

TOWN OF GROTON
SELECT BOARD MEETING
February 24, 2015

**In Attendance: Kyle Andrews, Robert Ferriere, Christina Goodwin and Sara Smith
(Administrative Assistant)**

Audience Members Present

Christina called the meeting to order at 7:04pm.

MINUTE APPROVAL:

Christina motioned to approve the minutes of February 17, 2015 as written, Bob 2nd, so voted.

OLD BUSINESS:

Update on Heat Issue

Dead River came out on Wednesday of last week and fixed the issue, it was a zone valve cover.

Perambulation Update

Christina gave an update of the Perambulation statuses.

- Hebron – This has been added to their warrant to put half the cost toward the perambulation for this 2015. Alexandria - This is in progress scheduled to be completed by the end of the month.
- Rumney - There is a conflict with the surveyors being considered. We should look into this again to determine what our next step is.

NEW BUSINESS:

Candidate's Night

Candidate's night is traditionally held during a Select Board meeting. Any candidates that are running for and elected position are given time to speak about why they are running for the position and then answer any questions from the audience. Normally, the minutes do not cover the Candidates section but the Board has decided to include for the public's reference. This second night, the Board will allow the candidates that were not at the first night to speak and answer questions. Once this is done, then the audience will be allowed to ask new questions of the remaining candidates.

Town Clerk/Tax Collector – 3 year term

Laura Hauser is the current Town Clerk/Tax Collector and is running again.

Planning Board – 3 year term

Forest Blake

His name is Forest Raymond Blake and most people know him by his middle name Ray. He has lived in Groton since 1989. He ran and owned his own business for 37 years in Southern New Hampshire. He has been retired for about a year. He was on the Planning Board as an alternate and really enjoyed it and met a lot of nice people. He would like to give something back to the Town.

Slim Spafford wanted to make a statement that he is happy to see that there is competition now and there never was when he first ran. This shows that the Town has grown, come a long way and more people are getting involved.

David Labar

He was not in attendance but Slim mentioned that he is on the Planning Board right now and is running again and he is glad to see him running.

Mark Watson

Spoke last week and there were no new questions for him.

Cemetery Trustee – 3 year term

Elizabeth Jespersen

Elizabeth explained that she has spent 30 years in cemeteries. There is so much history and a lot to learn. She was born and raised in Michigan. Along with Genealogy, she is in a group called “Find A Grave” so she has been roaming the cemeteries, taking thousands of pictures and doing memorials on these people. She has been doing this for the last 15 years. She feels she would be able to follow the RSA’s and do the best for Groton.

Trustee of the Trust Funds – 3 year term

No one is currently running. If anyone is interested they should add themselves as a write-in candidate.

Town Auditor – 1 year term

No one is currently running. If anyone is interested they should add themselves as a write-in candidate.

Library Trustee – 3 year term

No one is currently running. If anyone is interested they should add themselves as a write-in candidate.

Revisited the Select Board – 3 year term

All spoke last week so it was opened up to new questions that were not asked last week.

Audience members asked John Rescigno the following questions:

- *The number #1 priority for Select Board should be the security of the Town and of the people, such as drinking water, property taxes, and wind mills. How do you feel about*

- representing the Town and are these concerns of yours?* John stated he wants the town to move forward, he moved here because of the lower taxes and wants to keep it that way and wants to make sure the money is being spent wisely. He states the Town doesn't want to tax ourselves to death but we want to have enough money to maintain.
- *Do you think the Select Board has done what they should and made good negotiations on the prices they got us on the taxes due to the Windmills?* John said he thinks the Select Board did the best that they can. He thinks the Town got blindsided on the taxation with the wind farm but he has only been here 5 months so he doesn't know too much on that. He feels we can take it as a lesson learned and look into going forward.
 - *Do you think they have provided stability?* John has only been here 5 months so he thinks they have done a good job. He said there is always room for improvement and learn from your mistakes and move forward.
 - *Define what you mean by blindsided? How was the Town blindsided? The Town spent months and months looking into the Wind Towers, other Towns, etc.* John explained that he was not fully involved in that but he believes some things did not go as the Town expected.
 - *I come to the Select Board meetings and on a typical night it is the same people, also it is the same people that attend the Town Meetings. How are you going to get more people involved?* In a Town that is spread so far apart it is difficult to do. I think we need to hold these meetings to be more productive where we are listening to people and making something out of the conversations. We need to listen to what is said and try to make it happen.

