

TOWN OF GROTON  
SELECT BOARD MEETING  
December 5, 2017

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

**Audience Members Present**

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

**MINUTE APPROVAL**

**Kyle motioned to approve the Work Session minutes of November 21, 2017, Christina 2nd, so voted. John abstained.**

**Kyle motioned to approve the Non-Public Work Session minutes of November 21, 2017, Christina 2nd, so voted. John abstained.**

**Kyle motioned to approve the Select Board Meeting minutes of November 21, 2017, Christina 2nd, so voted. John abstained.**

**NEW BUSINESS:**

Christina was on her way so it was decided to go skip over the old business and go over some new business until she gets there. Once she gets there they will go back to the old business and then return to the rest of the new business that was on the agenda.

*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. **John motioned to table the Appointment & Resignation Policy, Kyle 2nd, so voted.**

*2017 Equalization Municipal Assessment Data Certificate*

This was tabled from last week's meeting. The Department of Revenue Administration sent in the yearly equalization municipal assessment data certificate to be signed by the Select Board. The Equalization Ratio is where the assessments fall during the year and should reflect market value as close as possible to 100%. The State will review the information submitted, which will be reviewed by the State Department of Revenue. The Certificate is what the Town needs to submit to release the information to the State. We did receive the information from the Department of Revenue which states **John motioned to sign the 2017 Equalization Municipal Assessment Data Certificate, Kyle 2<sup>nd</sup>, so voted.**

Pam asked what the rate is listed on Avitar's letter. The preliminary analysis indicates a median sales to assessment ration of 102.2% but since 18 sales wouldn't provide a large enough sample so they did an analysis of sales from 4/1/16 through 9/30/17 which indicates a median sales to assessment ration of 100.557% which they anticipate the final DRA ration to be similar but we have not received those as of yet.

*Abatement application- UTL-003*

The taxable value of Map UTL Lot 003, which is owned by Northern New England Telephone Operations LLC, was adjusted in the fall which resulted in an overpayment of taxes in the Spring of \$226.00. We need to abate this amount so they can receive the refund for this. **John motioned to approve the abatement application for Map UTL Lot 003, Kyle 2<sup>nd</sup>, so voted.**

### *Wex- Notice of Federal Tax Exemption*

Wex submitted the Notice of Federal Tax Exemption form for 2018 as the previous one expires on March 22, 2018. This is the same form we filled out for the Police Department last week but this one is for the Highway Department. **John motioned to sign the Wex notice of Federal Tax Exemption Form, Kyle 2nd, so voted.**

### *Septic Plan local approval, Map 5 Lot 129*

Bruce Barnard dropped off a Septic Plan and local approval for Map 5 Lot 129. All information submitted is correct. **John motioned to sign the local approval for Map 5 Lot 129, Kyle 2nd, so voted.**

### *Building Permit- Map 2 Lot 62*

The owners submitted a building permit for a 12x14 wood shed on their property on 1047 North Groton Road. **John motioned to sign the building permit for Map 7 Lot 24, Kyle 2nd, so voted.**

Christina arrived so it was decided to go back to the old business and then they will return to the rest of the new business that was on the agenda.

## **OLD BUSINESS:**

### *Tax Rate Update*

Everyone should have received their tax bills by now which also had a letter in them explaining the increase in the tax rate. 2016 tax rate was \$11.70 and 2017 is \$15.64. The letter provided the 2017 tax rate breakdown (compared to 2016) is as follows:

1. Town portion went from \$0.40 to \$0.93, an **increase** of \$0.53.
2. Local school went from \$5.06 to \$7.46, an **increase** of \$2.40.
3. State education tax went from \$3.43 to \$4.11, an **increase** of \$0.68.
4. County tax went from \$2.81 to \$3.14, an **increase** of \$0.33.
5. The overall tax rate went from \$11.70 to \$15.64, an **increase** of \$3.94. The majority of this increase is from education costs.

The Town cannot manipulate the local, state or county portions of the tax rate. These three totaled \$14.71 of the \$15.64 tax rate. The Town did apply \$200,000.00 from the unassigned fund balance and changed the overlay to \$10,000.00 to bring the Town's portion down. The Town's portion would have been \$3.57 without any money applied.

Pam asked if we kept back money from the bridge. Christina explained that the money that was raised for the bridge from the warrant article was transferred to the Atwell Orange Brook Bridge Capital Reserve Fund. Pam just wanted to make sure the money would be there for the bridge next year and she was assured it will be.

