

# MINUTES

## TOWN OF GROTON



## 2017 FALL TOWN MEETING

Groton-Dunstable Middle School Auditorium  
344 Main Street, Groton, Massachusetts 01450

Beginning Monday, October 23, 2017 @ 7:00 PM

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Attention – Voters and Taxpayers

Please bring this Report to Town Meeting

**SUMMARY OF VOTES - 2017 FALL TOWN MEETING**

**INITIAL SESSION – OCTOBER 23, 2017  
FIRST ADJOURNED SESSION - OCTOBER 30, 2017**

GROTON-Dunstable Middle School PAC  
345 Main Street, Groton, MA 01450

<b><u>ARTICLES</u></b>		<b>Date of Town Meeting Vote</b>	<b>Town Meeting Vote</b>
<b>Article 1</b>	Citizens' Petition – All Are Welcome Markers	Oct 23	Defeated
<b>Article 2</b>	Prior Year Bills	Oct 23	Passed
<b>Article 3</b>	Amend Fiscal Year 2018 Town Operating Budget	Oct 23	Passed
<b>Article 4</b>	Transfer Within Sewer Enterprise Budget	Oct 23	Passed
<b>Article 5</b>	Transfer Money into Capital Stabilization Fund	Oct 23	Passed
<b>Article 6</b>	Transfer Money into Stabilization Fund	Oct 23	Indefinitely Postponed
<b>Article 7</b>	Senior Center Design	Oct 23	Passed
<b>Article 8</b>	Create Town Capital Stabilization Fund for the GDRSD	Oct 23	Passed
<b>Article 9</b>	GDRSD Phone System and Internet Infrastructure	Oct 30	Passed
<b>Article 10</b>	Appropriation for Cyclical Inspections	Oct 30	Passed
<b>Article 11</b>	Complete Streets Engineering	Oct 30	Passed
<b>Article 12</b>	Off Set the Tax Rate	Oct 30	Indefinitely Postponed
<b>Article 13</b>	Sale or Lease of 23 Station Avenue	Oct 30	Passed
<b>Article 14</b>	Enterprise Fund – Four Corners Sewer District	Oct 30	Passed
<b>Article 15</b>	Fiscal Year 2018 Four Corners Sewer District Budget	Oct 30	Passed
<b>Article 16</b>	Amend Community Preservation Committee Regulations	Oct 30	Passed
<b>Article 17</b>	Amend Code of the Town of Groton – New Chapter 181	Oct 30	Passed
<b>Article 18</b>	Accept Chamberlains Mill Lane as a Public Way	Oct 30	Passed
<b>Article 19</b>	Citizens' Petition – Rezone 279 Main Street from R-A to VCB	Oct 30	Indefinitely Postponed



## **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. However, the van will depart the school at 10 PM regardless of the status of the meeting. 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 ADA Coordinator Michelle Collette at Town Hall at 978 448-1105 at least one week before the Town Meeting.

**FALL TOWN MEETING MINUTES  
OCTOBER 23, 2017**

**Town Moderator:**

Jason Kauppi

**Deputy Moderator**

Robert L. Gosselin, Sr.

**Board of Selectmen:**

Joshua A. Degen, Chairman  
Barry A. Pease, Vice-Chair  
Alison Manugian  
Becky Pine  
Jack G. Petropoulos

**Finance Committee:**

Gary Green, Chairman  
Bud Robertson, Vice-Chair  
Lorraine Leonard  
David Manugian  
Arthur Prest  
Jon Sjoberg  
Scott Whitefield

**Town Manager:**

Mark W. Haddad  
Dawn Dunbar, Executive Assistant

**Town Clerk:**

Michael F. Bouchard

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 PM on October 23. Mr. Jason Kauppi presided as Moderator. 409 attendees were present at 7:02. Later in the first session of the meeting, 456 voters were in attendance.

The First Adjourned Session of the 2017 Fall Town Meeting (October 30) marked the first time the Select Board, Finance Committee and Town Clerk were seated on the floor, instead of on the stage. This allowed the projection screen used for motions and presentations to be enlarged for better audience viewing. Feedback has been positive. This seating will be continued for future town meetings.

**Announcements and Reports:**

- o Non-Profit Council
- o Groton-Dunstable Regional School Committee
- o Town Charter Status: Still in Massachusetts Legislative Action
- o Town Meeting Information Packet – Scribner’s error on Page 17

Mr. Kauppi asked for a moment of silence in memory of recent passings in the Groton community.

Kira McKinley, Lauren Thorburn and Lara Hill of Girl Scout Troop 66530 led the Meeting in a Pledge of Allegiance. Jennifer Thorburn, Lauren Prestia and Katherine Zaiatz could not attend. The Troop has been in existence for 12 years, with 6 members graduating this year, completing their scouting careers by bridging to Adult Girl Scouts in June, 2018.

Mr. Kauppi stated that there 19 articles on the Warrant. He deemed that the warrant was duly posted and asked for a motion to waive the reading of the warrant. The motion was passed by a majority vote.

**MOTION To Limit Debate**

**Mover:** Michelle Collette

I move that debate be limited to three (3) minutes for each speaker, with the exception of the main proponent and opponent of each article, and at the discretion of the Moderator.

**Moved and Seconded**

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**Quantum of Town Meeting Vote Required:  
Vote on Motion to Limit Debate:**

**2/3rds Majority  
Passed by 2/3rds Majority**

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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 Groton-Dunstable Middle School Auditorium in said Town on Monday, the twenty-third day of October, 2017 at Seven O'clock in the evening, to consider the following:

**ARTICLE 1: CITIZENS' PETITION – ALL ARE WELCOME MARKERS**

To see if the Town will vote to change the wording of the markers approved at the 2017 Spring Town Meeting from "All Are Welcome" to "Welcome" such that the existing and any subsequent markers to be placed pursuant to that meeting will read (by line): "Town of Groton/Welcome/Town Meeting 2017". All funds needed to change the wording of the existing markers will be contributed by individual Town citizens who wish to avoid the divisiveness caused by the existing and planned markers, or to take any other action relative thereto.

**CITIZENS' PETITION**

<u>NAME</u>	<u>ADDRESS</u>	<u>NAME</u>	<u>ADDRESS</u>
John L. Saball	271 Forge Village Road	John M. Niles	14 McLains Woods Road
Claudia Saball	271 Forge Village Road	Kimberly S. Niles	14 McLains Woods Road
Gail Chalmers	123 Pepperell Road	Donald R. Black	573 Longley Road
Penelope C. Hommeyer	18 Blossom Lane	Earl N. Carter	8 Lone Lane
James A. Hommeyer	18 Blossom Lane	John W. Valentine	313 Whiley Road

**Board of Selectmen: *Not Recommended (4 Against, 1 No Position – Pease)***  
**Finance Committee: *No Position***

**Summary:** The following summary was prepared by the petitioners and represents their view on the Article: *The Welcome Markers Article seeks to assure that the Town's public signage is politically and culturally neutral. Subsequent to the approval of the "All Are Welcome" markers, many Town residents have learned that the wording of the signs does, in fact, have specific political and cultural connotations. This is not appropriate for a Town with diverse citizens and points of view. The changes are sought to lessen the partisan divisiveness caused by Town markers which make a political/cultural statement rather than simply welcoming people of all backgrounds and views to our Town.*

**Mover: John Saball**

**MOTION:** I move that the Town vote to change the wording of the markers approved at the 2017 Spring Town Meeting from "All Are Welcome" to "Welcome" such that the existing and any subsequent markers to be placed pursuant to that meeting will read (by line): "Town of Groton/Welcome/Town Meeting 2017". All funds needed to change the wording of the existing

markers will be contributed by individual Town citizens who wish to avoid the divisiveness caused by the existing and planned markers.