Audience members asked Otto Jesperson the following questions:

- *The number #1 priority for Selectmen should be the security of the Town and of the people, such as drinking water, property taxes, and wind mills. How do you feel about representing the Town and are these concerns of yours?* Otto agreed that the security of the Town is the most important job for the Select Board along with maintaining the taxes, supervising services that are needed.
- *Do you think the Select Board has done what they should and made good negotiations on the prices they got us on the taxes due to the Windmills?* Otto stated that he wasn't here when this was going on and in order to speak to that he would like to review any paperwork, notes, contracts and everything that was done before he can give an opinion. He did say that he does know the windmills have a life span and we need to start planning now to have a plan for what we are going to do and not wait 20 years from now to figure this out.
- *Is there room for improvement as far as the tax rate?* Otto stated that he believes the taxes are quite fair. He knows the county taxes were high this year but it will be fixed next year.
- *I come to the Select Board meetings and on a typical night it is the same people, also it is the same people that attend the Town Meetings. How are you going to get more people involved?* I think one of the biggest things we need to do is encourage more communication between the people, the Select Board and the Town Hall. There is something called Listserv which could be an email that we send out. I am in favor of putting my phone number on the website so you can call at any time. Communication is the biggest thing we can do and if we make it easier for the people to get involved then they will.

Audience members asked Bill Jolly the following questions:

- *The number #1 priority for Selectmen should be the security of the Town and of the people, such as drinking water, property taxes, and wind mills. How do you feel about representing the Town and are these concerns of yours?* Bill stated that the job of government not just Select Board is to protect people by virtue of taxes. The job is to protect the Town as a whole not just one individual or one issue like the wind towers since they are a big issue, but all issues. We need to make sure the water is clean, that those working in the woods are doing their jobs and protecting the land, making sure recreational use of the land doesn't impose on our quality of life.
- *Do you think the Select Board has provided stability and made good decisions regarding the Wind Turbines?* Bill said we have these wind turbines right now which are steel. To dismantle these things, according to Iberdrola when they applied to the SEC, was \$104,000.00 per unit which means the total clean-up for these turbines is \$2.4 million. Right now we have a letter of credit to represent security for \$600,000.00 to be applied to the \$2.4 million. The rest of that is supposed to be taken care of by the value of the steel but we have no control over the price of steel and that is a concern to make sure that Iberdrola honors its obligation to clean up its mess in the event it does go under. These are the things that haven't happened and need to be looked at to protect the Town. He feels there were things that should have happened that didn't and now we have to figure out how to deal with them. He said he did see the Select Board back then to see what was going on and to see the communication between the Select Board, our attorney and Iberdrola and he took the time to go through the paperwork and he didn't like what he saw. He feels Iberdrola behaved in a very poor fashion and is concerned about the future of the Town which is one reason why he is here but it is not the only reason.
- *Do you think the Select Board has done what they should and made good negotiations on the prices they got us on the taxes?* Bill thinks more homework could have been done, I think the right questions weren't asked at the time, and too much trust was put in our counterparts during the negotiations. The challenge of this is that there are not many Towns that have Wind Turbines and we probably should have gone out of state and got better contacts with those that have been through the process elsewhere. He thinks they could have gotten a better number.
- *Last week you said that you have got in trouble with taxes and if you were a Selectmen you would be lenient. How can you be lenient?* Bill said that he would understand where people are coming from if they are in trouble. He knows that he cannot make the decision alone that there are two other Board members that I would have to work with to try to be lenient and give them an opportunity. Having been through it I can say a little bit of sympathy goes a long way.
- *Is it fair to say that the Town has been lenient in your case?* Yes, the Town was good to me.
- *So you would continue how they have operated in the past, is that fair to say? Yes*
- *The only reason I wanted to clarify that is almost appears as if they were, a quote from last week being a little "stiff" on you. But are you saying they are in fact fairly lenient because that is how it sounds to me?* The people who made the decision were very lenient. Laura and Ann helped me set up a payment plan.