Miles stated he was shocked when he got the tax bill. He qualified for the veteran's credit so his tax bill was \$500.00 less than it would have been and it was still shocking to see the amount. He did some checking with the last years and this year's tax rate to compare numbers. What he noticed was that between 2016 and 2017 appropriations were only about \$34,000.00 difference. With these being pretty similar and him not being aware of anything else that would have thrown a wrench into that equation he was wondering how the Town tax rate potentially doubled. To make a long story short, he had a very hard time trying to wrap his head around this and he spent a lot of time last night and today going through the taxes. As he figured things out what he hadn't realized is how little the taxes raised from the tax rate contributed towards the operating budget. He assumed it was much greater than it is. He asked what that number is, the number from only the town portion of the tax rate that is raised in revenue from the tax bills that goes towards the operating budget. Christina pulled reports. She explained that the budget for 2017 was \$1,030,037.00. The revenue that is used to offset the budget is \$783,080.00 so without applying any money the net to the Town would have been

\$246,957.00. She explained that for every \$77,000.00 that you add to your budget, the tax rate that goes up \$1.00. Miles said there are several other revenues for the Town that play a larger role besides the tax bill. Sara and Christina explained that when we do the MS-434, the estimated revenue report, it doesn't look at property taxes, it only looks at other revenues such as the pilot payment, vehicle registrations, permits, etc. Miles asked if LUCT, Timber, etc. is. Sara confirmed that these are. Pamela asked what the pilot payment was for the year. It took some math to figure it out and it was confirmed that the revenue from the pilot payments were around \$579,000.00. It was explained that we now claim all four payments on the revenue report. Miles said that it appears that we only generate about \$80,000.00 from the tax bill that goes up just for the revenue raised from the Town portion of the taxes based on the numbers he got from Sara yesterday. Christina explained that the net required local tax effort was \$73,514.00. Miles thought there would be more. Christina explained that part of this is because we are applying money every time we set the tax rate to keep the town portion down. We agreed that with the budget staying at the rate it is the town rate is going to have to come up but this year with the local school, state, and county portions being so high we felt we had to apply the \$200,000.00 so that it wasn't such a big hit all at once. We would have like to been able to do more but if we took this money out and didn't apply the \$200,000.00 the Town rate would have been \$3.45 instead of the \$0.93 with the \$10,000.00 overlay that we did. We tried more than five different scenarios to keep this down.

Pam asked how much was retained since we put \$200,000.00 from the unassigned fund balance towards the tax rate. Christina explained the amount retained was \$229,147.00. The DRA provides a maximum recommendation of 17% and a minimum of 5% retained and we were at 10.65%. Christina also explained that before this bill there is still about \$99,000.00 in unpaid taxes.

Christina explained with the road damage we looked at the unpaid taxes, took some money from the disaster relief capital reserve fund and will probably have to take more which is why we didn't want to bring the amount retained any lower. Pam asked if there were going to be FEMA funds. Sara explained that this is possible. We have met with FEMA and Sara talked to Paul Hatch last week. He said at that point they were still compiling the information to send to the President. Once they send it to the President it will all be reviewed to see if it will be declared. If declared we will get some funds but he said this probably won't be declared until at least January and then the paperwork and everything will start in order to receive any funds.

Christina explained that the school is the worst part of it and she recommends that the townspeople go to the school meetings and deliberative sessions to help going forward. She also provided information from how other Towns were affected, although she didn't have all of the Towns information. Groton went from 5.06 to 7.46, Hebron went from .26 to .53, Bristol went from 8.33 to 9.77, Danbury went from 11.47 to 12.51, and New Hampton went from 7.99 to 9.23. She didn't have Alexandria or Bridgewater's information.

Bubba asked what the cost is per student, we didn't have the exact number at the time but Kyle explained that our monthly bill increased from about \$49,000.00 a month to about \$74,000.00 a month which is a \$25,000.00 increase. Sara explained that the amount of kids that attend the school from Groton increased to 57. Pam said something to know with the school, that even if the budget stays the same and even if we don't get more students we could still pay more because we pay a percentage of overall students for the school district. The school population could decrease but we could have the same amount of students so our cost could increase. Sara explained that there are many factors that feed into it, the amount of kids that go to school, the amount that use the school transportation, etc.

Miles said it was his understanding that the school adopted a tax cap a few years. Christina explained that it wasn't rescinded, that vote failed but they did pass an increase of \$800,000.00. The roof passed. Everything on the warrant passed except the school resource officer.

Miles said last he knew the budget used to be around 22 or 23 million for the school so if you add another 1 to 2 million that is a 5-10% increase to the budget but we are looking at a 47.4% increase. Christina explained the state funding formula has changed which makes the Towns pay more.