**Moved and Seconded**  
**Quantum of Town Meeting Vote: Majority**

**Discussion:**

**Presentation by Proponents**

- Mr. Sabal: Stated that the markers should be “simple and neutral”; believes the markers are a political statement. The proponents are here to be heard on the merits of the article, that this issue has caused anxiety and division and should properly debated.
- Mr. Niles: Believes that the passage of Article 17 in Spring 2017 is important context for this Article 1. Article 1 is a lawful petition, not an effort to undo a vote, but an effort to pay attention to local government. A small percentage of Groton voters voted to install these markers to issue what some consider to be a political statement. Changes to the markers should be made as the message has been coopted by activist organizations using these words as a political slogan to which he does not want to see Groton align.
- Ms. Hommeyer: wishes to participate in removing the political message in a non-destructive way by changing the words but not removing the markers.
- Mr. Valentine: Private funding will be used to change the markers “in place” at a bid cost of \$150 per marker. Reimbursement to the original donors is not being addressed, but hopes the previous donors would welcome this change. He further stated that there was no objection to the article in the Spring as there was no organized opposition. The proponents will ask for a secret ballot on Article 1 due to the “poisoned atmosphere”. He added that Article 1 should not be considered advisory and that it does not require town resources. He asked if the political statement was worth the divisiveness it has caused.
- Mr. Black: is okay with “Welcome” but not with “All Are Welcome” because that is the wrong message. He related a story from his youth in which he met Dr. Martin Luther King who was in Groton to give a speech at the Groton School, to indicate that Groton has historically been a welcoming community.
- Proponents strongly pointed out that they are not against any individuals or groups. They believe the message has significant political overtones and not appropriate for the Town.

**MOTION to fix the method of voting on Article 1 Main Motion to be by Secret Ballot.**

**Moved and Seconded**  
**Quantum of Town Meeting Vote: Majority**

**Discussion (Continued):**

- Board of Selectmen (Alison Manugian): A majority of 2017 Spring Town Meeting Attendees did support Article 17. A majority of the Board of Selectmen do not support Article 1.
- Jack Petropoulos (as Selectman): Was an initial proponent of Spring Article 17. The message is affiliated with “nothing”. Don’t let our Town be known for removing “All” and creating division.
- Sustainability Commission (Bruce Easom): voted 2 (in favor) -1 (against) -1 (abstain) to not recommend Article 1.

Q: Did town meeting know of the time capsules being placed with the markers?

R: Mr. Petropoulos stated this was discussed at a Board of Selectmen meeting and with the School Superintendent. It was not discussed at town meeting. His statement was challenged. A video was displayed showing the Board of Selectmen discussing time capsules at a public meeting.

C: This controversy is derived from a lack of process. The Town should not enter into immigration issues.

C: This is a highly political statement. Groton should not be involved in national politics.

C: Supports the message but not the process used to incorporate a political message.

C: (Marlena Gilbert, Chair GDRSC): The School Committee did not know of the markers when the invitation for student essays was received. The School Committee did not endorse the markers. The Schools should not be a political organization.

C: Town Clerk Bouchard was asked to explain how a secret ballot would be executed, and for an estimate of time. He thought 30-45 minutes to process the 400+ attendees using a voting machine to count the votes.

Q: Why is this vote mandatory but the Spring 2017 vote was advisory?

R: The Spring vote was advisory, but followed as history of previous votes (notably the vote on the Personnel Board some years ago) caused the Board of Selectmen to think it is important to follow the vote of Town Meeting.

C: Suggest that this question be put on the Spring 2018 Town Election ballot. "All Are" is not the issue. It's a surrogate for issues with the current administration.

C: "All Are Welcome" is not a political message; it is a humanitarian message.

**MOTION to Move the Questions of the Secret Ballot and Article 1 – Main Motion:**

**Moved and Seconded**

**Quantum: 2/3<sup>rd</sup>s Majority**

**Vote on Motion to Move the Questions: Passed by 2/3<sup>rd</sup>s Majority**

**Vote on Motion to Fix the Method of Voting to be a Secret Ballot for Article 1 – Main Motion:**

**Defeated (i.e. Secret Ballot would not be used)**

**Vote on Article 1 – Main Motion: Chair declares the motion was defeated. 7 voters did not contest the ruling.**

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**ARTICLE 2: 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.

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN**

**Board of Selectmen: Recommended Unanimously**

**Finance Committee: Recommended 6-0-0**

**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.*

**Mover: Becky Pine**

**MOTION:** I move that the Town vote to transfer from the Excess and Deficiency Fund (Free Cash) the sum of \$16,500 for the payment of the following bill of a prior fiscal year:

Sprague Energy -	<u>\$16,500</u>
Total	\$16,500

**Moved and Seconded**

**Quantum of Town Meeting Vote: 4/5's Majority**

**Vote on Article 2 – Main Motion: Passed by Unanimous Vote**

**ARTICLE 3: AMEND THE FISCAL YEAR 2018 TOWN OPERATING BUDGET**

To see if the Town will vote to amend the Fiscal Year 2018 Operating Budget as adopted under Article 4 of the 2017 Spring 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 2018, or to take any other action relative thereto.

**FINANCE COMMITTEE  
BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
TOWN MANAGER**

**Board of Selectmen: Recommended Unanimously**

**Finance Committee: Recommended 5 In Favor 1 Against (Robertson)**

**Summary:** *The Fiscal Year 2018 Town Operating Budget was approved at the 2017 Spring Town Meeting in April, 2017. 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 2018 Operating Budget. Please see the Town Manager's Report contained in the back of this Warrant for an explanation outlining the proposed changes.*

**Mover: Barry Pease**

**MOTION:** I move that the Town vote to amend the Fiscal Year 2018 Operating Budget, as adopted under Article 4 of the April 24, 2017 Spring Town Meeting, as follows, each line item to be considered as a separate appropriation for the purposes voted:

**GENERAL GOVERNMENT:** By increasing the General Government Appropriation from \$1,946,980 to \$1,961,480 so as to: increase Line Item 1032 – “Town Manager Expenses” by \$10,000, from \$4,000 to \$14,000; increase Line Item 1101 – “IT Wages” by \$500, from \$47,753 to \$48,253; and increase Line Item 1131 – “Town Clerk Wages” by \$4,000, from \$54,589 to \$58,589; And to raise and appropriate the sum of \$14,500 to fund said increases.

**Moved and Seconded**

**Quantum of Town Meeting Vote: Majority**

**Vote on Article 3-Main Motion: Passed by Majority Vote**

**ARTICLE 4:           TRANSFER WITHIN SEWER ENTERPRISE FUND**

To see if the Town will vote to transfer a sum or sums of money from the Sewer Enterprise Fund Surplus to the Fiscal Year 2018 Sewer Enterprise Department Budget for engineering services related to the Pepperell Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrades, or to take any other action relative thereto.

