

# Warrant, Summary, and Recommendations

## 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



## **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 WARRANT  
OCTOBER 23, 2017**

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 LISTINGS**

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**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.*

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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: *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.*

**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:** *See Town Manager's Report in Back of Warrant for Recommendations*

**Finance Committee:** *See Town Manager's Report in Back of Warrant for Recommendations*

**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.*

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**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.*

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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.*

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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.*

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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: *Recommendation Deferred Until Town Meeting***  
**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.

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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.

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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.*

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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: *Recommendation Deferred Until Town Meeting***  
**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.*

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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.*

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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.*

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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.*

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**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.*

**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.*

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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.*

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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.*

**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 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, 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.*

**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.*

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.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Constable

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date Duly Posted

## 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