Miles asked if the Select Board has taken into consideration addressing this by sending letters to convey concerns, support, whatever it is. According to his numbers the county went up 12%, the state education went up almost 20%, the local education went up 48% and these are not sustainable numbers. He said that he wanted to correct something. When he spoke at Town meeting this year he said he was on a fixed budget and he is but he is not living in poverty. However, he did not retire to plan on giving most of his money towards this rate of increase on taxation. So again his question is does the Select Board plan on addressing this on a state, county level? Christina said to be honest they haven't been able to talk about it yet but they do think it is a good idea so they will discuss this.

Miles said that he doesn't know how much of the increase on the state portion is due to the full day kindergarten or not. He doesn't see Keno producing the revenue that they think it will so that may add further burden. They promised about \$1,100.00 per kid even before the first Keno game was played. Christina mentioned that we even tuition in Hill and that did seem to help.

Ruth said we need to keep into consideration the population of the Town that are on fixed income and elderly and she agrees something needs to be said that this is not sustainable.

Lastly Miles apologized for adding work he made the Town do but now he has a deeper appreciation for what goes into setting the tax rate.

Pam said that there was a time there was no one going to the school deliberative session. Then back in 2009 there was an increase in the taxes so people started to attend and now it is back down to no one showing up. This is where we get to voice our opinions so we should be there.

The first Deliberative Session is February 3, 2018 at 10:00 am at Newfound Regional High School with a snow date February 5, 2018 at 6:30 pm.

### **NEW BUSINESS:**

#### *Citizens Planning Committee*

Pam Hamel is the Chairman of the Citizen's Planning Committee and she thanked the Town for the opportunity to speak. This committee was formed to assist the Planning Board with their planning process to identify and implement planning that is appropriate for this community and consisting with the visions and principals with the Master Plan.

The committee is made up of eight members: Pam Hamel who is the chair, Bonnie Lane is the vice chair, Michelle Lacroix, Steve Lindsey, Vicky Kimball, Bernard Dauphinais, Tony Tavares and Deb Johnson who is the secretary and Planning Board liaison.

The Committees responsibilities will be to determine the heartbeat of the community by reaching out to resident and property owners to ascertain what, if anything, they want to do to implement the vision and principles of the Masterplan which was originally drafted after getting feedback from the community. A long time has passed since they handed out those surveys so now they want to know what the community wants to do. They have met a few times and have decided they want to keep the Groton citizens informed, provide an avenue to ask questions and make suggestions, provide education regarding what their options are, to protect our community and our lifestyle that we currently have.

They are hoping to accomplish this in a number of ways such as surveys, direct mailings, a committee web page to explain the scope and timeline of this project, who is on the committee, contact information, ways to submit thoughts and feedback, a committee email address, active calls from the committee, asking Ruth to publish updates in the Talk of the Town, put poster board here at the town offices, schedule a forum for Friday evening and a following Saturday morning here at the Town House for questions and answers, a brief presentation and have stations to look at options to see what community can do moving forward. The process will be education not only for the townspeople but also for the committee because they didn't know where to start. They want to explore all options which will take time, energy, thought and finances. Most of the work is volunteer but if people do express interest in some type of land use regulations we would want the correct type of regulations brought to the Town for the vote. They want to do it right the first time and they don't want to rush it. The only way to do that is a massive outreach which is difficult in our Town which is why they have all of these ideas.

The Committee is asking for a few things from the Select Board which some require the assistance of the Administrative Assistance. Sara has been posting the meetings for them which they appreciate. They would like if Sara could print the agendas and put them in planning board cabinet, along with the meeting minutes to have available in 5 days, would like assistance with a page on the website for the committee which Bernard would sit with Sara to get this up and running if she wanted. Pam talked to Dave about the email address which would be [cpc@grotonnh.org](mailto:cpc@grotonnh.org) which he can set it up and wont charge. The Committee is trying to be as independent as possible but need assistance. Finally they are asking for the Select Board support moving forward. The Planning Board has contract with Steve Whitman who has a lot of contacts, research, and is looking for what Groton wants to do. Christina asked if this is out of Planning Board budget. Pam explained it is and NLRA will pay for some of these expenses which would be a reimbursement.

The Select Board is fine with Sara assisting with these things in her spare time. Sara mentioned that it doesn't sound like these things will take that much time with the exception of setting up the web page. Christina asked how quickly they are looking to set up the web page. The next meeting they will be putting together dates as to when they would like things but they haven't picked a date as of yet but will let us know. They will also ask for a mailing list to do a mass mailing. They would like to do a presentation at Town meeting to go over the plan. Then if there is plan for some type of land use regulation they would get it drafted so it would be ready for 2019 Town Meeting.