**BOARD OF SEWER COMMISSIONERS**

**Board of Selectmen:** *Recommended Unanimously*  
**Finance Committee:** *Recommended Unanimously*  
**Sewer Commission:** *Recommended Unanimously*

**Summary:** *This Article seeks to transfer a sum of money from the Sewer Enterprise Fund Surplus to the Fiscal Year 2018 Sewer Department's General Expenses for engineering services related to the Pepperell Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrades. The exact amount will be provided at Town Meeting.*

**Mover: James Gmeiner**

**MOTION:** I move that the Town vote to transfer the sum of \$90,000 from the Sewer Enterprise Fund Surplus to the Fiscal Year 2018 Sewer Enterprise Department Budget for engineering services related to the Pepperell Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrades

**Moved and Seconded**

**Quantum of Town Meeting Vote: Majority**

**Vote on Article 4 – Main Motion: Passed by Unanimous Vote**

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**ARTICLE 5:           TRANSFER MONEY INTO THE CAPITAL STABILIZATION FUND**

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate and/or transfer from available funds 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.

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN**

**Board of Selectmen:** *Recommended Unanimously*  
**Finance Committee:** *Recommended Unanimously*

**Summary:** *The Fund has a balance of \$118,486. 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.*

**Mover: Joshua Degen**

**MOTION:** I move that the Town vote to transfer the sum of \$500,000 from the Excess and Deficiency Fund (Free Cash) to be added to the sum already on deposit in the Capital Stabilization Fund.

**Moved and Seconded**  
**Quantum of Town Meeting Vote: Majority**

**Discussion:**

o Brief discussion on merits of maintaining stabilization funds compared to returning money to the taxpayers.

**Vote on Article 5 – Main Motion: Passed by Majority Vote**

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**ARTICLE 6: TRANSFER MONEY INTO THE STABILIZATION FUND**

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate and/or transfer from available funds 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.

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN**

**Board of Selectmen: Recommended Unanimously**  
**Finance Committee: Recommended Unanimously**

**Summary:** *The balance in this fund is \$1.79 million. The financial management goal is to achieve and maintain a balance in the Stabilization Fund equal to 5% of the total annual budget. The target amount for the Stabilization Fund will be provided at Town Meeting.*

**Mover: Alison Manugian**

**MOTION A:** I move that the Town vote to transfer the sum of \$0 from the Excess and Deficiency Fund (Free Cash) to be added to the sum already on deposit in the Stabilization Fund.

**Moved and Seconded**

**MOTION B:** I move that Article 6 be indefinitely postponed.

**Moved and Seconded**  
**Quantum of Town Meeting Vote: Majority**  
**Vote on Article 6 – Indefinitely Postpone: Passed by Unanimous Vote**

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**ARTICLE 7: SENIOR CENTER DESIGN**

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, transfer from available funds, and/or borrow a sum or sums of money, to be expended by the Town Manager, for the purpose of hiring an architect and/or engineer, pursuant to the Designer Selection Guidelines adopted by the Board of Selectmen in December, 2010, for the design, or design and construction bidding process, of a new Senior Center, and/or the renovation and expansion of the current Senior Center, and all costs associated and related thereto, or to take any other action relative thereto.

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
SENIOR CENTER BUILDING COMMITTEE**

**Board of Selectmen: 3 In Favor; 2 No Position**  
**Finance Committee: Recommended Unanimously**

**Summary:** *Originally constructed in 1986 as a VFW hall, Groton's current senior center is inadequate for current program needs as well as deficient in meeting minimal standards of universal accessibility. Previous analysis and Town Meeting vote have determined that the current West Groton site is the preferred choice for a center that will serve Groton's growing senior population and the community both now and into the future. This article requests funding to allow the Town to secure design and bid-level documents that will determine how much a renovated and expanded or new senior center will cost and thereby adequately inform voters for a future Town Meeting and Proposition 2 ½ debt exclusion vote.*

**Mover: Joshua Degen**

**MOTION:** I move that the Town vote to transfer the sum of \$175,000 from the Receipts Reserved for Appropriation and transfer the sum of \$275,000 from the Excess and Deficiency Fund (Free Cash) for a total sum of \$450,000, to be expended by the Town Manager, for the purpose of hiring an architect and/or engineer, pursuant to the Designer Selection Guidelines adopted by the Board of Selectmen in December, 2010, for the design, or design and construction bidding process, of a new Senior Center, and/or the renovation and expansion of the current Senior Center, and all costs associated and related thereto.

**Moved and Seconded**  
**Quantum of Town Meeting Vote: Majority**

**Discussion:**

- o Finance Committee: Unanimously supports this article
  - o Planning Board: Voted on Sept 14 to Recommend this article by a 4-1 vote
  - o GDRSC: voted on Sept 20 to support this article
  - o Commission on Accessibility: Voted on Sept 11 to unanimously support this article.
  - o Board of Selectmen voted 3 in favor and 2 no position on this article.
  - o Sustainability Commission voted 3 In Favor and 1 Abstaining to support this article
  - o Mr. Cunningham presented the report of the Senior Center Building Committee describing the need for an updated facility and the proposed funding process. This article is to fund an architect's design, the preparation of bid documents, an owner's project manager (as required by law), and bid solicitation to construct a new senior center. The results of the bid process will be presented to Town Meeting in Spring 2018.
  - o Mr. Manugian stated that the Charter Review Committee, during its discussions, recommended not voting to spend money at a Fall Town Meeting because the Meeting doesn't know the totality of spending requests coming before the Town.
  - o Mr. Green stated that the Finance Committee supports waiting for the Spring Town Meeting for appropriation articles, in general. However, sometimes there is a good reason to appropriate at the Fall Meeting. The Finance Committee believes this proposal is a good reason so that the Spring Meeting can discuss the merits of the result.
- Q: Is it a legal requirement to have a stand-alone senior center?

R; No

Q: If the Center was required to make repairs (estimated to be \$950,000), could a solution be to close the building?

R: In the opinion of Town Counsel, that would likely not be an acceptable solution.

o Ms. Gilbert stated that both the seniors and students needs the Town's support.

**MOTION to Move the Question**

**Moved and Seconded**

**Quantum: 2/3<sup>rd</sup>s Majority**

**Vote on Motion to move the Question: Passed by 2/3<sup>rd</sup>s Majority**

**VOTE on Article 7 – Main Motion: Passed by Majority Vote**

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**ARTICLE 8: CREATE TOWN CAPITAL STABILIZATION FUND FOR GDRSD**

To see if the Town will vote to create a Capital Stabilization Fund entitled "Town of Groton Capital Stabilization Fund for the Groton Dunstable Regional School District" and to raise and appropriate and/or transfer from available funds a sum or sums of money to be added to said fund, or to take any other action relative thereto.

