the Groton Dunstable Regional School District, or to take any other action relative thereto.

Town Manager

Select Board: *Recommended Unanimously*

Finance Committee: *Recommended Unanimously*

Summary: *As of the printing of the Warrant, the balance in this fund is \$21,996. This fund covers the Town of Groton's share of the Groton Dunstable Regional School District Committee's long-range Capital Plan to address its capital needs. The target amount will be provided at Town Meeting. Please see the Town Manager's Report starting on page 28 for additional information related to this Article.*

Article 6: *Terminate Opioid Settlements Special Purpose Stabilization Fund*

To see if the Town will vote, pursuant to Chapter 40, Section 5B of the Massachusetts General Laws, to (i) transfer any funds held in the Opioid Settlement Stabilization Fund to the Opioid Special Revenue Fund and (ii) terminate the Opioid Settlement Stabilization Fund as created by Article 7 of the 2023 Spring Town Meeting, or to take any other action relative thereto.

Town Manager

Select Board: *Recommended Unanimously*

Finance Committee: *Recommended Unanimously*

Summary: *The Town of Groton has been eligible to receive settlement payments from various opioid makers for the prevention, harm reduction, treatment and recovery of individuals harmed by the use of opioids. Opioid settlement funds currently on deposit as well as all future settlement funds received will be deposited into the Special Revenue Fund. Groton is expecting to receive approximately \$40,000 through 2038. At the time of the initial settlement payments, the State had all Town's create a Special Purpose Stabilization Fund to receive and disburse funds. They have since simplified the process to allow Municipalities to create a Special Revenue Fund instead that will allow communities better access to the Funds for purposes identified in the settlement agreements. As the Special Purpose Stabilization Fund is no longer needed, this Article seeks to revoke its creation.*

Article 7: *Transfer Within the Water Enterprise Fund*

To see if the Town will vote to transfer a sum or sums of money from the Water Enterprise Fund Surplus to the Fiscal Year 2025 Water Enterprise Budget, or to take any other action relative thereto.

Board of Water Commissioners

Select Board: *Recommended Unanimously*

Finance Committee: *Recommended Unanimously*

Summary: *This Article will seek a transfer from the Water Enterprise Fund Surplus to the Fiscal Year 2025 Water Department's General Expense Budget for the purchase of a new Pick-Up Truck as identified in the Capital Plan. Please see the Town Manager's Report starting on page 28 for additional information related to this Article.*

Article 8: *Transfer Within the Center Sewer Enterprise Fund*

To see if the Town will vote to transfer a sum or sums of money from the Center Sewer Enterprise Fund Surplus to the Fiscal Year 2025 Center Sewer Enterprise Department Budget, or to take any other action relative thereto.

Board of Sewer Commissioners

Select Board: *Recommended Unanimously*

Finance Committee: *Recommended Unanimously*

Summary: *This article allows the Sewer Department to transfer money from its surplus account to cover any deficit in the Fiscal Year 2025 Center Sewer Budget. Please see the Town Manager's Report starting on page 28 for additional information related to this Article.*

Article 9: *Transfer Within the Four Corners Sewer Enterprise Fund*

To see if the Town will vote to transfer a sum or sums of money from the Four Corners Sewer Enterprise Fund Surplus to the Fiscal Year 2025 Four Corners Sewer Enterprise Department Budget, or to take any other action relative thereto.

Board of Sewer Commissioners

Select Board: *Recommended Unanimously*

Finance Committee: *Recommended Unanimously*

Summary: *This article allows the Sewer Department to transfer money from its surplus account to cover any deficit in the Fiscal Year 2025 Four Corners Sewer Budget. Please see the Town Manager's Report starting on page 28 for additional information related to this Article.*

Article 10: Debt Service for Middle School Track – Fiscal Year 2025

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate and/or transfer from available funds, an additional sum or sums of money, pursuant to Chapter 44B, Section 5, of the Massachusetts General Laws, for debt service for Fiscal Year 2025 for the Middle School Track Project, as authorized under Article 7 of the May 1, 2021 Spring Town Meeting, or to take any other action relative thereto.

Community Preservation Committee

Select Board: Recommended Unanimously

Finance Committee: Recommended Unanimously

Summary: Article 7 of the May 21, 2021 Spring Town Meeting appropriated \$1,405,374 for the new Middle School Track. The May 18, 2024 Special Town Meeting appropriated \$235,072 for Debt Service for this project. The Community Preservation Committee would like to increase this amount by \$400,000 to \$635,072 by increasing the amount toward the principal debt.

Articles 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9 & 10 – Consent Motion

Mover: John Reilly

MOTION: I move that the Town take affirmative action on Articles 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9 & 10 pursuant to the motions as set forth in the Town Meeting Information Handout for this Meeting, without debate and in accordance with the action proposed under each motion, provided however that if any voter requests the right to debate a specific motion, then said motion shall be debated and voted upon separately.

Quantum of Town Meeting Vote: Majority

THE MOTION WAS MOVED BY JOHN REILLY AND SECONDED.

The Chair read the name of each article.

THERE WERE NO HOLDS AND NO DEBATE.

Quantum of Town Meeting Vote: Majority

Vote on Consent Motion #1 for Articles 1-5,7-10: Yes – 137; No - 15; Motion Carried by 2/3s Majority Vote.

Article 6: Terminate Opioid Settlements Special Purpose Stabilization Fund

MOTION: I move, pursuant to Chapter 40, Section 5B of the Massachusetts General Laws, to (i) transfer \$13,594.93 held in the Opioid Settlement Stabilization Fund to the Opioid Special Revenue Fund and (ii) terminate the Opioid Settlement Stabilization Fund as created by Article 7 of the 2023 Spring Town Meeting.

Quantum of Town Meeting Vote: 2/3s Majority

THE MOTION WAS MOVED BY JOHN REILLY AND SECONDED.

DEBATE: Mr. Reilly provided a brief description of this article. There was no debate.

Quantum of Town Meeting Vote: 2/3s Majority

Vote on Motion #6: Yes – 150; No - 8; Motion Carried by 2/3s Majority Vote.

Article 11: *Water Supply System for Heritage Landing*

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, transfer from available funds and/or borrow, pursuant to any applicable statute, a sum or sums of money, to be expended by the Town Manager, for the design, bid specifications, bidding, construction, construction administration and all related costs to extend the Town’s potable water supply system to serve the Heritage Landing project at Cow Pond Brook Road, and to authorize the Town Manager to apply for a MassWorks Development Grant for such water project; provided, that no funds may be expended hereunder unless and until the Town has received a MassWorks Development Grant reimbursing the Town for all costs associated with the water project, or to take any other action relative thereto.

Board of Water Commissioners

Select Board: *Recommendation Deferred Until Town Meeting*

Finance Committee: *Recommended Unanimously*

Summary: *This article will allow the Select Board to borrow \$2,509,600 for the design and construction of a water supply system on Cow Pond Brook Road for the Heritage Landing Housing Development Project. The Town would borrow these funds contingent upon a successful award of a Mass Works Development Grant from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Said funds shall not be expended unless the grant is awarded to the Town.*

Article 11: Water Supply System for Heritage Landing

Mover: Tom Orcutt

MOTION: I move that the Town appropriate Two Million Five Hundred Nine Thousand Six Hundred Dollars (\$2,509,600), to be expended by the Town Manager, for the design, bid specifications, bidding, construction, construction administration, and all related costs to extend the Town's potable water supply system to serve the Heritage Landing project at Cow Pond Brook Road, and that to meet this appropriation, the Town Treasurer, with the approval of the Select Board, is authorized to borrow said amount under and pursuant to G.L. c. 44, §8(5) or pursuant to any other enabling authority, and to issue bonds or notes of the Town therefor, and to authorize the Town Manager to apply for a MassWorks Development Grant for such water project; provided, that no funds may be expended hereunder unless and until the Town has received a MassWorks Development Grant reimbursing the Town for all costs associated with the water project.

Quantum of Town Meeting Vote: 2/3s Majority

THE MOTION WAS MOVED BY TOM ORCUTT AND SECONDED.

DEBATE: Mr. Orcutt provided a brief description of this article. Ms. Bicknell asked why the Town was getting involved in this seeing it benefited a private developer. Mr. Haddad said that the Town was the only one that could apply for the grant adding this was a private/public partnership. Mr. Haddad said that this would benefit the town by adding fire protection and water to the DPW garage. Ms. Bicknell said they should wait until they hear in the grant first.

Quantum of Town Meeting Vote: 2/3s Majority

Vote on Motion #11: Yes – 95; No - 72; Motion did not carry by 2/3s Majority Vote.

Article 12: Funding for Security Improvements at Sargisson Beach

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, transfer from available funds, and/or borrow, pursuant to any applicable statute, a sum or sums of money, to be expended by the Town Manager, for security improvements at Sargisson Beach and the Sargisson Beach Parking Area, including the purchasing of cameras, servers, installation of a structure to house equipment, and all related equipment and expenses to carry out these improvements, or to take any other action relative thereto.