- *The Town Clerk has no authority to make any type of payment arrangements with anyone. Then she must have worked with the Select Board. I have an email with the payment plan.*
- *RSA's regulate the tax laws, property, etc so the Select Board has to follow certain procedures before they can take the property. If you try to be lenient by your own rules then you would have to be careful that someone gets something that someone does not. It cannot go by who you know, it has to go by the RSA's and if you cannot follow the RSA's then you shouldn't be on the Board. If the RSA allows some latitude and it is a reasonable request and I had some room I would try to help the resident.*
- *Do you remember making a very comprehensive and broad request for the public documents relating to the construction and operation of Groton Wind? Yes I do.*
- *Do you remember reading those documents? Yes.*
- *Do you remember publicly stating in this building that you believe that the then Board of Selectmen exercised their due diligence in their interactions with Wind Farm, because I remember you saying that and it appears for whatever reason you have now changed your mind? I do not remember this. If I said it I probably meant it based on the information I had at that time. At that time I did state that there was a discrepancy with the amounts to take the towers down, the application stated \$104,000.00 but the Board was saying \$12,000.00.*
- *So what you're saying here tonight, based on your investigation and research that you have done, you are in a better position than the then sitting Board of Selectmen to negotiate any agreements that they did when you don't even possess a fraction of the information that they did. I think I could. I think that you screwed up based on the bad information that you were given, which we don't know how to cover the costs of the take down since the \$600,000.00 letter of credit will not cover it.*
- *If the then sitting Board of Selectmen did such a horrible job in their interactions with Groton Wind, how come the Town of Groton gets more revenue per megawatt hour than any other wind farm in the state, in fact we get twice the amount that Granite reliable gets. I am not going to get into that, I will say that I am concerned about what we have today and how we are going to deal with it down the road. I bring a financial background that knows about this stuff.*
- *Your primary focus seems to be the decommissioning which the then sitting Board of Selectmen did better than the Town of Lempster because we were not comfortable with the promise from the parent company to decommission so we advocated on behalf of the Towns people of Groton who were not willing to accept that and we dug our heels in to get the letter of credit or assurance guarantee which the Town of Lempster doesn't have. This shows the Town advocated very strongly on behalf of the Town of Groton. It is very easy for someone to sit back and try to play Monday morning quarterback but this Town did the best that they could, with the information that they had and they did reach out to experts, other Towns and got copies of other agreements and I think the board did an excellent job. If I become Selectman I would need that information and would like you to work with me to help me understand and know what it was because we have a real challenge ahead of us. Some mistakes were made but no one is saying it was malicious. We need to know how we are going to deal with this down the road.*
- *I think it is very sad that the position of Select Board has become a conversation of Groton Wind. Yes Wind is a big thing but it is not the biggest thing or the most important thing or the everyday things that the Select Board deals with. Do you feel that your*

character has changed in such a way that you are going to be consistent and follow through and be responsible on all the things that were discussed last week? That is what this should be about, not just Wind. Yes, because it is not all about Wind but Wind is a very pressing issue that cannot be disregarded. My character was fine to begin with and I have no more comment on this issue. If you have any other questions you can find me on www.ivotebill.com and you can go to my Facebook page and ask questions or contact me there.

- *Speaking of your Facebook, there was something about St. Bernard dogs, was this a joke? Yes it is a joke and was supposed to be funny.*
- *Bob Ferriere made a point to state that it is not just Bill that is concerned with the decommissioning it has been brought up and we are already thinking about what is going to happen. It is important and we will deal with it and it will be resolved to the best of our ability at that time. Will we do it perfectly? No, nobody does but we learn from our mistakes and we go on and do what is best for the people of Groton because that is who we are here to represent.*
- *I come to the Select Board meetings and on a typical night it is the same people, also it is the same people that attend the Town Meetings. How are you going to get more people involved? We need to be where the people are like the dump. Also, technology is very big right now so we need to be online, create a Facebook page that is pushed out to the people of Groton which is perfect for the budget since it doesn't cost anything.*
- *I think the people should know that they have been adequately protected as far as the decommissioning goes. There is language in the agreement that causes the issue to be revisited every five years to make sure that it is adequate so even if assuming that it is presently insufficient there is a mechanism that it will automatically get revisited every five years.*

Zoning Board – 2 year term

All spoke last week so it was opened up to new questions that were not asked last week.