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
FINANCE COMMITTEE  
TOWN MANAGER**

**Board of Selectmen: Recommended Unanimously**

**Finance Committee: Recommended to Create Fund (5 In Favor, 2 Against – Leonard, Sjoberg)  
Recommended Unanimously to Fund at Proposed Level**

**Summary:** *The Groton Dunstable Regional School District Committee has recently adopted a long-range Capital Plan to address its capital needs. This detailed plan will require a substantial financial contribution from both Groton and Dunstable over the next several years. While Groton approved a GDRSD held Capital Stabilization Fund, approval by Dunstable is also needed. A Town of Groton held Capital Stabilization account will allow Groton to be prepared to pay its share of Capital costs. To that end, the Board of Selectmen, Finance Committee and Town Manager would like to create and begin funding a Town of Groton held Capital Stabilization fund for the GDRSD.*

**Mover: Joshua Degen**

**MOTION:** I move that the Town vote to create a Capital Stabilization Fund entitled "Town of Groton Capital Stabilization Fund for the Groton Dunstable Regional School District" and to transfer the sum of \$500,000 from the Excess and Deficiency Fund (Free Cash) to be added to said fund.

**Moved and Seconded**

**Quantum of Town Meeting Vote: Majority**

**VOTE on Article 8 – Main Motion: Passed by Majority Vote**

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**MOTION to Continue the Meeting to Monday, October 30, 2017 at 7:00 PM at the Groton-Dunstable Middle School Performing Arts Center**  
**Moved and Seconded**  
**VOTE on Motion to Continue: Passed by Majority Vote**

**The Meeting was adjourned at 10:24 PM (October 23, 2017)**

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**The First Adjourned Session of the 2017 Fall Town Meeting was called to order at 7:01PM. There was no quorum requirement. Attendance was 106.**

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**ARTICLE 9: GDRSD PHONE SYSTEM & INTERNET INFRASTRUCTURE**

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, transfer from available funds, and/or borrow a sum or sums of money to pay the Town of Groton's share for the Groton Dunstable Regional School District's District Wide Phone System & Internet Infrastructure replacement project, and all costs associated and related thereto, in accordance with the Regional School Agreement, or to take any other action relative thereto.

**GDRSD COMMITTEE**

**Board of Selectmen: *Recommended Unanimously***  
**Finance Committee: *Recommended Unanimously***

**Summary:** *The replacement of the District Wide Phone System & Internet Infrastructure is the largest expense in the adopted long-range District Capital & Technology Plans and is scheduled to take place in FY19. Groton's portion of the expense, per the regional agreement and based on the five-year rolling average pupil enrollment, is \$346,860. Replacing the network infrastructure is a necessity. The network is used for almost all assignments and testing. Many of the software requirements, including taking MCAS via computer, are mandated by the State. Currently the bandwidth is the most significant impediment (i.e. bottleneck); there are times when the performance is impacted and not steady. This can occur at inopportune moments such as during classroom activities or state mandated online MCAS testing. In addition to being an academic necessity there are safety concerns as the District does not have caller ID. Without caller ID, the District remains in a vulnerable position of not being able to determine where or what type of call is coming into the District, making prosecution difficult in the event of a threat. This vulnerability was identified when the District received a Robo Call bomb threat. Caller ID could prove to be critical for investigative purposes.*

**Mover: Barry Pease**

**MOTION:** I move that the Town vote to transfer the sum of \$346,860 from the Excess and Deficiency Fund (Free Cash) to pay the Town of Groton's share for the Groton Dunstable Regional School District's District Wide Phone System & Internet Infrastructure replacement project, and all costs associated and related thereto, in accordance with the Regional School Agreement.

**Moved and Seconded**

**Quantum of Town Meeting Vote: Majority**

**Discussion:**

o Marlena Gilbert, Chair-GDRSC, explained that this project addresses safety and academic issues. The current phone system has no caller ID capability. More academic requirements, including standardized tests, necessitate faster internet connections. This project will address both needs and be “future-proofed” to take advantage of Verizon upgrades.

o Ms. Gilbert also explained that this article was being brought to the Fall Town Meeting as a conclusion from a Survey Monkey poll results. This one article was brought forward due to recognize that other town needs may also require Fall funding. This will be a FY19 expense. Dunstable will also need to fund its portion before it can go forward.

o Council on Aging: We are responsible for creating a safe and adequate facility for our students. The Council on Aging supports this article.

**VOTE on Article 9 – Main Motion: Passed by Majority vote**

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**ARTICLE 10: APPROPRIATION FOR CYCLICAL INSPECTIONS**

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, transfer from available funds, and/or borrow a sum or sums of money, to be expended by the Board of Assessors to perform a cyclical reinspection program, pursuant to and as required by the directive issued by the Massachusetts Department of Revenue, Bureau of Local Assessments, or to take any other action relative thereto.

**BOARD OF ASSESSORS**

**Board of Selectmen: Recommended Unanimously**  
**Finance Committee: Recommended Unanimously**

**Summary:** *In 2017, the Bureau of Local Assessments issued the following directive: “Cyclical Reinspection - Maintenance of current and accurate property inventory data is a critical element in the development of uniform, fair market values. Our last certification review indicated that the Board of Assessors should begin a cyclical reinspection program of all descriptive property data over a specified time period, so that each parcel is inspected at least once in every nine-year cycle.” Cyclical Inspection, as defined by the Mass DOR, is the process of the systematic measure and listing of all properties within a municipality over a specified period of time (over the next 5 fiscal years and concluding prior to the Town of Groton’s next recertification commencing in FY2022). The Cyclical Inspection process is utilized to update property owner record cards in order to provide fair and equitable assessments to ALL property owners in town. The Town has issued a Request for Proposal that will allow the Town to determine the cost effectiveness of conducting these inspections all at once, or over the next five years. A full report will be provided at Town Meeting.*

**Mover: Donald Black**

**MOTION:** I move that the Town vote to transfer the sum of \$103,500 from the Excess and Deficiency Fund (Free Cash), to be expended by the Board of Assessors, to perform a cyclical

reinspection program, pursuant to and as required by the directive issued by the Massachusetts Department of Revenue, Bureau of Local Assessments.

**Moved and Seconded**

**Quantum of Town Meeting Vote: Majority**

**VOTE on Article 10-Main Motion: Passed by Unanimous Vote**

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**ARTICLE 11: COMPLETE STREETS ENGINEERING**

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, transfer from available funds, and/or borrow a sum or sums of money, to be expended by the Town Manager, for the purpose of hiring an engineer for the design of traffic safety and pedestrian improvements funded by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts "Complete Streets" program, or take any action relative thereto.

**COMPLETE STREETS COMMITTEE**

**Board of Selectmen: Recommended Unanimously**

**Finance Committee: Recommended Unanimously**

**Summary:** *The Complete Streets Committee received a grant from MassDOT to improve pedestrian safety and accessibility at crosswalks in the Town Center, to extend the sidewalk on Long Hill Road from Riverbend Drive to Groton Place, to install speed limit flashing lights in various locations, and to install two bicycle repair kits on the Nashua River Rail Trail. This article will provide funding for the required engineering design of the projects. The Town must provide the engineering to design and solicit bids in order to obtain the construction funding. It is anticipated that the cost of this engineering will not exceed \$45,000.*

**Mover: Peter Cunningham**

**MOTION:** I move that the Town vote to transfer the sum of \$45,000 from the Excess and Deficiency Fund (Free Cash), to be expended by the Town Manager, for the purpose of hiring an engineer for the design of traffic safety and pedestrian improvements funded by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts "Complete Streets" program.