Town Manager

Select Board: *Recommended Unanimously*

Finance Committee: *Recommended Unanimously*

Summary: *For the past two years, Sargisson Beach and the Parking Area has seen an increase in illegal dumping of trash and other related items that has impacted not only the ecosystem, but the recreational integrity of the Beach. The Town has taken some steps to*

improve security, but better cameras and related equipment is necessary to provide protection and oversight of the area. The Town does not have the personnel to patrol the area at all times and these security improvements will mitigate these issues at the Beach and parking area. Please see the Town Manager's Report starting on page 28 for additional information related to this Article.

Article 12: Security Improvements at Sargisson Beach

Mover: John Reilly

MOTION: I move that \$40,000 be transferred from the Excess and Deficiency Fund (Free Cash), to be expended by the Town Manager, for security improvements at Sargisson Beach and the Sargisson Beach Parking Area, including the purchasing of cameras, servers, installation of a structure to house equipment, and all related equipment and expenses to carry out these improvements.

Quantum of Town Meeting Vote: Majority

THE MOTION WAS MOVED BY JOHN REILLY AND SECONDED.

DEBATE: Mr. Reilly provided a brief description of this article. There was no debate.

Quantum of Town Meeting Vote: Majority

Vote on Motion #12: Yes – 135; No - 30; Motion Carried by Majority Vote.

Article 13: Funding To Purchase Budget Software for the Town of Groton

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, transfer from available funds, and/or borrow, pursuant to any applicable statute, a sum or sums of money, to be expended by the Town Manager, to purchase budget software, and all costs incidental and related thereto, for the Town of Groton, or to take any other action relative thereto.

Town Manager

Select Board: Recommended Unanimously

Finance Committee: Recommended Unanimously

Summary: *This Article seeks funding for the Town's Finance Department to purchase software for the creation of the Town's Annual Operating and Capital Budgets. For the last 16 years, the Town Manager has relied on Excel to create the Town's Budget. While this has been an adequate format, it is time to move the Town forward. With the current Town Manager expected to retire in the next few years, establishing a new formal Budget Process with strong*

historical data will allow for a seamless transition with regard to budgeting. Please see the Town Manager's Report starting on page 28 for additional information related to this Article.

Article 13: Funding To Purchase Budget Software

Mover: Peter Cunningham

MOTION: I move that \$35,000 be transferred from the Excess and Deficiency Fund (Free Cash), to be expended by the Town Manager, to purchase budget software, and all costs incidental and related thereto, for the Town of Groton.

Quantum of Town Meeting Vote: Majority

THE MOTION WAS MOVED BY PETER CUNNINGHAM AND SECONDED.

DEBATE: Mr. Cunningham provided a brief description of the article. There was no debate.

Quantum of Town Meeting Vote: Majority

Vote on Motion #13: Yes – 149; No - 18; Motion Carried by Majority Vote.

Article 14: Engineering Funds for Complete Streets Grant Work

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, transfer from available funds, and/or borrow pursuant to any applicable statute, a sum or sums of money, to be expended by the Town Manager, for the purpose of paying engineering costs, and other related costs, for work associated with successfully receiving grant funding from the Commonwealth under the Complete Streets Grant Program, or to take any other action relative thereto.

Complete Streets Committee

Select Board: Recommended Unanimously

Finance Committee: Recommended Unanimously

Summary: *The Complete Streets Committee has successfully received over \$750,000 in grant funding from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts under their Complete Streets Program. Some of the projects covered by the funding have been sidewalks on West Main Street and Lowell Road, along with Pedestrian Crossing Devices along Main Street. The Committee is in the process of preparing another Grant Application this Fall. One of the requirements for this program is that the Town has to cover engineering costs for any approved project. The Committee is seeking \$35,000 for this purpose.*

Article 14: Funding - Complete Streets Grant Work

Mover: Alison Manugian

MOTION: I move that \$35,000 be transferred from the Excess and Deficiency Fund (Free Cash), to be expended by the Town Manager, for the purpose of paying engineering costs, and other related costs, for complete streets design and planning work associated with successfully receiving grant funding from the Commonwealth under the Complete Streets Grant Program.

Quantum of Town Meeting Vote: Majority

THE MOTION WAS MOVED BY ALISON MANUGIAN AND SECONDED.

DEBATE: Ms. Manugian provided a brief description of this article. There was no debate.

Quantum of Town Meeting Vote: Majority

Vote on Motion #14: Yes – 147; No - 19; Motion Carried by Majority Vote.

Article 15: Amend Purpose of CPA Project for Improvements to Baseball Diamond

To see if the Town will vote to amend the purpose of CPC Proposal D “Rebuild Major League Baseball Diamond”, as voted under Article 14 of the 2023 Spring Town Meeting, to allow for a comprehensive study and development of bid specifications for improvements to Town Field, including the Major League Diamond, Little League Field, Gazebo and Playground, and all costs associated and related thereto, or to take any other action relative thereto.

**Community Preservation Committee
Town Manager**

Select Board: Recommended Unanimously

Finance Committee: Recommended Unanimously

Summary: *The 2023 Spring Town Meeting appropriated \$80,000 for improvements to the major league diamond at Town Field. This funding is not enough to design and construct the improvements. The Town Manager has approached the Community Preservation Committee and asked them to use these funds to conduct a comprehensive study of Town Field and come back with proposed improvements to enhance the recreational facility. It is the intent of the Town Manager to submit a formal project to the CPC for Fiscal Year 2026.*

Article 15: Amend Purpose of CPA Project

Mover: Matthew Pisani

MOTION: I move to amend the purpose of CPC Proposal D “Rebuild Major League Baseball Diamond”, as voted under Article 14 of the 2023 Spring Town Meeting, to allow for a comprehensive study and development of bid specifications for improvements to Town Field,

including the Major League Diamond, Little League Field, Gazebo and Playground, and all costs associated and related thereto.

Quantum of Town Meeting Vote: Majority

THE MOTION WAS MOVED BY MATTHEW PISANI AND SECONDED.

DEBATE: Mr. Pisani provided a brief description of this article. There was no debate.

Quantum of Town Meeting Vote: Majority

Vote on Motion #15: Yes – 113; No - 52; Motion Carried by Majority Vote.

Article 16: Squannacook River Dam

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, transfer from available funds, and/or borrow, pursuant to any applicable statute, a sum or sums of money, to be expended by the Town Manager, to hire the necessary professionals to determine the costs and impacts for both removal and repair of the Squannacook River Dam, or to take any other action relative thereto.

Select Board

Select Board: Recommended Unanimously

Finance Committee: Recommended Unanimously

Summary: *The Select Board and Department of Public Works are in the process of determining the future of the Squannacook River Dam. To make an informed decision, the Select Board needs to understand both the cost of removal and its impact on the environment and the cost of repair. The purpose of this Article is to appropriate the necessary funds (estimated to be \$200,000) to hire professionals to study both the repair and removal of the Dam. Based on the information received, the Select Board will be in a better position to bring this issue back to a future Town Meeting. More information on the process will be provided to the Fall Town Meeting. Please see the Town Manager's Report starting on page 28 for additional information related to this Article.*

Article 16: Squannacook River Dam

Mover: Rebecca Pine

MOTION: I move that \$160,250 be transferred from the Excess and Deficiency Fund (Free Cash) to be expended by the Town Manager, to hire the necessary professionals to determine the costs and impacts for both removal and repair of the Squannacook River Dam.

Quantum of Town Meeting Vote: Majority

THE MOTION WAS MOVED BY REBECCA PINE AND SECONDED.

DEBATE: Ms. Pine said that the amount in the motion was reduced from what had been printed in the warrant. Ms. Pine said that the Commonwealth had told us that the Squannacook River Dam was in need of repair or removal. She said that this article would appropriate money to continue to study the options available to them.

Mr. Tom Delaney provided a presentation to the Town Meeting.

A resident asked what would be different than the state report that was already done. He asked if they could remove the Shirley side if they didn't own it. Mr. Delaney said that the report only looked at removal. Mr. Delaney said that they had a written agreement with the owner of the Shirley side who said they didn't care what we did. Mr. Alberghini asked what the higher numbers were. Mr. Delaney said that the estimates to repair the dam were \$400-700K and the removal would cost upwards of \$2.2M. Mr. Shaden said that the town had an ongoing liability with this dam citing the dam's that gave way down south with the recent storms. He asked if the DER priority program could be talked about and asked how much they would have to spend if they moved forward with the dam removal. He said he wanted people to know there was a lot of money available for dam removal. Mr. Delaney said that the DER priority program commits the town to removal and would provide the funding for engineering. Mr. Delaney said that there is a lot of money available for removal. Ms. Pine said they didn't know how much money it would cost to take the dam down but would be covered by the state. She said that approving this article would provide them an opportunity to study this further and understand their options better. Mr. Dave Armstrong from Pepperell was provided an opportunity to speak. He said that they didn't spend a lot of money adding that DER provided them with most of the money. Mr. Delaney said that if this was a no vote, this would kick this back to the Select Board to work with DER on next steps. Mr. Parker-Roach asked if this study would include the possibility of electric generation. Mr. Delaney said that this was not part of the study. Mr. Shaden said that electric generation brought with it, liability. Ms. Manugian said they were not able to answer the questions that were being asked adding that's why they needed a yes vote to study this further. Ms. Frank asked if they had the money to remove it, why there would spend money to study it. Mr. Delaney said that dam removal was a town decision and it was an emotional one. He said that voting yes would provide them with all the information they needed to make an informed decision of what was best for the Town. Mr. Robertson said this was a forever decision. He said that once the dam was gone, it was gone. He said that they needed to study and receive all the facts adding it was a major decision for West Groton and the Town.