Nancy Watson brought up that she also thinks Listserv is a good idea and other towns do this and newsletters which could get more people involved if they know what is going on.

School Budget Committee – 3 year term

Gina Rescigno

Gina spoke last week and there were no new questions for her.

School board – 3 year term

Jeff Levesque

Jeff is on vacation so he was not able to attend this week. He did speak and answer questions last week.

Information on letter to the Editor at Record Enterprise

Christina explained that Nancy Watson emailed Laura and informed her that the Jo O'Connor referred her to the editor of the Record Enterprise who is Brendan Berube. Brendan is welcoming any candidate running for Town Office to send in a letter to the editor to promote themselves. He asked that it be limited to between 350 and 400 words and it can be sent to

record@salmonpress.com. The subject in the email should be candidate editorial. The deadline for submission is Tuesday, March 3rd at noon.

An audience member made a suggestion for candidate night that there should be a moderator and a timer.

Groton Events Facebook Page

Christina informed everyone that there is a Facebook page for Groton Events.

Candidate's Night was closed and the Select Board moved forward with the remainder of their meeting.

Report of Cut - Mike Ethier

Mike Ethier turned in his report of cut. The Select Board reviewed the Timber Tax billing worksheet. Sara will contact the Department of Revenue (DRA) and verify the cut and follow up with them on the last issue.

Christina motioned to table the report of cut for Mike Ethier's report of cut for three weeks until Mike returns from vacation, Kyle 2nd, so voted.

Report of Cut - FORECO

Tom Hahn turned in the report of cut for FORECO for Map 7 Lot 22 which is Victoria's Mountain Way. The Select Board reviewed the Timber Tax billing worksheet.

Kyle motioned to sign the Certification of Yield Taxes for FORECO's report of cut, Bob 2nd, so voted.

Schedule the rest of March Work Sessions

March 3, 2015 is already scheduled for 4:00pm. Also, due to the Elections, March 10, 2015 is scheduled for 5:00pm. The Board agreed to table this until after the elections when new board is set.

Schedule the next Joint Loss Safety Meeting

The Board explained that it is time to schedule the next Joint Loss Safety meeting so they need to decide where they want to have it and the date and time. This will be tabled until the new board is set as well.

SELECT BOARD ITEMS:

Leaking Roof

Kyle thinks it is condensation. We will keep an eye on it to see if it happens again.

North Country Council

We receive something every year regarding the 10 year plan. The Board thought the Orange Atwell Bridge was put on there in the past but Pam doesn't think it made it to the 10 year plan. She said the application should be in a file upstairs. Sara will find the application and send this out. The deadline is Friday, February 27th. Sara will ask if we can file it electronically.

Bob motioned to move forward with submitting the Orange Atwell bridge to the 10 year plan, Christina 2nd, so voted.

Highway Safety Meeting

Glen, EJ, Chief and Christina need to meet on this. The Board is okay with moving forward with the Grants for the Highway Safety. The Chief will take the information. Christina will get in touch with the members tomorrow to set a meeting date.

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS:

An audience member asked if the Town Report will be out next week. Christina explained that we are hoping to get the proof as soon as possible so we can turn around and get our suggestions back to them. They did guarantee we will have it by the date we need it.

An audience member asked if we are getting more than the 250 copies that we did last year. Christina explained no, we are getting the 250 copies.

An audience member suggested to get more people involved by putting the agenda online before the meeting.

An audience member asked if there are different prices depending on the type of Timber. Christina explained that there are. The Department of Revenue sets the values of each type of timber in a range. The Town has a worksheet which scores the cut based on location, type of Timber, etc. and this score assigns the cost within the range for the actual timber tax bill.

An audience member wanted to make a statement that a candidate that was speaking eluded to the fact that the Select Board didn't do anything with the Groton Wind Contract and she saw the board rip their hair out. She knows the Board worked hard and did a great job.

An audience member asked about the Kimball Hill property and if there was any new information on this. The Committee met and there is a meeting next week with someone from Timbervest. Negotiations are non-public work sessions. **Kyle motioned to adjourn at 8:44pm, Christina 2nd, so voted.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Sara Smith
Administrative Assistant