**Moved and Seconded**

**Quantum of Town Meeting Vote: Majority**

**Discussion:**

- o Construction of this Complete Streets project will be funded by a \$339,270 state grant. The Town needs to do the initial engineering.
- o The Complete Streets project will provide safe and accessible options for all travel modes (bike, walk, accessible, car).
- o This is a 5 year plan with projects including Main Street Traffic Calming (incorporating signalized crosswalks), an extension of Long Hill Road sidewalk from Riverbend Dr to Groton Place, Speed Limit signage and two bike repair kits of the Rail Trail.
- o The opening of the Groton Inn and Indian Hill Music are considered in the plan, but these projects are needed anyway as growth has already occurred.
- o Q: Is \$340k funding for one year or five?

R: One year (2018) funding  
o Planning Board: Met on October 12, 2017 and voted unanimously to support this article.

**VOTE on Article 11 – Main Motion: passed by Unanimous Vote**

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**ARTICLE 12:           OFFSET THE TAX RATE**

To see if the Town will vote to transfer a sum of money from the General Excess and Deficiency Fund (Free Cash) or from other available funds for the purpose of affecting the tax rate for the period beginning July 1, 2017, or to take any other action relative thereto.

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN**

**Board of Selectmen: *Recommended (3 In Favor, 2 Against – Degen, Manugian)***  
**Finance Committee: *Not Recommended (6 Against, 1 In Favor – Sjoberg)***

**Summary:** *The intent of this article is to use a portion of Free Cash or General Stabilization Fund monies as a funding source for the FY 2018 Budget in order to lower the amount of money required to be raised from taxes or to balance a deficit budget. The Board of Selectmen has voted to recommend that \$100,000 be transferred from Free Cash to reduce the Fiscal Year 2017 tax rate.*

**Mover: Becky Pine**

**MOTION A:** I move that the Town vote to transfer the sum of \$0 from the Excess and Deficiency Fund (Free Cash) for the purpose of affecting the tax rate for the period beginning July 1, 2017.

**Moved and Seconded**

**MOTION B:** I move that Article 12 be indefinitely postponed.

**Moved and Seconded**

**Quantum of Town Meeting Vote: Majority**

**Discussion:**

o Since the printing of the warrant, recent expenses have caused the Select Board to recommend the Tax Rate Offset be set to \$0. These expenses included the settled amount of the prior year bill, cyclical Inspections and an increased amount for the Senior Center Design.

**VOTE on Article 12 – Indefinitely Postpone: Passed by Majority Vote**

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**ARTICLE 13: SALE OR LEASE OF 23 STATION AVENUE**

To see if the Town will vote to authorize the Board of Selectmen to sell and/or lease, for a period not to exceed 99 years, the buildings formerly known as the Groton Electric garages, which comprise approximately 6300 square feet, and all or a portion of the 1.8 acre site on which they are located at 23 Station Avenue, Groton, Massachusetts, to take all necessary action to comply with the General Laws of the Commonwealth for the disposal of said buildings, and to petition the General Court for any necessary special legislation, or to take any other action relative thereto.

**GROTON ELECTRIC LIGHT COMMISSIONERS**

**Board of Selectmen: *Recommended Unanimously***  
**Finance Committee: *No Position***

**Summary:** *With the completion of GELD's new office and garage facilities, the former garages are surplus. The Light Department and the Town will no longer be putting the garages to best use and seek a better use for the parcel. The Groton Electric Light Board has issued an RFP for the sale of these buildings and hopes to have a final proposal for consideration at Town Meeting. The purpose of this article is to present the successful proposal to Town Meeting for approval and disposal of the Buildings. A full report will be made at the Town Meeting.*

**Mover: Rod Hersh**

**MOTION:** I move that the Town vote to transfer to the Board of Selectmen, for the purpose of sale and/or lease, custody and control of the buildings formerly known as the Groton Electric garages, which comprise approximately 6300 square feet, and all of the 1.08 acre site on which they are located at 23 Station Avenue, Groton, Massachusetts, and to authorize the Board of Selectmen to sell and/or lease, for a period not to exceed 99 years, said property and to take all necessary action to comply with the General Laws of the Commonwealth for the disposal of said buildings, and to petition the General Court for any necessary special legislation.

**Moved and Seconded**

**Quantum of Town Meeting Vote: 2/3's Majority**

**Discussion:**

o Mr. McElroy presented renderings of what their plans would look like. The plan would utilize the existing building. It would be renovated, perhaps gain a brick siding, and the road and parking lot reconfigured. EV Charging Stations might be installed. Retail space is envisioned.

o Q: If the existing site was environmentally compromised such that a new Senior Center could not be built on it (discussion for an earlier town meeting), why is it "ok" now?

R: The Senior Center needs were more extensive than these, and involved tearing down the building. This proposal would utilize the existing building.

**VOTE on Article 13 – Main Motion: Passed by Unanimous Vote**

**ARTICLE 14: ENTERPRISE FUND - FOUR CORNERS SEWER DISTRICT**

To see if the Town will vote to accept the provisions of Chapter 44, Section 53F½, an Act Authorizing Cities and Towns to Establish Enterprise Funds, for the purpose of establishing an Enterprise Fund for the Four Corners Sewer District, to be effective January 1, 2018, or to take any other action relative thereto.

**TOWN MANAGER**

**Board of Selectmen: *Recommended Unanimously***  
**Finance Committee: *Recommended Unanimously***

**Summary:** *This Article proposes to create a separate Sewer Enterprise Fund for the Four Corners Sewer District.*

**Mover: Barry Pease**

**MOTION:** I move that the Town vote to accept the provisions of Chapter 44, Section 53F½, an Act Authorizing Cities and Towns to Establish Enterprise Funds, for the purpose of establishing an Enterprise Fund for the Four Corners Sewer District, to be effective January 1, 2018.

**Moved and Seconded**

**Quantum of Town Meeting Vote: Majority**

**VOTE on Article 14 – Main Motion: Passed by Majority Vote**

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**ARTICLE 15: FY 2018 FOUR CORNERS SEWER DISTRICT ENTERPRISE BUDGET**

To see if the Town will vote the following operating budget, for Fiscal Year 2018, for the Four Corners Sewer District Enterprise Fund, with funding to come from donation revenues which have been received by the Town in support of the Four Corners Sewer Project:

<u>Line Item</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Expenses	\$13,230

or to take any other action relative thereto.