Mr. Lotz moved the question. The motion was seconded.

Quantum of Town Meeting Vote: 2/3s Majority

Vote on Moving the Question: Yes – 166; No - 18; Motion Carried by 2/3s Majority Vote.

Quantum of Town Meeting Vote: Majority

Vote on Motion #16: Yes – 150; No - 28; Motion Carried by Majority Vote.

Article 17: *Authorize the Lease of Town Owned Land*

To see if the Town will vote to authorize the Select Board to dispose of by lease for a period of up to thirty (30) Years a 5.24 acre portion of Town owned land located at 600 Cow Pond Brook Road consisting of portions of Assessors' Parcel 248 -41, as shown on the plan entitled "Sketch Plan of Compost Facility at DPW Facility" dated August 30, 2024, a copy of which is on file in the Town Clerk's office, for such minimum consideration and on such terms and conditions as the Select Board deems advisable, for the purpose of providing a composting facility, or to take any action relative thereto.

***Town Manager
DPW Director***

Select Board: *Recommended Unanimously*

Finance Committee: *No Position*

Summary: *The Town entered into a lease arrangement with Black Earth to install a composting center at the DPW Facility on Cow Pond Brook Road. The facility has been successful and the operator has been working with the DPW and Board of Health to address neighborhood concerns. The Town would like to solicit proposals to have a composting center at this location. The Town would like to be able to offer a longer term lease for up to Thirty (30) years. Town Meeting approval is required for leases of land.*

Article 17: Authorize the Lease of Town Owned Land

Mover: Matthew Pisani

MOTION: I move to authorize the Select Board to dispose of by lease for a period of up to thirty (30) Years a 5.24 acre portion of Town owned land located at 600 Cow Pond Brook Road consisting of portions of Assessors' Parcel 248 -41, as shown on the plan entitled "Sketch Plan of Compost Facility at DPW Facility" dated August 30, 2024, a copy of which is on file in the Town Clerk's office, for such minimum consideration and on such terms and conditions as the Select Board deems advisable, for the purpose of providing a composting facility.

Quantum of Town Meeting Vote: 2/3s Majority

THE MOTION WAS MOVED BY MATTHEW PISANI AND SECONDED.

DEBATE: Mr. Pisani provided a brief description of this article. Mr. Delaney also provided a brief description of this article. Mr. Alberghini asked how much the Town would be receiving each year. Mr. Delaney said that they would be getting an in-kind service to include free composting, managing the compost for the Town, etc. Ms. Busser asked why not a lower amount of lease time. Mr. Delaney said that 3 years was the maximum you could contract with without town meeting vote. He said that this gave them the flexibility to extend up to 30 years. He said that they could word the contract in a way that it would be lesser. Mr. Yanchenko asked if they authorized up to 30 years, the Select Board would be able to negotiate the contract. Mr. Delaney said that was correct adding there were terms outlined in the contract. Ms. Bicknell asked if this was specific to the vendor in there now. Mr. Delaney said that they would have to go out to RFP again if they changed vendors. Mr. Covenor asked if the company was a for profit company. Mr. Delaney said that they were a for profit company. Ms. Foster said that they were under the \$10k exemption and did not recollect that they were paying personal property taxes but would look into it.

Quantum of Town Meeting Vote: 2/3s Majority

Vote on Motion #17: Yes – 159; No - 19; Motion Carried by 2/3s Majority Vote.

Article 18: Amend Chapter 81 “Town Meetings” of the Code of the Town of Groton

To see if the Town will vote to amend Chapter 81 “Town Meetings” of the General Bylaws of the Town by deleting Sections 81-2 and 81-4 in their entirety and replacing said sections with the following:

§81-2 Quorum

There shall be no quorum requirement for any Annual or Special Town Meeting.

§81-4 Time of Town Meetings and Town Elections

- A. Town Meetings - Town meeting sessions shall commence at times set forth in the warrants for said meetings approved by the Select Board.
- B. Town Elections - The annual election of officers and other voting by ballot shall be held on the fourth Tuesday following the first session of the Spring Town Meeting, or on such other date in March, April or May as may be determined by the Select Board in consultation with the Town Manager and Town Clerk, so long as the Select Board provides formal public notice of that date at least six weeks prior to the date established. Special town elections may be called by the Select Board. Polls at any town election shall remain open at hours determined by the Select Board in consultation with the Town Manager and Town Clerk.
- C. No elected or appointed Town board shall hold a regular meeting when a Town Meeting is in session.

or to take any other action relative thereto.

Town Manager

Select Board: *Recommended (4 In Favor, 1 Against – Cunningham)*

Finance Committee: *No Position*

Summary: *Currently, Section 81-2 of the Bylaw requires a quorum of 2% for any Special Town Meeting but there is no quorum requirement at the Spring and Fall Town Meetings. The proposed amendment would eliminate the quorum requirement at Special Town Meetings and make it consistent with the Spring and Fall Town Meetings. Section 81-4 currently requires business to be held at the first session of the Town Meeting at 7:00 p.m. Removing this requirement will allow for greater flexibility in the calling of Town Meetings, including the start time. In addition, this Section requires polls to be open for the Annual Election from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. There are times when the Ballot for the Annual Election has no contested races and turn out is extremely light. Having the polls open for 13 hours in these instances is excessive and costly. Allowing the Select Board to set the hours on an annual basis, after consulting with the Town Manager and Town Clerk, will address this issue.*

Article 18: Amend Chapter 81 “Town Meetings”

Mover: Alison Manugian

MOTION: I move to amend Chapter 81 “Town Meetings” of the Code of the Town of Groton as set forth in Article 18 of the Warrant for the 2024 Fall Town Meeting.

Quantum of Town Meeting Vote: Majority

THE MOTION WAS MOVED BY ALISON MANUGIAN AND SECONDED.

DEBATE: Ms. Manugian provided a brief description of this article. Mr. Mike Manugian said that in terms of voting, it was nice to be able to count on the polls being opened on a regular schedule. Mr. Haddad said that if they had a quorum requirement today, they would not be able to hold this meeting, adding the quorum requirement would have been 183. Ms. Collette agreed that polling hours should be left alone. Mr. Fleischer said that they could reduce the special town meeting quorum.

Ms. Pine moved to divide the question. 81-2 - Quorum and 81-4 – Scheduling of Business.

A resident asked if they were doing anything to drive voter participation. Ms. Manugian said that mailings go out to every household and didn’t know what else they could do. A resident asked what the bar was to get an article on the warrant. Ms. Manugian said that articles could be sponsored by a town entity or by citizen’s petition.

Quantum of Town Meeting Vote: Majority

Vote on Motion to Divide the Question: Yes – 104; No - 70; Motion Carried by Majority Vote.

MS. PINE MOVED TO AMEND THE MAIN MOTION TO REPLACE SECTION 81-2 THE ARTICLE TO SAY “A QUORUM FOR ANY SPECIAL TOWN MEETING SHALL CONSIST OF 1% OF THE REGISTERED VOTERS OF THE TOWN AS OF THE PRECEDING JANUARY. THE MOTION WAS SECONDED.

Mr. Yanchenko said that this vote was arbitrary and not well thought out. He suggested they leave things alone. Ms. Frank said that lowering the requirement wasn't the answer adding it was how to get people out to the meeting. Mr. Petropoulos said that they should be getting at least 1% turnout and was going to vote to keep the quorum requirement as it was today. A resident said they should be getting more voters out to Town Meeting.

Quantum of Town Meeting Vote: Majority

Vote on Motion to Amend the Main Motion on Part 81-2: Yes – 41; No - 137; Motion did not pass by Majority Vote.

Quantum of Town Meeting Vote: Majority (*this would eliminate the quorum requirement*)

Vote on Main Motion on Part 81-2: Yes – 32; No - 149; Motion did not pass by Majority Vote.

Quantum of Town Meeting Vote: Majority

Vote on Main Motion on Part 81-4: Yes – 37; No - 136; Motion did not pass by Majority Vote.

