

TOWN OF GROTON
SELECT BOARD MEETING
November 21, 2017

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

Absent: John Rescigno

Audience Members Present

Christina called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.

MINUTE APPROVAL

Christina motioned to approve the Work Session minutes of November 7, 2017, Kyle 2nd, so voted.

Christina motioned to approve the Non-Public Work Session minutes of November 7, 2017, Kyle 2nd, so voted.

Christina motioned to approve the Select Board Meeting minutes of November 7, 2017, Kyle 2nd, so voted.

Christina motioned to table the Work Session minutes of November 14, 2017 until the next meeting, Kyle 2nd, so voted.

NEW BUSINESS:

Mark Zankle, The Nature Conservancy- Kimball Hill Update

Mark Zankle, Director from the Nature Conservancy of New Hampshire, attended the meeting to provide the Town with an update on the purchase of Kimball Hill and brought Jim O'Brien, Director of External Affairs, with him. He explained that he was here in late July to talk about their interest in purchasing the Kimball Hill property in Groton which was 2700 acres in which the sealed bids were due by August 10, 2017 and to see what the Towns wishes were for this property.

Mark explained that they were the successful bidder, they completed a contract with the seller in late August and as of October 25, 2017 they are the owner. They also said at that time that if they won the bid they would come back and talk to the Town and go over the plans for the property and if they Town would have any interest. He explained that he will be giving an update tonight and has a request for the Town.

They bought the property and their interest is in conserving the land, ensuring that there is no future development out there, maintaining for wildlife habitat and forest management, and maintaining public access for recreation. These are also the primary interests that they heard from the Town. At that time, they were thinking about some long term scenarios for the property which could have included The Nature Conservancy owning and managing the property or a Town forest which would require the Town to purchase the property but the town was not sure at that time and wasn't ready to commit to anything at that time.

Since they got the contract on the property they have talked to NH Fish and Game and they are interested in the property and were looking at the property too but they couldn't move quickly and it would take at least a year for them to be able to. They would like to establish this as the State's newest wildlife management area and are willing to put a significant amount of funds towards the project and their goals are consistent with the goals that were discussed in July which are to protect property, prevent development and subdivision, keep it open for hunting, fishing and snowmobiling, manage it for wildlife habitat, etc.

What they are proposing right now is to transfer land to Fish and Game Department, establish the new wildlife management area and The Nature Conservancy would hold a conservation easement on the property which

will be written into deed which states the restrictions and assures the reason The Nature Conservancy purchased the property will be guaranteed over time. The state owning the property will accomplish most everyone's goals and interests.

The project is a 2.1 million dollar project. They paid 1.785 million and then there are other costs with surveying and appraisals. They are getting it appraised to see what the value of the easement would be. They are thinking they will be getting about one million from State and then they have to raise the rest of the money. They are asking that the Town would consider donating \$25,000.00 towards the project of the easement. They have raised about \$575,000.00 so far which leaves \$525,000.00 to be raised. There are two reasons the Town should consider this as it will be an asset to the Town and it sends a good message that the town believes in it enough to put in the money.

Ruth asked if it would have to be a warrant article. It was explained that it would have to.

Lou asked if it would be the intent of the Select Board to draft one. Kyle and Christina said they both would be willing to draft one to let the Town vote on it but since John isn't here they would have to discuss this as a Select Board later on. Christina explained we cannot say yes but we would be willing to put it on the warrant and they would support it. However, we would want more information to present at Town meeting and have someone from The Nature Conservancy here at Town meeting to answer any questions.

Miles asked if Mark if he was aware they have to wait until town meeting. He said that he knew it would have to wait for the meeting on March 17, 2018. Miles asked what the chances are for someone to be at town meeting and Mark said that is a good chance that someone would be.

Lou said funding sources have a better chance if the Select Board supports it. Lou asked if the Town could have a copy of the display that they brought to the meeting and they said they would get us one.

Ongoing Excavation Letter

The Select Board met a few weeks ago with Mike Ethier and with Mary Pinkham-Langer regarding the property on Beaver Pond Road to discuss excavation on the property. It was decided he will be considered grandfathered for the existing excavation but needs to file intents to excavate and pay taxes for the years that he didn't file which were 2001, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017, and any expansion he has to go before the Zoning Board and Planning Board. Sara drafted the letter explaining all of this and the Select Board and Mary from the Department of Revenue have looked it over and made some changes.

Christina motioned to sign the ongoing excavation letter, Kyle 2nd, so voted.