**TOWN MANAGER**

**Board of Selectmen: *Recommended Unanimously***  
**Finance Committee: *Recommended Unanimously***

**Summary:** *This Article proposes an Operating Budget for the Four Corners Sewer District Enterprise Fund, to be effective January 1, 2018.*

**Mover: Barry Pease**

**MOTION:** I move that the Town vote the following operating budget, for Fiscal Year 2018, for the Four Corners Sewer District Enterprise Fund, with funding to come from donation revenues which have been received by the Town in support of the Four Corners Sewer Project:

<u>Line Item</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Expenses	\$13,230

**Moved and Seconded**  
**Quantum of Town Meeting Vote: Majority**  
**VOTE on Article 15 – Main Motion: Passed by Unanimous Vote**

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**ARTICLE 16: AMEND COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE BYLAW**

To see if the Town will vote to amend Chapter 10, "Community Preservation Committee" of the Code of the Town Groton by deleting paragraph B of §10-1 in its entirety and replacing it with the following new paragraph B:

"Initially, the members designated by the Conservation Commission, Historical Commission and Planning Board will serve for three years, the members designated by the Parks Commission and the Housing Authority will serve for two years, and the members appointed by the Board of Selectmen will serve for one year. Subsequent appointments for members designated by the Conservation Commission, Historical Commission, Housing Authority and members appointed by the Board of Selectman shall be for a term of three years terms. Subsequent appointments for members designated by the Parks Commission and the Planning Board shall be for a term of one year. If a person no longer serves in the position or on the board or commission as set forth above, his or her term shall end, and any person appointed as a replacement shall serve out the remainder of the original term of that person."

or to take any other action relative thereto.

**COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE**

**Board of Selectmen: Recommended Unanimously**  
**Finance Committee: No Position**  
**Community Preservation Committee: Recommended Unanimously**

**Summary:** *The purpose of this article is to clarify the appointment process and length of terms of individuals appointed by the various Boards and Committees to the Community Preservation Committee.*

**Mover: Bruce Easom**

**MOTION:** I move that the Town vote to amend Chapter 10, "Community Preservation Committee" of the Code of the Town Groton by deleting paragraph B of §10-1 in its entirety and replacing it with a new Paragraph B as set forth in the Warrant for the 2017 Fall Town Meeting.

**Moved and Seconded**  
**Quantum of Town Meeting Vote: Majority**

**VOTE on Article 16 – Main Motion: Passed by Unanimous Vote**

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**ARTICLE 17: AMEND CODE OF GROTON BY ADDING NEW CHAPTER 181**

To see if the Town will vote to amend the Code of the Town of Groton by adding a new Chapter 181, entitled “Anti-Litter/Snow in Public Ways,” as follows:

**CHAPTER 181  
Anti-Litter/Snow in Public Ways**

**§181-1 Disposal of Refuse**

Whoever disposes of garbage, trash, refuse, bottles, cans, containers, rubbish or other debris or household items on a public or private way, or in inland waters, shall be subject to a penalty of three hundred dollars. Each violation shall be considered a separate offense.

**§181-2 Discarding of Snow in Public Way or on Property of Another**

Whoever shall discard, shovel, throw, or pile snow in a public way, or plow snow across a public way to the property of another without the written permission of the owner of such property, after a police warning not to do so, shall be subject to a penalty of one hundred dollars. Each violation shall be considered a separate offense.

**§181-3 Enforcement**

This bylaw may be enforced in accordance with the provisions §1-4.B Non-Criminal Complaint, of the Code of the Town of Groton. The Groton Police Department shall be the enforcement authority.

or to take any other action relative thereto.

**TOWN MANAGER  
PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR**

**Board of Selectmen: *Recommended Unanimously***  
**Finance Committee: *No Position***

**Summary:** *Currently, the Town has no enforcement provisions for littering or discarding snow within a public way. If this proposed new Bylaw is adopted, the Groton Police Department will have the authority to enforce and issue fines for either infraction.*

**Mover: Becky Pine**

**MOTION:** I move that the Town vote to amend the Code of the Town of Groton by adding a new Chapter 181, entitled “Anti-Litter/Snow in Public Ways,” as set forth in the Warrant for the 2017 Fall Town Meeting.

**Moved and Seconded**  
**Quantum of Town Meeting Vote: Majority**

**Discussion:**

- o Similar bylaw as Dunstable
- o The main issue is snow movement into public ways by plowing contractors
- o This bylaw proposal also addresses littering. Concern was raised that the “household items” listed as litter in the bylaw precludes residents from leaving “free” items at the street for free pickup. Mr. Delaney, DPW Director, stated that was accurate, but not the intention of the bylaw nor the focus on enforcement. He did cite how “free” items, in many situations, are never claimed and become roadside litter, which the Town should have the ability to address.
- o Q: Does the bylaw apply too “off the public way”, such as Groton’s network of Trails?  
R: Town Counsel’s view was that it only applied to public ways.

**MOTION to Amend Article 17-Main Motion**

**Mover: Brooks Lyman**

**I move to amend the Main Motion under Article 17 by striking the words “three hundred” in Section 181-1 and substitute the words “one hundred”.**

Ed Note: This Amendment would reduce the fine for each violation from \$300.00 to \$100.00.

**Moved and Seconded**

**Quantum: Majority**

**VOTE on the Motion to Amend Article 17-Main Motion: Did not pass.**

**VOTE on Article 17-Main Motion: Passed by Majority Vote.**

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**ARTICLE 18: ACCEPTANCE OF CHAMBERLAINS MILL LANE AS A TOWN WAY**

To see if the Town will vote to accept as a public way the roadway known as Chamberlains Mill Lane, as heretofore laid out by the Board of Selectmen and as shown on a plan entitled “As Built Plan Chamberlains Mill, Groton, Mass, prepared for Regular Realty Trust, P.O. Box 381, Groton, MA” dated June 1, 2017, prepared by Ducharme & Dillis, Bolton, MA, a copy of which is on file with the Town Clerk, and to authorize the Board of Selectmen to acquire, by gift, purchase, or eminent domain, the fee to or lesser interests in said roadway and all related easements, or to take any other action relative thereto.

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN**

**Board of Selectmen: Recommended Unanimously**

**Finance Committee: No Position**

**Summary:** *To accept Chamberlains Mill Lane as a public way.*

**Mover: Becky Pine**

**MOTION:** I move that the Town vote to accept as a public way the roadway known as Chamberlains Mill Lane, as heretofore laid out by the Board of Selectmen and as shown on a

plan entitled "As Built Plan Chamberlains Mill, Groton, Mass, prepared for Regulas Realty Trust, P.O. Box 381, Groton, MA" dated June 1, 2017, prepared by Ducharme & Dillis, Bolton, MA, a copy of which is on file with the Town Clerk, and to authorize the Board of Selectmen to acquire, by gift, purchase, or eminent domain, the fee to or lesser interests in said roadway and all related easements.

**Moved and Seconded**  
**Quantum of Town Meeting Vote: Majority**

**Discussion:**

o On August 31, the Planning Board voted unanimously to support Article 18

**VOTE on Article 18-Main Motion: Passed by Unanimous Vote**

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**ARTICLE 19: CITIZENS' PETITION - REZONE PARCELS 112-60, 112-61, 112-62 FROM RESIDENTIAL – AGRICULTURAL "R-A" TO VILLAGE CENTER BUSINESS "VCB"**

To see if the Town will vote to amend the Zoning Map established under Chapter 218 of the Code of the Town of Groton to rezone three adjoining parcels of land from Residential-Agricultural (R-A) to Village Center Business (VCB), said parcels of land located at 279 Main Street consisting of approximately 1.25 acres, being shown on Assessors' Map 112, Parcels 60, 61, and 62, or take to take any other action relative thereto.