Article 19: Zoning Amendment - Firearms Retail Sales Establishments

To see if the Town will vote to amend the Zoning Bylaws of the Town of Groton as follows:

1. Amend **Section 218-3 Definitions** by inserting the following in alphabetical order:

“FIREARMS RETAIL SALES ESTABLISHMENT”

A commercial business, possessing a Federal Firearms License (FFL), with established business hours, which derives its principal income from the sale and service of firearms, such as handguns and long guns, to individuals in an open shopping format. It may also provide repairs for firearms and their parts. Other firearms related or sporting equipment, such as accessories, ammunition, hunting and fishing products, food, or clothing, may be sold in the store as well. This definition shall not apply to small ‘by appointment only’ FFL licensed holders/collectors consistent with the provisions of Section 218-5.3.B Home Occupations, as permitted by

Massachusetts General Laws and Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives Regulations (BATFE)

2. Amend **Section 218—5.2 Schedule of Use Regulations** by inserting the following entry in the Section titled “Business” after the entry numbered 80 and renumbering subsequent entries accordingly:

	USE	R-A ¹⁰	R-B ¹⁰	NB	VCB ¹⁰	GB	I	P ¹⁰	O
“81	Firearms Retail Sales Establishment	N	N	N	N	PB	PB	N	N”

3. Amend **Section 218-10 Special Regulations** by inserting a new **Section 218-10.5 Firearms Retail Sales Establishments** to read as follows:

“218-10.5 Firearms Retail Sales Establishments

A. Purpose.

- (1) To provide reasonable regulations and standards for the placement and operation of Firearms Retail Sales Establishments in appropriate places in the Town of Groton.
- (2) To minimize the adverse impacts of Firearms Retail Sales establishments on adjacent properties, residential neighborhoods, schools, and other places where children congregate, local historic districts, and other sensitive land uses.
- (3) To regulate the siting, design, placement, security, safety, monitoring, modification, and discontinuance of Firearms Retail Sales establishments.

B. Applicability.

No Firearms Retail Sales Establishment shall be operated in the Town of Groton except in compliance with the provisions of § **218-5.2** (Schedule of Use Regulations) and this § **218-10.5** (Firearms Retail Sales Establishments).

C. General requirements and conditions for all Firearms Retail Sales Establishments.

- (1) All Firearms Retail Sales Establishments shall be located within a building or structure.
- (2) The hours of operation of Firearms Retail Sales establishments shall be set by the special permit granting authority.

- (3) No Firearms Retail Sales Establishment entrance shall be located closer than 500 feet from the entrance of a preexisting public or private preschool, school providing education in kindergarten or any grades 1 through 12, junior college, college, licensed day-care center, church, library, park, playground, or other firearms retail sales establishment. Distance shall be measured in a straight line from the geometric center of the Firearms Retail Sales Establishment's entrance door to the geometric center of the entrance door or primary public entrance location of the nearest facility listed in the previous sentence, unless there is an impassable barrier within those 500 feet that renders any part of the 500-foot straight-line distance inaccessible by a pedestrian or automobile, in which case the 500-foot distance shall be measured along the center of the shortest publicly accessible pedestrian travel path from the geometric center of the Firearms Retail Sales Establishment's entrance door to the geometric center of the entrance door or primary public entrance location of the nearest facility listed in the previous sentence.
- (4) The on-site discharge of firearms at all licensed Firearms Retail Sales Establishments is prohibited in the Town of Groton.
- (5) The maximum number of licensed Firearms Retail Sales Establishments in the Town of Groton shall not exceed three (3) such establishments.
- (6) No person under the age of 18 shall be allowed on the premises unless accompanied by a parent or legal guardian and notice of such limitation shall be posted outside the establishment.
- (7) No Firearms Retail Sales Establishment shall be located inside a building containing residential units, including transient housing such as motels and dormitories, or inside a movable or mobile structure such as a van or truck.
- (8) Firearms Retail Sales Establishments shall be located within a permanent building and may not be in a trailer, cargo container, motor vehicle or other similar nonpermanent enclosure. Firearms Retail Sales Establishments shall not have drive-through service.
- (9) No outside storage of Firearms Retail Sales, related supplies or promotional materials is permitted.
- (10) No more than one Firearms Retail Sales Establishment shall be operated from the same lot.
- (11) The special permit for a Firearms Retail Sales Establishment shall be granted to the FFL license holder rather than the owner of the property and shall not be transferrable absent an amendment to the special permit.
- (12) No display of firearms shall be visible from the building exterior.

D. Special permit requirements.

- (1) A Firearms Retail Sales Establishment shall only be allowed by special permit from the Planning Board in accordance with MGL c. 40A, § 9 and **§ 218 2.3** (Special permits) and **§ 218 5.5** (Performance standards for business and industrial special permits uses in R-B, VCB, NB, GB, and I Districts) of this chapter subject to the following statements, regulations, requirements, conditions, and limitations.
- (2) No special permit for any Firearms Retail Sales Establishment shall be issued without major site plan approval having been issued by the Planning Board, **§ 218-2.5**, Site Plan Review, of this chapter. In addition to the standards set forth within, the site plan must meet all dimensional, parking, landscaping, and signage requirements within this chapter.
- (3) A Firearms Retail Sales Establishment shall not sub-lease space from another Firearms Retail Sales Establishment in any building or establishment and is prohibited from sub-leasing space to another Firearms Retail Sales Establishment.
- (4) In addition to the application requirements set forth above, a special permit application for a Firearms Retail Sales Establishment shall include the following:
 - (a) The name and address of owner(s) of the Firearms Retail Sales Establishment licensee/applicant.
 - (b) Copies of all FFL licenses and permits issued to the applicant by the BATFE and any other agencies for the establishment.
 - (c) Evidence of the applicant's right to use the site of the establishment for the establishment, such as a purchase and sale agreement, deed, owner's authorization, or lease agreement.
 - (d) Proposed security plan with measures for the Firearms Retail Sales Establishment, including lighting, fencing, after-hours storage, security surveillance, alarms, and systems, etc., to ensure the safety of persons and to protect the premises from theft. A letter from the Town of Groton Police Chief, or designee, acknowledging review and approval of the Firearms Retail Sales Establishment security plan is required. To the extent allowed by law, all such documents shall be confidential.
 - (e) All application requirements for major site plan review as specified in **§ 218-2.5.D.(2)** of this chapter unless certain nonapplicable requirements are waived by the Planning Board.
- (5) Mandatory findings. The special permit authority shall not issue a special permit for a Firearms Retail Sales Establishment unless it finds that:

- (a) The establishment is designed to minimize any adverse impacts on abutters and other parties in interest, as defined in MGL c. 40A, § 11.
 - (b) The establishment demonstrates to the satisfaction of the Planning Board that it will meet all the permitting requirements of all applicable agencies within the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and will comply with all applicable state and federal laws and regulations; and
 - (c) The applicant has satisfied all the conditions and requirements set forth herein.
- (6) A special permit granted under this section shall have a term limited to the duration of the applicant's ownership of the business and licensure of the Firearms Retail Sales Establishment. Transfer of the establishment to another licensed proprietor or termination/expiration of applicant's FFL license shall render the special permit invalid. Transfer of the establishment or the reissuance of an expired FFL license shall require the approval of the special permit granting authority in the form of an amendment to the special permit with all information required.
- (7) The special permit granting authority may waive the buffer requirement set forth in Section 218-10.5.C(3) by a supermajority (2/3) vote as part of the issuance of a special permit provided that:
- (a) The application is for a new Applicant (change of Applicant) for an existing Firearms Retail Sales Establishment; or
 - (b) The Applicant demonstrates that the Firearms Retail Sales Establishment would otherwise effectively be prohibited within the Town; or
 - (c) That the project can be conditioned to reasonably satisfy the purpose and intent of the setback requirements.

E. Abandonment or discontinuance of use.

- (1) A special permit shall lapse if the special permit holder's Federal Firearms License (FFL) is terminated or not renewed by the BATFE unless the applicant can demonstrate reissuance of an FFL is highly probable.
- (2) A Firearms Retail Sales Establishment shall be required to remove all material, equipment, and other items subject to federal and state licensing within six months of ceasing operations.

or to take any other action relative thereto.

Planning Board

Select Board: *Recommended Unanimously*

Finance Committee: *No Position*

Planning Board: *Recommended Unanimously*

Summary: *The proposed Zoning Bylaw amendment defines firearms retail sales establishments as a use category, identifies the zoning districts where such establishments are allowed, and specifies the provisions under which such establishments may be permitted.*

Article 19: Zoning - Firearms Retail Sales Establishments Mover: Paul Hathaway

MOTION: I move to amend the Zoning Bylaw of the Town of Groton, Section 218-3, Definitions, Section 218-5.2, Schedule of Use Regulations, and Section 218-10 Special Regulations, by inserting a new Section 218-10.5 Firearms Retail Sales Establishments, as set forth in Article 19 of the Warrant for 2024 Fall Town Meeting.

Quantum of Town Meeting Vote: 2/3s Majority

THE MOTION WAS MOVED BY PAUL HATHAWAY AND SECONDED.

DEBATE: Mr. Hathaway provided dates in which the planning Board held public hearings. He said that on August 22, 2024, they voted unanimously to approve the proposed zoning bylaw and a brief description of this article. A resident asked if they had existing firearm retail establishments in Town. Mr. Hathaway said that they did not adding this started because of events in Littleton and their firearms retail establishments should they moved to Groton once their current space was eliminated. He said that they did not have a zoning bylaw on the books to regulate this. The resident said that this was going against their second amendment rights much like the Commonwealth. Ms. Lathrop said that she would like to preclude the three establishments from being in the same section of town. Mr. Petropoulos proposed an amendment.

Mr. Petropoulos moved to amend the main motion by striking “three (3)” and inserting “one (1)” in Paragraph C (5) of 218-10.5 Firearms Retail Sales Establishments, as found on page 17 of the Warrant for this Town Meeting. The motion was seconded.