Ann asked why he doesn't have to file for the years not mentioned. It was explained that the Department of Revenue went through their files and these were the years he didn't file an intent to excavate, he did file for all other years.

Miles asked if there are going to be outstanding excavation taxes due as a result of this. Christina mentioned that he will be paying the excavation tax for each year that was not exempt. We do not know exactly until we see what he files and the Department of Revenue will look at the intents to make sure it is accurate to what has been done as she is very familiar with the property. Miles was happy to see that the Mike Ethier situation is being resolved as it has been going on for a long time.

Miles asked if Mike Ethier is involved in the activity that is taking place at the old Sewell property off North Groton Road. It was explained that Mike Ethier is not involved. There is a new owner which is Casey Kuplin and there have been some concerns about this and we have talked to Casey about them. He is very willing to work with the Town, the Department of Revenue and will be meeting with the Planning Board regarding this.

Transfer of funds- Disaster Relief Capital Reserve Fund

Sara created a Memo to the Trustees of the Trust Fund requesting they transfer \$30,000.00 from the Disaster Capital Reserve Fund to Meredith Village Savings bank to cover the we are receiving until we get the funds from FEMA once a decision is made. **Christina motioned to sign the Memo requesting the transfer of funds from the Disaster Relief Capital Reserve Fund to Meredith Village Savings bank, Kyle 2nd, so voted.**

It was explained that the Highway Department is still continuing to do work on the roads and Sara will reach out to Glen to get an update on the roads. There has not been a final decision made on FEMA funds at this time.

Intent to Cut- Map 2 lot 41

Robert Berti submitted an Intent to Cut for Green Acre Woodland's property on Map 2 Lot 41, on Halls Brook Road for a 15 acre cut. No timber tax bond is required and all information is correct. **Christina motioned to sign the Report of Cut for Map 2 Lot 41, Kyle 2nd, so voted.**

Avitar- Terra Mapping Services Agreement

Avitar sent in the Mapping Services Agreement. The cost and everything is the same as last year. **Christina motioned to sign the 2018 Avitar Terra Mapping Services Agreement, Kyle 2nd, so voted.**

Appointment & Resignation Policy

Ruth submitted a Memo requesting the Town to adopt a policy when a resident is appointed to a Board, Committee, etc. that a signed "letter of appointment" be submitted to the Town Clerk before the member is sworn in. She created a sample letter that the Town could use. Also, she requested that she gets copies of all resignations as she is required to keep these with the oaths for three years. Sara drafted a policy regarding this. **Christina motioned to table the Appointment & Resignation Policy until the December 5th meeting, Kyle 2nd, so voted.**

2017 Equalization Municipal Assessment Data Certificate

We still have not yet received the information from Avitar that is needed before we sign the 2017 Equalization Municipal Assessment Data Certificate. **Christina motioned to table the 2017 Equalization Municipal Assessment Data Certificate until the preliminary information from Avitar is received, Kyle 2nd, so voted.**

Signs at Town Garage

John suggested placing signs at the Town garage that clearly state parking is for Town equipment only and violators will be ticketed. Sara will talk to Glen about purchasing two signs, one on each side of the driveway that says "Town Equipment only".

SELECT BOARD ITEMS:

Thanksgiving baskets

The Town received five turkey dinners which were donated anonymously and Kyle, John and EJ delivered them to five families. The Town of Groton wants thank you to those that donated anonymously and Kyle, John and EJ for delivering them to the residents.

Collection Bins

Christina reminded everyone that there are collections bins for food and winter clothing at the Town House, which will be collected up until December 15, 2017.

Tax Rate

The Town is currently working on setting the tax rate. We received the preliminary rate, made some changes and submitted it back to the Department of Revenue. Once they get back to us and finalize it we will run the warrant and send the tax bills. We cannot give an exact number at this time but there was a \$3.41 increase between the local school, state education and county taxes and we cannot manipulate these numbers so the tax rate will be increasing.

Kyle explained that our school bill went up \$25,000.00 a month. Christina explained that it is not just our Town that is experiencing the increase.

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS:

Town Garage

Robert Ellis asked what is going on with the Town Garage as far as the clean-up goes. Sara explained we are waiting for an estimate from clean harbors regarding the dirt work.

He asked about the building and if everything was done with the building. ServPro has been working on cleaning the town garage but they haven't been there for a few days. Sara will follow up with ServPro to see where the project stands and with Primex to see what the next step will be.

Having no other business to conduct, Kyle motioned to adjourn at 745pm, Christina 2nd, so voted.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sara Smith
Administrative Assistant