**CITIZENS' PETITION**

<u>NAME</u>	<u>ADDRESS</u>	<u>NAME</u>	<u>ADDRESS</u>
Stephen S. Palmer	81 Boston Road	Michael W. Hill	56 Wintergreen Lane
Cynthia J. Marcus	293 Chicopee Row	Jessica C. Bicknell	14 High Oaks Path
Myra Lane	21 Lovers Lane	Kenneth C. Kolodziej	10 Whiting Avenue
Lawrence R. Deal	76 Fairway Drive	Jeffrey A. Gordon	161 Main Street
Miqelle F. Demeis	63 Fairway Drive	Deborah E. Johnson	25 Longley Road

**Board of Selectmen: Recommendation Deferred Until Town Meeting**  
**Finance Committee: Recommendation Deferred Until Town Meeting**  
**Planning Board: Recommendation Deferred Until Town Meeting**

**Summary:** The following summary was prepared by the petitioners and represents their view on the Article: Stephen Palmer, 81 Boston Rd, Groton, MA, requests rezoning of the Sacred Heart Church from its current residential/educational/religious zoning to a commercial zoning. The objective of this rezoning is to permit renovation of the property for the use as a theater suitable for screening of independent and foreign films, as well as for live theater uses. The Groton Celestial Theater proposes to use these facilities to screen two movies daily in two theaters. Proposed seating capacity will be for 120-150 and parking in the existing parking lot can accommodate 50 – 60 cars/light trucks.

**Mover: Stephen Palmer**

**MOTION A:** I move that the Town vote to amend the Zoning Map established under Chapter 218 of the Code of the Town of Groton as set forth in the Warrant for the 2017 Fall Town Meeting.

**Moved and Seconded**

**MOTION B:** I move that Article 19 be indefinitely postponed.

**Moved and Seconded**

**Quantum of Town Meeting Vote: Majority**

**VOTE on Article 19- Indefinitely Postpone: Passed by Unanimous Vote**

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**MOTION to Dissolve the 2017 Fall Town Meeting**

**Moved and Seconded**

**Motion to Dissolve passed by Unanimous Vote**

**The 2017 Fall Town Meeting was dissolved at 8:08PM.**

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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 2<sup>nd</sup> Day of October in the year of our Lord Two Thousand Seventeen.

*Joshua A. Degen*

Joshua A. Degen, Chairman

*Barry A. Pease*

Barry A. Pease, Vice Chairman

*Alison S. Manugian*

Alison S. Manugian, Clerk

*John G. Petropoulos*

John G. Petropoulos, Member

*Rebecca H. Pine*

Rebecca H. Pine, 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.

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Constable

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Date Duly Posted

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## **REPORT OF THE TOWN MANAGER TO THE 2017 FALL TOWN MEETING**

The 2017 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 2018 Tax Rate.

As you will recall, the 2017 Spring Town Meeting voted a budget of \$36,049,935, which was \$183,950 under the levy limit based on our best estimate of revenues at that time. At that Town Meeting, we estimated that the Fiscal Year 2018 Tax Rate would be \$18.65. Since that time, we have begun to get a better picture of our estimates. Most importantly, in July, the Commonwealth finalized its budget and provided the Town with its final State Aid Estimates. Further, the Assessors continue to work toward the finalization of the Town's new growth figure. They should have it certified by the end of October. At this time, it appears that our revenue estimates are pretty much in line (slight decrease) with what we anticipated in the Spring. The following chart provides the difference between what was originally estimated and what we are estimating at this time:

	<u>Original</u>	<u>Current</u>	<u>Difference</u>
State Aid	\$ 915,112	\$ 912,979	\$ (2,133)
State Charges	\$ 89,523	\$ 89,523	\$ -
Snow and Ice Deficit	\$ 200,000	\$ 200,000	\$ -
Cherry Sheet Offsets	\$ 1,000	\$ -	\$ 1,000
Off-Set Receipts	\$ 20,000	\$ 18,953	\$ 1,047
Property Tax Levy	\$ 29,129,180	\$ 29,129,180	\$ -
Local Receipts	\$ 3,828,472	\$ 3,820,787	\$ (7,685)
		<b>Difference</b>	<b>\$ (7,771)</b>

With these revised estimates, the approved budget is now \$176,179 under the levy limit. Since the original budget was voted, there are a few issues that require attention. Article 3 of the Warrant proposes to amend the original budget in some line items. These amendments will have a slight impact on the Tax Rate for Fiscal Year 2018, since the additional revenues will come from the unexpended tax capacity. The additional amount of tax levy proposed at this meeting will cause the tax rate to increase by \$0.01 to an estimated tax rate of \$18.66. In addition, the Department of Revenue has certified the Town's Excess and Deficiency Fund (Free Cash) at \$2,369,261. "Free Cash" is proposed to fund several of the Articles contained in the Warrant. The use of "Free Cash" will not impact the tax rate.

The following is a summary of Warrant Articles requesting funding:

**Article 2: Unpaid Bills** **Amount Requested: \$0**

At this time, we do not anticipate any Unpaid Bills for Town Meeting appropriation.

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**Article 3: Budget Amendments** **Amount Requested: \$14,500**

The proposed funding for this Article will come from taxation and will impact the Tax Rate (at the conclusion of all the Article summaries will be a chart showing the impact on the FY 2018 Tax Rate). The following is a breakdown of the requests, followed by an explanation:

<u>Line Item</u>	<u>Original Appropriation</u>	<u>New Appropriation</u>	<u>Difference</u>
Town Manager Expenses	\$ 4,000	\$ 14,000	\$ 10,000
Town Clerk Wages	\$ 54,589	\$ 58,589	\$ 4,000
IT Wages	\$ 47,753	\$ 48,253	\$ 500
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 106,342</b>	<b>\$ 120,842</b>	<b>\$ 14,500</b>

**Explanation of Requests**

**Town Manager Expenses - \$10,000**

The Board of Selectmen had approved a recommendation by the Town Manager to hire per diem minute takers for the Planning Board, Conservation Commission and Finance Committee. Department Heads are taking minutes and it is becoming increasingly difficult for them to participate in the meeting while taking minutes. This expenditure would cover the cost of taking and preparing the minutes for approval by these three Boards through the end of Fiscal Year 2018. This would also become an annual expenditure and part of the Annual Operating Budget.

**Board of Selectmen: *Recommended Unanimously***

**Finance Committee: *Recommendation Deferred Until Town Meeting***

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**Town Clerk Wages - \$4,000**

At the beginning of the current Fiscal Year, the Town Clerk's Office had two twenty (20) hour per week Assistant Town Clerks. Both of these positions received full benefits from the Town. When one of the Clerks resigned to take another position, a reorganization plan was approved by the Board of Selectmen that increased the Housing Coordinator from 25 hours to 40 hours and assigned this position to the Town Clerk's Office for 15 hours per week. The other Assistant Town Clerk was increased from 20 hours per week to 25 hours per week to keep administrative staff support in the Town Clerk's Office at 40 hours. This reorganization has eliminated one benefited position that could save the Town \$18,000 annually. Due to the current hourly rates of the above two referenced employees, the Town Clerk's Wage Line item needs to be increased by \$4,000.