Mr. Petropoulos said that this amendment would have them start out with One (1) retail establishment. He said that this zoning article did not prohibit his second amendment right but was uneasy about retail firearms establishments in general and did not want multiple ones in this town. He said they could always modify the number of allowed shops up but not down. Mr. Hathaway said they were very careful to be equitable. Mr. Delaney said that saying no in general once again would make Groton look unfriendly to business. A resident said that a gun shop in town would leave her with an uneasy feeling as it did in her previous town of Plymouth. She said without a regulation, that would be allowed here. She urged people to vote in favor of this regulation. A resident said he was a gun dealer adding that this would not be the wild west

because the stores were highly regulated. Mr. Weber said that this was not trying to make the upset the gun owners.

Mr. Lathrop moved the question on the motion to amend and the main motion. The motion was seconded.

Quantum of Town Meeting Vote: 2/3s Majority

Vote on Motion to Move the Question: Yes – 149; No - 16; Motion Carried by 2/3s Majority Vote.

Quantum of Town Meeting Vote: Majority

Vote on Motion to Amend: Yes – 65; No - 104; Motion did not pass by Majority Vote.

Quantum of Town Meeting Vote: 2/3s Majority

Vote on Main Motion #19: Yes – 124; No - 52; Motion Carried by 2/3s Majority Vote.

Article 20: Zoning Amendment – Solar Parking Canopies

To see if the Town will vote to amend the Zoning Bylaws of the Town of Groton as follows:

1. Amend **Section 218-3 Definitions** by inserting the following definition in alphabetical order:

“SOLAR PARKING CANOPY” — A roof application of a solar photovoltaic array that is installed on top of a supporting structure built on a functional and striped parking surface so as to maintain the function of the area beneath the canopy (also known as "solar carports.")

2. Amend **Section 218—5.2 Schedule of Use Regulations** by inserting the following entry in the Section titled “Business Accessory (use)” after the entry numbered 108 and renumbering subsequent entries accordingly:

USE	R-A ¹⁰	R-B ¹⁰	NB	VCB ¹⁰	GB	I	P ¹⁰	O
“80 Solar Parking Canopy	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y”

3. Amend **Section 218-5.3 Accessory Uses** by inserting a new **Section 218-5.3.E. Solar Parking Canopy** to read as follows:

“Section 218-5.3.E. Solar Parking Canopies

(1) Solar Parking Canopies in the R-A District shall meet setback requirements for Accessory Structures.

(2) Solar Parking Canopies and Surface-integrated Solar Energy Systems in non-R-A Districts shall be allowed where parking is permitted in accordance with the requirements defined in Section 218-8.1,

Off-Street Parking and Loading. The requirements for the planting of trees in landscaped strips within the parking area as defined in Section 218-8.1.C.(7) Parking Lot Planting may be met elsewhere on the lot. Landscaping for parking lots located under a canopy shall be designed to manage runoff from the panels and to be shade tolerant.

(3) Solar Parking Canopies in all zoning districts except the R-A District shall be subject to Section 218-2.5 Site Plan Review.

(4) Solar Parking Canopies shall not exceed seventeen (17) feet in height from grade. The Planning Board may allow an increase in the maximum height based on site conditions.”

4. Amend **Section 218-2.5 Site Plan Review** by inserting the following entry under Section 518-2.5.C.(2) Threshold of Review / Major to read as follows:

“(e) Solar Parking Canopy”

Planning Board

Select Board: *Recommended Unanimously*

Finance Committee: *No Position*

Planning Board: *Recommended Unanimously*

Summary: *The purpose of this Zoning Bylaw amendment is to allow for the as-of-right installation of solar parking canopies in areas where off-street parking is provided, subject to certain requirements*

Article 20: Zoning Amendment – Solar Parking Canopies

Mover: Phil Francisco

MOTION: I move to amend the Zoning Bylaw of the Town of Groton, Section 218-3, Definitions, Section 218-5.2, Schedule of Use Regulations, and Section 218-5.3 Accessory Uses, by inserting a new Section 218-5.3.E, Solar Parking Canopies, as set forth in Article 20 of the Warrant for the 2024 Fall Town Meeting.

Quantum of Town Meeting Vote: 2/3s Majority

THE MOTION WAS MOVED BY PHIL FRANCISCO AND SECONDED.

DEBATE: Mr. Francisco said that the Planning Board held a public hearing on August 22, 2024 and voted unanimously in favor of this zoning amendment. Mr. Yanchenko asked if interconnections could be handled by the Grid of Groton Electric Light. Mr. Yanchenko said that applicants would have to go to the Planning Board but would also be required to obtain other permits including permission from the Light Department. Mr. Burke said that site plan review would be required by the Planning Board.

Quantum of Town Meeting Vote: 2/3s Majority
Vote on Motion #20: Yes – 128; No -30; Motion Carried by 2/3s Majority Vote.

Article 21: Zoning Amendment – Accessory Dwelling Units

To see if the Town will vote to amend the Zoning Bylaw of the Town of Groton as follows:

- 1. Amend Section 218-3 Definitions by deleting the definition for Accessory Apartment in its entirety and replace it with the following definition**

“Accessory Dwelling Unit

A self-contained housing unit, inclusive of sleeping, cooking and sanitary facilities on the same lot as a principal dwelling, subject to otherwise applicable dimensional and parking requirements, that: (i) maintains a separate entrance, either directly from the outside or through an entry hall or corridor shared with the principal dwelling sufficient to meet the requirements of the state building code for safe egress; (ii) is not larger in gross floor area than 1/2 the gross floor area of the principal dwelling or 900 square feet, whichever is smaller.

- 2. Amend Section 218-5.2 Schedule of Use Regulations** by deleting the entry under Accessory Uses “Accessory apartments, as regulated under § 218-9.4” in its entirety and replace it with the following entries:

	R-A	R-B	NB	VCB	GB	I	P	O
One Accessory Dwelling Unit	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N
More than One Accessory Dwelling Unit	PB	PB	N	N	N	N	N	N

- 3. Amend Section 9.4 Accessory Apartment** by deleting it in its entirety and replace it with the following:

§ 218-9.4. Accessory Dwelling Unit.

§ 218-9.4.1. Purpose.

- a. To provide property owners in the R-A and R-B Districts with a means of sharing space and the burdens of home ownership, companionship, security, and services, thereby enabling them to stay more comfortably in homes and neighborhoods they might otherwise be forced to leave.
- b. Develop housing units in neighborhoods that are appropriate for households at a variety of stages in their life cycle.

- c. Provide small additional housing units for rent without substantially altering the appearance of the Town.
- d. Provide housing units for persons with disabilities.
- e. Protect stability, property values, and the residential character of a neighborhood.

§ 218-9.4.2. Attached accessory dwelling unit.

Use or rental of an accessory dwelling unit, an independent dwelling unit not to exceed 900 square feet of habitable floor area or 50% of the gross habitable floor area contained within the principal dwelling unit, whichever is less. The gross floor area shall include the interior finished habitable area to be used exclusively for the accessory dwelling unit.

No more than one accessory dwelling unit shall be allowed by right on a lot in the RA and RB Districts providing the following criteria are met:

- a. The accessory dwelling unit shall conform to the provisions of Title V of the State Sanitary Code, 310 CMR 15.00, and applicable regulations of the Groton Board of Health or be served by public sewer.
- b. Approval from the Fire Department.
- c. Building, plumbing, electrical and any other required permits are obtained.
- d. The attached accessory dwelling unit is contained within or attached to a principal dwelling.
- e. All staircases required to access an attached accessory dwelling unit must not change the general appearance of a dwelling.
- f. Space for the attached accessory dwelling unit may be provided by either raising the roof, or extending the dwelling, but only in accordance with current height and setback requirements.
- g. To maintain the character of the neighborhood, the entrance to the attached accessory dwelling unit should be on the side or rear, if possible, but may be through the front door, if there is a vestibule.
- h. The accessory dwelling unit and the principal dwelling to which it is accessory shall remain under the same ownership to preserve the principal/accessory relationship .
- i. Sufficient and appropriate area for at least one additional parking space shall be provided by the owner to serve the accessory dwelling unit. Said parking space shall be

constructed of materials consistent with the existing driveway and, to prevent on-street parking, and shall have vehicular access to the driveway.

- j. The footprint of the structure in which the attached accessory dwelling unit is to be located shall not be increased by more than 900 square feet or 50% of the habitable gross floor area of the existing principal dwelling, whichever is less, and shall retain the appearance of the principal structure. Any such increase in the footprint shall not exacerbate an existing nonconformity nor create a new nonconformity.
- k. The provisions of MGL c. 40A, § 3 shall apply to any accessory dwelling units intended for occupancy by a person with a disability relative to access ramps used solely for the purpose of facilitation ingress and egress to person with physical limitations as defined in MGL c. 22, § 13A.

§ 218-9.4.3. Detached accessory dwelling unit.