**Board of Selectmen: *Recommended Unanimously***

**Finance Committee: *Recommendation Deferred Until Town Meeting***

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**IT Wages - \$500**

Due to a scrivener's error in setting the Wage Line Item for the IT Department, two numbers were transposed and the actual hourly rate of the Desk Stop Specialist that was approved will cause a short fall in that wage line by \$500. Since this is the annual wage of the current employee, it is recommended that this line item be increased by \$500 to cover the expense.

**Board of Selectmen: *Recommended Unanimously***  
**Finance Committee: *Recommendation Deferred Until Town Meeting***

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**Article 4 – Transfer Within Sewer Enterprise** **Amount Requested: \$90,000**

This Article seeks to transfer \$90,000 from the Sewer Enterprise Fund Surplus to the Fiscal Year 2018 Sewer Department's General Expenses for engineering services related to the Pepperell Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrades. The Fund has a balance of \$545,281. This transfer will not affect the tax rate.

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**Article 5 – Capital Stabilization Fund** **Amount Requested: \$500,000**

The Fund currently has a balance of \$118,486. 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. To meet this level and provide adequate funding to meet the anticipated Fiscal Year 2019 Capital Budget, the Town will need to add \$500,000 to the fund. This funding will come from Free Cash and not affect the Tax Rate.

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**Article 6 – Stabilization Fund** **Amount Requested: \$10,000**

The Fund currently has a balance of \$1,797,719. The financial management goal is to achieve and maintain a balance in the Stabilization Fund equal to 5% of the total annual budget. To meet this level, the Town will need to add \$10,000 to the fund. This funding will come from Free Cash and not affect the Tax Rate.

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**Article 7 – Senior Center Design** **Amount Requested: \$400,000**

From the Warrant Summary: Originally constructed in 1986 as a VFW hall, Groton's current senior center is inadequate for current program needs as well as deficient in meeting minimal standards of universal accessibility. Previous analysis and Town Meeting vote have determined that the current West Groton site is the preferred choice for a center that will serve Groton's growing senior population and the community both now and into the future. This article

requests funding to allow the Town to secure design and bid-level documents that will determine how much a renovated and expanded or new senior center will cost and thereby adequately inform voters for a future Town Meeting and Proposition 2 ½ debt exclusion vote. Funding for this Article will come from Free Cash (\$225,000) and Receipts Reserved for Appropriation (\$175,000) and not affect the Tax Rate.

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**Article 8 – Capital Stabilization for the GDRSD**

**Amount Requested: \$600,000**

From the Warrant Summary: The Groton Dunstable Regional School District Committee has recently adopted a long-range Capital Plan to address its capital needs. This detailed plan will require a substantial financial contribution from both Groton and Dunstable over the next several years. While Groton approved a GDRSD held Capital Stabilization Fund, approval of Dunstable is also needed. A Town of Groton held Capital Stabilization account will allow Groton to be prepared to pay its share of Capital costs. To that end, the Board of Selectmen, Finance Committee and Town Manager would like to create and begin funding a Town of Groton held Capital Stabilization fund for the GDRSD. The Town Manager is proposing that \$600,000 be transferred from Free Cash to begin funding this Capital Stabilization Fund. This transfer will not affect the Tax Rate.

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**Article 9 – GDRSD Phone System and Infrastructure**

**Amount Requested: \$346,860**

From the Warrant Summary: The replacement of the District Wide Phone System & Internet Infrastructure is the largest expense in the adopted long-range District Capital & Technology Plans and is scheduled to take place in FY19. Groton's portion of the expense, per the regional agreement and based on the five-year rolling average pupil enrollment, is \$346,860. Replacing the network infrastructure is a necessity. The network is used for almost all assignments and testing. Many of the software requirements, including taking MCAS via computer, are mandated by the State. Currently the bandwidth is the most significant impediment (i.e. bottleneck); there are times when the performance is impacted and not steady. This can occur at inopportune moments such as during classroom activities or state mandated online MCAS testing. In addition to being an academic necessity there are safety concerns as the District does not have caller ID. Without caller ID, the District remains in a vulnerable position of not being able to determine where or what type of call is coming into the District, making prosecution difficult in the event of a threat. This vulnerability was identified when the District received a Robo Call

bomb threat. Caller ID could prove to be critical for investigative purposes. This funding will come from Free Cash and not affect the Tax Rate.

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**Article 10 – Appropriation for Cyclical Inspections      Amount Requested: \$110,000**

From the Warrant Summary In 2017, the Bureau of Local Assessments issued the following directive: “Cyclical Reinspection - Maintenance of current and accurate property inventory data is a critical element in the development of uniform, fair market values. Our last certification review indicated that the Board of Assessors should begin a cyclical reinspection program of all descriptive property data over a specified time period, so that each parcel is inspected at least once in every nine-year cycle.” Cyclical Inspection, as defined by the Mass DOR, is the process of the systematic measure and listing of all properties within a municipality over a specified period of time (over the next 5 fiscal years and concluding prior to the Town of Groton’s next recertification commencing in FY2022). The Cyclical Inspection process is utilized to update property owner record cards in order to provide fair and equitable assessments to ALL property owners in town. The Town has issued a Request for Proposal that will allow the Town to determine the cost effectiveness of conducting these inspections all at once, or over the next five years. A full report will be provided at Town Meeting. The proposed funding for this Article will come from Free Cash and not affect the Tax Rate.

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**Article 11 – Complete Streets Engineering      Amount Requested: \$45,000**

From the Warrant Summary: The Complete Streets Committee received a grant from MassDOT to improve pedestrian safety and accessibility at crosswalks in the Town Center, to extend the sidewalk on Long Hill Road from Riverbend Drive to Groton Place, to install speed limit flashing lights in various locations, and to install two bicycle repair kits on the Nashua River Rail Trail. This article will provide funding for the required engineering design of the projects. The Town must provide the engineering to design and solicit bids in order to obtain the construction funding. The amount needed is \$45,000 and will come from Free Cash. This appropriation will not affect the Tax Rate.

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**Article 12 – Offset the Tax Rate      Amount Requested: \$100,000**

After reviewing all of the other financial commitments contained in the Warrant for the 2017 Fall Town Meeting, the Board of Selectmen has voted to recommend that the Town Meeting vote to transfer \$100,000 from Free Cash to offset the Fiscal Year 2018 Tax Rate. This amount will reduce the tax rate by \$0.06 and reduce the average tax bill (a home valued at \$425,000) by \$25.50.

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The funding for the request for Article 3 (total of \$14,500) will come from the tax levy. Should this Article pass as presented, it will cause the tax rate to increase by \$0.01. The impact on the FY 2018 Tax Rate is as follows:

Original Budget -	\$36,049,435
Original Levy Capacity Used -	\$31,118,125

Amount Under the Levy Limit -	\$183,950
Original Proposed Tax Rate -	\$18.65
Average Tax Bill -	\$7,926 or \$165 increase over FY 2017
New Proposed Budget -	\$36,063,935
New Levy Capacity Used	\$31,140,396
Amount Under the Levy Limit -	\$161,679
New Proposed Tax Rate -	\$18.66
Average Tax Bill -	\$7,930 or \$169 increase over FY 2017

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Respectfully submitted,

*Mark W. Haddad*  
 Mark W. Haddad  
 Town Manager