The Planning Board shall authorize the installation and use and rental of a detached accessory dwelling unit not to exceed 900 square feet of habitable floor area or 50% of the gross habitable floor area contained within the principal dwelling unit, whichever is less, in a detached structure on a lot in the R-A or R-B Districts, subject to Site Plan Review pursuant to § 218-2.5 provided the following criteria are met:

- a. Sections a-c, e, h, i, and k of § 218-9.4.2 are met.
- b. A plot plan of the existing dwelling unit and proposed accessory dwelling unit shall be submitted, showing the location of the building on the lot, the proposed accessory dwelling unit, location of any septic system and required parking.
- c. The detached accessory dwelling unit shall be a complete, separate housekeeping unit. No more than one accessory dwelling unit shall be allowed by right on a lot in the RA and RB District, except by special permit.
- d. Any new construction shall be in accordance with current height and setback requirements for the district in which it is located.
- e. No building permit shall be granted without a condition that the accessory dwelling unit shall conform to the provisions of Title V of the State Sanitary Code, 310 CMR 15.00, and applicable regulations of the Groton Board of Health.
- f. Any property that has been granted a building permit for a detached accessory dwelling unit shall not be further divided unless all zoning requirements can be met for the district in which it is located.
- g. Prior to approval under Site Plan Review a for a detached accessory dwelling unit the Planning Board shall make the following findings:

- (1) The detached accessory dwelling unit meets the requirements of this section.
- (2) The detached accessory dwelling unit will provide housing opportunities in conformance with the purpose of this section.

4. Amend Section 218-2.5 Site Plan Review by adding the following at the end of Section B.(2) Applicability

“(d) Detached Accessory Dwelling Unit (refer to Section 218-9.5)”

or to take any other action relative thereto.

Planning Board

Select Board: *Recommended Unanimously*

Finance Committee: *No Position*

Planning Board: *Recommended Unanimously*

Summary: *This article amends the Zoning Bylaw to conform with newly adopted changes to the Massachusetts Zoning Act relative to Accessory Dwelling Units while retaining much of the local regulatory framework. The major regulatory requirements include:*

- *The term Accessory Dwelling Units replaces the nomenclature for Accessory Apartments and the definition tracks definition from the State legislation*
- *An occupancy requirement of either the Accessory or Principal unit by the property owner is no longer permitted under the State legislation.*
- *Accessory unit size is limited to 900 square feet or 50% of the gross habitable floor area of the principal unit, whichever is smaller. Current zoning limits size to 800 square feet.*
- *No more than one accessory unit is to be allowed as of right on a lot, however the proposed zoning amendment does require detached accessory units to be subject to site plan review by the Planning Board. The current zoning allowed attached units as of right and detached by special permit. Special permits are no longer permitted unless more than one accessory dwelling is contemplated. This bylaw does not contain provisions for more than one accessory dwelling unit per lot in a single-family district, which may be allowed by special permit.*
- *The bylaw leaves many of the dimensional, bulk, parking, and site requirements consistent with the State legislation.*

Article 21: Zoning Amendment – Accessory Dwelling Units

Mover: Russ Burke

MOTION: I move to amend the Zoning Bylaw of the Town of Groton, Section 218-3, Definitions, Section 218-5.2, Schedule of Use Regulations, and Section 9.4, Accessory

Apartment, as set forth in Article 21 of the Warrant for the 2024 Fall Town Meeting.

Quantum of Town Meeting Vote: Majority

THE MOTION WAS MOVED BY RUSS BURKE AND SECONDED.

DEBATE: Mr. Burke said that the Planning Board held a public hearing on September 12, 2024 and voted unanimously to recommend approval of this zoning article. He provided a brief description of this article. Mr. Fleischer said that the Commission on Accessibility voted to support this article adding this enabled people with disabilities to have safe and accessible housing. There was no debate.

Quantum of Town Meeting Vote: Majority

Vote on Motion #21: Yes – 139; No - 10; Motion Carried by Majority Vote.

Article 22: Amend Chapter 198 Stormwater Management – Low Impact Development

To see if Town will vote to amend the Code of the Town of Groton by deleting Chapter 198, “Stormwater Management – Low Impact Development,” in its entirety and replacing it with a new Chapter 198, “Stormwater Management – Low Impact Development” as on file in the Office of the Town Clerk, or to take any other action relative thereto.

Earth Removal Stormwater Advisory Committee

Select Board: Recommended Unanimously

Finance Committee: No Position

Summary: *The Committee is proposing an amendment to the Stormwater Management By-law to update the by-law so that it is consistent with the new Massachusetts Stormwater Handbook and Regulations.*

Article 22: Amend Chapter 198 Stormwater Management

Mover: Michelle Collette

MOTION: I move to amend the Code of the Town of Groton by deleting Chapter 198, “Stormwater Management – Low Impact Development,” in its entirety and replacing it with a new Chapter 198, “Stormwater Management – Low Impact Development” as on file in the Office of the Town Clerk.

Quantum of Town Meeting Vote: Majority

THE MOTION WAS MOVED BY MICHELLE COLLETTE AND SECONDED.

DEBATE: Ms. Collette provided a brief description of this article. Me. Luening said that one section allowed for riskier activity with no oversight by the ERSWAC. Ms. Collette said that this was a threshold that was subject to misinterpretation and was clearing that up. She said this would also avoid having 2 repeat processes by 2 different town agencies.

Quantum of Town Meeting Vote: Majority

Vote on Motion #22: Yes – 127; No - 15; Motion Carried by Majority Vote.

Article 23: *Accept Monarch Path as a Town Way*

To see if the Town will vote to accept Monarch Path as a public way, as recommended by the Planning Board and laid out by the Select Board and as shown on a plan entitled “Right-of-Way As-Built of Monarch Path, Groton, Massachusetts, Owned by Ebrahim Masalehdan”, prepared by TFM Civil Engineers, Bedford, NH for Ebrahim Masalehdan, dated May 2, 2022, and on file with the Town Clerk; to authorize the Select Board to acquire, by gift, purchase or eminent domain such land and easements for the creation, maintenance and operation of a public way, including but not limited to easements for access, grading, drainage, sloping, construction and utilities, in all or any portions of such way and the parcels on such way, or to take any other action relative thereto.

Select Board

Select Board: *Recommendation Deferred Until Town Meeting*

Finance Committee: *No Position*

Summary: *To accept Monarch Path as a public way.*

Article 23: *Accept Monarch Path as a Town Way*

This article shall be passed over.

Article 24: *Citizens’ Petition – Reduce Statutory Speed Limit from 30 MPH to 25 MPH*

To see if the Town will vote to amend Groton Traffic Rules and Orders, Article XI Speed Regulations, Town of Groton Speed Limits, by adopting MGL, c. 90, §17C Sections 193 of Chapter 218 of the Acts of 2016. Mass.gov: “Section 193 allows a municipality to opt-in to Section 17C of Chapter 90 of the MGL, thereby reducing the statutory speed limit from 30 mph to 25 mph on any or all city or town-owned roadways within a thickly settled or business

district. The legislation also requires cities and towns to notify MassDOT of these changes,” or to take any other action relative thereto.

Citizens’ Petition

<u>Name</u>	<u>Address</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Address</u>
James A. Barisano	15 Longley Road	Paul Barstow	283 Old Dunstable Road
Lynne Burmeister	37 Throne Hill Road	Jeff Gordon	161 Main Street
Sadie Guichard	15 Whiting Ave	Lisa Murray	85 Wharton Row
Karen Tucker-Barisano	15 Longley Road	David Butz	532 Longley Road
Paul F. Murray, Jr.	85 Wharton Row	Greg Sheldon	62 Whispering Brook Road

Select Board: *Recommendation Deferred Until Town Meeting*

Finance Committee: *No Position*

Summary: The following summary was prepared by the petitioners and represents their view on the Article: *Groton has approximately 110 miles of roads and no sidewalks or bike lanes on 80% of them. Vehicles traveling on Groton’s roads routinely exceed the posted speed limits by five to ten miles per hour. At the Groton Master Plan Public Session held at the Groton Center, the Barrett Planning Group revealed that the risk of death to a pedestrian hit by a vehicle is 18% at 20 miles per hour, 50% at 30 miles per hour and 88% at 40 miles per hour. Risks vary significantly by age. This is commonsense solution, which has been adopted by eighty-one Massachusetts cities and towns, including towns adjacent to Groton. It will help reduce the risk of injury and death to those walking, jogging and on bicycles. This is a multi-step process. If approved by Town Meeting, the Select Board will appoint a committee to conduct a traffic study in cooperation with the MassDOT. Currently posted speed regulations on streets within business and thickly settled districts will each be evaluated. When all steps in the process are complete and approval has been granted by the MassDOT, the Town will remove all speed restriction signs applicable to the previous speed limit and begins enforcement of the 25 MPH speed limit. All citizens of Groton are urged to support this pedestrian safety initiative.*

Article 24: Citizens’ Petition

Mover: James Barisano

MOTION: I move to accept Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 90, Section 17C, thereby authorizing the Select Board to establish a speed limit of 25 miles per hour on any roadway inside a thickly settled or business district in the town on any way that is not a state highway.

Quantum of Town Meeting Vote: Majority

THE MOTION WAS MOVED BY JAMES BARISANO AND SECONDED.

DEBATE: Mr. Barisano provided a brief presentation. Mr. Delaney said that he applauded the efforts and provided some clarifications on regulatory and statutory roads and their speed limits. A resident said that lowering the speed limit in another town encouraged road rage. A resident said that he heard this would not apply to state roads or roads that already had speed limits assigned and asked for clarification on how this would apply. A resident said that the inconsistency on posted roads in Groton was insane. Mr. Cunningham said he was in favor of this as an avid cyclist. Ms. Manugian said there was a lot of good intent here but had some concerns about this. She said that they didn't enforce the current speed limits and thought they needed to enforce what they had first. Chief Luth said that they made 3,800 traffic stops in 2023 but in order to do more, they needed more officers. A resident asked how much revenue the town brought it from traffic infractions. Ms. Dufresne said it averaged around \$11K-15K.

Mr. Lathrop moved the question. The motion was seconded.

Quantum of Town Meeting Vote: 2/3s Majority

Vote on Moving the Question: Yes – 117; No - 16; Motion Carried by 2/3s Majority Vote.

Quantum of Town Meeting Vote: Majority

Vote on Motion #24: Yes – 58; No - 74; Motion did not pass by Majority Vote.

There was a motion to dissolve the meeting at 12:03pm that was seconded. A voice vote called by the Moderator was unanimous.

Hereof fail not and make return of your doings to the Town Clerk on or before time of said meeting.

Given under our hands this 16th Day of September in the year of our Lord Two Thousand Twenty-Four.

Alison S. Manugian
Alison S. Manugian, Chair

Rebecca H. Pine
Rebecca H. Pine, Vice Chair

Peter S. Cunningham
Peter S. Cunningham, Clerk

John F. Reilly
John F. Reilly, Member

Matthew F. Pisani
Matthew F. Pisani, Member

**OFFICERS RETURN
Groton, Middlesex**

Pursuant to the within Warrant, I have this day notified the Inhabitants to assemble at the time, place, and for the purpose mentioned as within directed. Personally posted by Constable.

Constable

Date Duly Posted

REPORT OF THE TOWN MANAGER TO THE 2024 FALL TOWN MEETING

The 2024 Fall Town Meeting Warrant contains several warrant articles that seek appropriations, some of which will affect the Tax Rate and some of which will have no further impact on taxes. The purpose of this report is to provide the residents and taxpayers with a summary of these articles and what impact they will have on the Fiscal Year 2025 Tax Rate. In preparing for the Fall Town Meeting, the Select Board and Finance Committee reviewed the balances in the various reserve accounts. These accounts will either be used to fund the various articles, or money will be added to them to comply with the Town's Financial Policies. The balances as of September, 2024, are as follows:

The following is a summary of Warrant Articles requesting funding:

Article 1: Unpaid Bills Requested: \$0

At this time, there are no unpaid bills.

Article 2: Amend the Fiscal Year 2025 Town Operating Budget

This Article will request the following adjustments in the Operating Budget:

1. Select Board Expenses Requested: \$28,500

As owners and Landlords of the Prescott School, the Town is responsible for and major capital expenditures/repairs. Currently the front entrance doors are in disrepair and need to be replaced. They are difficult to lock and are a security liability. The cost to replace the doors is estimated to be \$28,500. This funding, since it is a one-time expense, will come from the Excess and Deficiency Fund (Free Cash).

Select Board: *Recommended Unanimously*
Finance Committee: *Recommended Unanimously*

2. Town Manager Expenses Requested: \$8,100

The Trails Committee and Park Commission has been working with the DPW Maintenance Division to make several improvements to the Shed located at Town Field. This Shed will be used by the Trails Committee and Park Commission. The Trails Committee has received funding from the Community Preservation Act to purchase tools to help them maintain the various trails in Town. Most of these new tools are battery powered, which will require re-charging the batteries. There is no electricity at the Shed. It will cost \$8,100 to bring electricity to the Shed. This funding, since it is a one-time expense, will come from the Excess and Deficiency Fund (Free Cash).

Select Board: *Recommended Unanimously*
Finance Committee: *Recommended (6 In Favor, 1 Against – Green)*

3. Town Counsel Expenses Requested \$40,000

The Town is currently facing three Arbitration Cases with the Police Union. These cases are very expensive to defend. Based on the number of hearings anticipated, the Legal Budget will need an additional \$40,000 for this purpose. This funding, since it is a one-time expense, will come from the Excess and Deficiency Fund (Free Cash).

Select Board: *Recommended Unanimously*
Finance Committee: *Recommended Unanimously*

4. Insurance and Bonding Requested: \$20,000

Due to a number of natural events (lightning strikes, etc.), the Town has seen an 18% increase in Liability Insurance for Fiscal Year 2025. When the original budget was set last May, the Town had not received the final estimate and did not budget enough to cover the increase. There is currently an anticipated shortfall of \$20,000 in this Account. This funding, since it is a recurring cost, will come from the Unexpended Tax Capacity.

Select Board: *Recommended Unanimously*
Finance Committee: *Recommended Unanimously*

5. Police Expenses Requested: \$6,400

At the beginning of the Fiscal Year, there were three vacancies in the Police Department. Two of those vacancies have been filled with new recruits who need to attend the Police Academy. The cost to the Town for sending these recruits to the Academy is \$3,200 each, for a total of \$6,400. This funding, since it is a one-time expense, will come from the Excess and Deficiency Fund (Free Cash).

Select Board: *Recommended Unanimously*
Finance Committee: *Recommended Unanimously*

6. Fire Wages Requested: \$154,411

The closing of the Nashoba Valley Medical Center (NVMC) has had an adverse impact on the Fire Department creating a severe situation for emergency medical responses by the Department. The NVMC was only three miles from the Center Fire Station. The Department now has the following distances to new primary hospitals: Emerson Hospital - 26 minutes at 18.5 miles; Leominster Hospital - 26 minutes at 16.3 miles; and St. Joseph Nashua - 23 minutes at 13.2 miles. In addition, other alternative hospitals have the following distances: Lowell General Hospital - 30 minutes at 14.2 miles; and Southern New Hampshire Medical Center - 30 minutes at 14.4 miles. These distances and travel times are from the geographic center of Town; thus the actual times and distances will vary. Depending on the time of day and traffic conditions, these locations can add as much as 15 minutes to the transport time. The Department has already seen the impact of delayed response times based on these distances and the influence this has had on the health and safety of Groton residents. Since the closure of NVMC, the Department made several transports to Emerson and St. Joseph's Hospitals. During those transports, the Ambulance averaged 1 hour 30 minutes total transport time. What is not included is the additional 20 minutes to refuel the ambulance prior to returning to the Station.

The Station is not staffed for two hours during these transports, which is unacceptable, especially if another emergency call is received. This very situation continues to happen and what is usually a 1-2 minute response time to leave the station now is taking over 10 minutes (Call EMTs or Mutual Aid Response). To address this, the Fire Chief has requested funding for two additional Firefighter/EMTs for the remainder of Fiscal Year 2025. This is a short-term solution and allows the Department to guarantee staffing for that second ambulance which is desperately needed. The increase to the budget would be an additional \$171,182.00 as follows:

Wages:	\$154,411
Gear and Clothing:	\$ 7,425
Health Insurance:	<u>\$ 24,346</u>
 Total	 \$186,182

This additional staffing will provide the time needed for the Department/Town to evaluate the total impact of the closure of NVMC and bring back a formal proposal to the 2025 Spring Town Meeting as part of the Fiscal Year 2026 Budget. As the Town is unsure of the final expense at this time, the initial funding will come from the Excess and Deficiency Fund (Free Cash) until a final formal proposal is presented.

Select Board: *Recommended (4 In Favor, 1 Abstain – Pisani)*
Finance Committee: *Recommended Unanimously*

7. Fire Expenses Requested: \$7,425

See Explanation #6 above.

Select Board: *Recommended (4 In Favor, 1 Abstain – Pisani)*
Finance Committee: *Recommended Unanimously*

8. Council on Aging Expenses Requested: \$7,500

The Council on Aging Director has requested funding for the mailing of a bi-monthly newsletter as well as a twice per year mailing to all registered voters in Groton . The goal of this newsletter mailing is to allow for more inclusivity, greater reach and to enhance community involvement in The Groton Center. The cost is approximately \$7,500. The bi-monthly newsletter mailing would be available to Groton residents aged 60 and older; those younger and/or residing outside of Groton will be encouraged to receive their newsletter in person at The Groton Center, or to access it online. The twice yearly newsletter mailing would be mailed to all registered voters in the town of Groton. At least once per year, this mailing will include a programming survey to determine the needs and wants of residents. Currently, the Council produces a bi-monthly newsletter that contains information on ongoing and upcoming programs as well as outreach information, such as health insurance reminders and updates, financial assistance programs and mental health resources. This newsletter is available via email, on the COA website as well as at the Center. A small number of Groton residents (6 currently) pay a \$5 per year fee to receive the newsletter via USPS. This cost is often a barrier for many Seniors who live on a limited income. In 2023 The Groton Center hosted 884 residents 16,526 times for various programs, events and outreach purposes. In order to reach those who are not currently visitors of The Groton Center, those who visit infrequently and those who are not able to utilize a

computer/email or have transportation limitations, mailing the newsletter is a vital piece of the puzzle. This funding, since it is a recurring cost, will come from the Unexpended Tax Capacity.

Select Board: *Recommended (4 In Favor, 1 Against – Manugian)*

Finance Committee: *Recommended (5 In Favor, 1 Against – Green, 1 Deferred – Whitefield)*

9. Weed Management – Groton Lakes Requested: \$88,500

In 2012, the Town appropriated approximately \$100,000 to fund a major herbicide treatment of Lost Lake/Knops Pond to eradicate invasive weeds. This was a very successful endeavor. In 2019, the Lakes required another major treatment and this funding came from the Community Preservation Fund. Solitude Lake Management, the firm utilized by the Groton Lakes Association (GLA) to treat the Lakes, has determined that a major treatment is required in May 2025. The Community Preservation Committee (CPC) has determined that these periodic treatments are “maintenance” and not “preservation”, therefore CPA funds cannot be used again. While this is something that could be added to the Capital Budget, the optimal treatment time is May. Capital Budget Funds are not available until July. Waiting another year would be disastrous according to our consultant. To that end, funding is being requested at the 2024 Fall Town Meeting. The estimated cost for the treatment is \$123,500. To help offset the total cost, the GLA will privately raise \$35,000 toward the cost. The Town would then need to appropriate \$88,500 for the Treatment. This funding, since it is a one-time expense, will come from the Excess and Deficiency Fund (Free Cash).

Select Board: *Recommended Unanimously*

Finance Committee: *Recommended (5 In Favor, 1 Against – Lengyel, 1 Deferred – Green)*

10. Debt Service Requested: (\$124,159)

Based on final borrowing terms on FY 2025 Bond issues, the total Debt Service Budget will be reduced by \$124,159. The primary reduction, and good news for Groton’s Taxpayers, is the interest rate on the Bond Anticipation Note for the remaining Florence Roche Elementary School Construction Project came in under the original estimates, saving the taxpayers \$255,614 in Fiscal Year 2025. The Debt Budget will be adjusted to reflect borrowing for the Fire Department Ambulance approved at the 2023 Spring Town Meeting, as well as paying down the debt on the Highway Dump Truck approved at the 2022 Spring Town Meeting. The following is the proposed new Debt Budget for Fiscal Year 2025:

			<u>Original</u>		<u>Proposed</u>
2000	Long Term Debt - Principal Excluded	\$	2,025,000	\$	2,025,000
2001	Long Term Debt - Principal Non-Excluded	\$	165,000	\$	160,000
2002	Long Term Debt - Interest - Excluded	\$	1,340,252	\$	1,340,252
2003	Long Term Debt - Interest - Non-Excluded	\$	110,364	\$	106,974
2004	Short Term Debt - Principal - Town - Non Excluded	\$	123,526	\$	247,532
2005A	Short Term Debt - Interest - Town - Non Excluded	\$	8,644	\$	24,483
2005B	Short Term Debt - Interest - Town - Excluded	\$	1,283,825	\$	1,028,211
DEPARTMENTAL TOTAL		\$	5,056,611	\$	4,932,452

These issues will be funded as follows:

- Excluded Debt will be Decreased by \$255,614 from \$4,649,077 to \$4,393,463
- Debt within the Tax Levy will be decreased by \$8,390
- To fund the Short Term Principal and Short Term Interest Increases (total of \$139,845), \$104,955 will come from Ambulance receipts and \$34,890 will come from Free Cash.

Select Board: *Recommended Unanimously*
Finance Committee: *Recommended Unanimously*

11. Health Insurance Requested: \$24,346

See Explanation #6 above.

Select Board: *Recommended (4 In Favor, 1 Abstain – Pisani)*
Finance Committee: *Recommended Unanimously*

Article 3: Transfer - Capital Stabilization Fund Requested: \$900,000

The current balance in this fund is \$90,394. The Town’s Financial Policies call for a balance in this Fund of 1.5% of the Operating Budget. If all the transfers and appropriations are approved under Article 2 of this Warrant, the total Fiscal Year 2025 Operating Budget will be \$51,328,320. This would require a Capital Stabilization Fund Balance of \$769,925. However, the anticipated Fiscal Year 2026 Capital Budget is \$898,991. Therefore, it is requested that the Town appropriate \$900,000 from Free Cash to add to this Fund.

Article 12: Security Improvements at Sargisson Beach Requested: \$40,000

From the Summary in the Warrant: For the past two years, Sargisson Beach and the Parking Area has seen an increase in illegal dumping of trash and other related items that has impacted not only the ecosystem, but the recreational integrity of the Beach. The Town has taken some steps to improve security, but better cameras and related equipment is necessary to provide protection and oversight of the area. The Town does not have the personnel to patrol the area at all times and these security improvements will mitigate these issues at the Beach and parking area. The Town is requesting \$40,000 to fund these improvements. This funding will come from the Excess and Deficiency Fund (Free Cash).

Article 13: Purchase Budget Software Requested: \$35,000

From the Summary in the Warrant: This Article seeks funding for the Town’s Finance Department to purchase software for the creation of the Town’s Annual Operating and Capital Budgets. For the last 16 years, the Town Manager has relied on Excel to create the Town’s Budget. While this has been an adequate format, it is time to move the Town forward. With the current Town Manager expected to retire in the next few years, establishing a new formal Budget Process with strong historical data will allow for a seamless transition with regard to budgeting. The Town will be requesting \$35,000 to fund the Software. This funding will come from the Excess and Deficiency Fund (Free Cash).

Article 14: Complete Streets Grant Engineering Requested: \$35,000

From the Summary in the Warrant: The Complete Streets Committee has successfully received over \$750,000 in grant funding from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts under their Complete Streets Program. Some of the projects covered by the funding have been sidewalks on West Main Street and Lowell Road, along with Pedestrian Crossing Devices along Main Street. The Committee is in the process of preparing another Grant Application this Fall. One of the requirements for this program is that the Town has to cover engineering costs for any approved project. The Committee is seeking \$35,000 for this purpose. This funding will come from the Excess and Deficiency Fund (Free Cash).

Article 15: Amend Purpose of CPA Project – Baseball Diamond Requested: \$80,000

From the Summary in the Warrant: The 2023 Spring Town Meeting appropriated \$80,000 for improvements to the major league diamond at Town Field. This funding is not enough to design and construct the improvements. The Town Manager has approached the Community Preservation Committee and asked them to use these funds to conduct a comprehensive study of Town Field and come back with proposed improvements to enhance the recreational facility. It is the intent of the Town Manager to submit a formal project to the CPC for Fiscal Year 2026.

Article 16: Squannacook River Dam Requested: \$200,000

From the Summary in the Warrant: The Select Board and Department of Public Works are in the process of determining the future of the Squannacook River Dam. To make an informed decision, the Select Board needs to understand the cost of removal and its impact on the environment or the cost of repair. The purpose of this Article is to appropriate the necessary funds (estimated to be \$200,000) to hire professionals to study both the repair and removal of the Dam. Based on the information received, the Select Board will be in a better position to bring this issue back to a future Town Meeting. More information on the process will be provided to the Fall Town Meeting. This funding will come from the Excess and Deficiency Fund (Free Cash).

Should the Town Meeting agree with these appropriations, \$1,602,572 will come from the Town’s Free Cash Account, leaving a Free Cash balance of \$1,154,546. In the Spring of 2025, it is expected that \$300,000 in Free Cash will be required to cover Debt Service, OPEB Trust Fund and Department Head Performance Incentives, leaving a balance of \$854,546 in Free Cash. The one issue that will need to be addressed is the GDRSD Capital Plan. The request is usually around \$500,000, so there should be a sufficient amount of Free Cash to cover that expense as well. Based on final anticipated new Growth for FY 2025 and the Final Cherry Sheet Estimates received from the State, the Budget approved at Town Meeting is currently \$62,811 under the anticipated FY 2025 Levy Limit. For the line items that are reoccurring and will be funded through taxation, it is requested that \$19,110 come from this amount, which will leave the Town \$43,701 under the anticipated Levy Limit for Fiscal Year 2025. In the Spring of 2024, the tax rate was estimated at \$15.61. Based on the proposed changes at the Fall Town Meeting, the anticipated tax rate is \$15.53. The following chart is a breakdown of the anticipated rate:

	<u>Actual</u> <u>FY 2024</u>	<u>Proposed</u> <u>FY 2025</u>	<u>Dollar</u> <u>Change</u>	<u>Percent</u> <u>Change</u>
Levy Capacity Used	\$ 36,587,742	\$ 38,096,508	\$ 1,508,766	4.12%
Tax Rate on Levy Capacity Used	\$ 13.36	\$ 13.80	\$ 0.44	3.29%
Average Tax Bill	\$ 9,284	\$ 9,590	\$ 306	3.29%
Excluded Debt	\$ 4,732,786	\$ 4,776,976	\$ 44,190	0.93%
Tax Rate on Excluded Debt	\$ 1.73	\$ 1.73	\$ -	0.00%
Average Tax Bill	\$ 1,202	\$ 1,202	\$ -	0.00%
Final Levy Used	\$ 41,320,528	\$ 42,873,484	\$ 1,552,956	3.76%
Final Tax Rate	\$ 15.09	\$ 15.53	\$ 0.44	2.92%
Average Tax Bill	\$ 10,487	\$ 10,792	\$ 306	2.92%

Respectfully submitted,

Mark W. Haddad

Mark W. Haddad
Town Manager