Elizabeth asked that as far as the Select Board to print agendas and minutes would this come out of the Planning Board Budget because anytime the library or cemetery prints anything it comes out of Elizabeth's pocket so if the Planning Board has the Select Board office do it then they will as well. Pam mentioned that this would be hard to track because it is a matter of pages and how do you determine what to charge per pay. Also they do not have access to a printer like the library does which is why they need the assistance. Christina said there is a fine line there but the trustees can print here as well. Sara explained that she does print out the postings for all committees and boards.

Pam mentioned that they have another meeting scheduled for

#### *Turnstone- DPW Contract*

Turnstone submitted a draft of the contract for the Public Works Building. Sara emailed it to the Select Board for review. Sara asked if we should submit this to the attorney for review. It was agreed that this should be sent to the attorney. **Christina motioned to send the DPW contract to the attorney for review, Kyle 2nd, so voted.**

### *Primex- Contribution Assurance Program*

Primex has a new program called the Contribution Assurance Program which offers the option of participating in the program for the next three years. It provides stability to members by creating a limit on the property and liability contributions for future renewals. This offer qualifies Groton for the following:

- July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020 it offers a maximum increase of 9% over the July 1, 2018 through June 30, 2019 contribution
- July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021 it offers a maximum increase of 9% over the July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020 contribution
- July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022 it offers a maximum increase of 9% over the July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021 contribution

Actual increases will not exceed that percentage but could actually be lower, based on each members and the pools risk management performance and exposure changes. **Kyle motioned to sign the Primex Contribution Assurance Program, John 2nd, so voted.**

### *Important School dates*

We received a letter from the School that has importance dates for upcoming Newfound Area School District meetings. They are as follows:

- **Budget Hearing** January 12, 2018 6:30 pm at Newfound Regional High School Snow date January 13, 2018 10:00 am
- **Petition for Warrant Articles** due by: January 9, 2018 3:30 pm
- **First Day to file for District Positions** January 24, 2018
  - School Board positions to be filled this year
    - ❖ Bristol 2 – year term
    - ❖ Danbury 3 – year term
    - ❖ Groton 3 – year term
    - ❖ Hebron 3 – year term
  - Budget Committee positions to be filled this year
    - ❖ Danbury 3 – year term
    - ❖ Groton 3 – year term
    - ❖ Hebron 3 – year term
  - Moderator 1 – year term
- **Last Day to file for District Positions** February 2, 2018 3:30 pm
- **First Deliberative Session** February 3, 2018 10:00 am at Newfound Regional High School Snow date February 5, 2018 6:30 pm
- **Voting Day** (Second Session) March 13, 2018

### *Christmas basket questions*

Elizabeth Jespersen is heading up the Christmas baskets this year and she had the following questions:

- a) Do we know who/how many families? There were five that were done for Thanksgiving so we should do these again and if we can think of anyone else we will let her know.
- b) Can additional food items be purchased if needed besides hams? The Town didn't put any money into these baskets it was donations that were received. Kyle mentioned that we do have a few people that he can get in touch with for donations.

She would like to shop on Thursday December 14th for delivery on Saturday December 16<sup>th</sup>. John and EJ can assist and they will do the morning.

John asked if we are doing a toy drive but we didn't get approached this year to do anything. We usually get called the week after thanksgiving. They had a successful turkey trot. We will accept donations of gift cards or money towards gifts.

## **QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS:**

### *Newest Fraud*

EJ informed the Town of the newest Fraud. It is a letter coming from Portugal, Spain stating that you have won money.

### *Informational Session*

EJ explained the next information session will be on December 18, 2017 at 6:30pm and will be about preparing for winter. Light refreshments will be served.

### *Town Garage*

Robert Ellis asked what the status with the garage is. Sara explained that as of November 16<sup>th</sup>, 2017 ServPro had completed their portion. Sara is waiting to hear back from Primex about the next step. As far as the fuel spill outside, clean harbors came out and we are waiting for a quote.

### *Planning Board Minutes*

Miles mentioned that not all of the Planning Board minutes were online and he asked if it was on the Planning Boards end or on Sara's end. Sara explained that she has been asking for the updated minutes. Sara explained that she only received them when Elizabeth resigned and she asked Elizabeth to send them over which she did. Other than those Sara has not received any minutes from the Planning Board. The drafts are not even in the binder. The Select Board asked Sara to reach back out to the Planning Board and remind them of the requirements and request all missing meeting minutes be sent ASAP.

### *Master Plan*

Ruth asked that an updated Master Plan be provided. It was explained that it hasn't been adopted yet. There was a draft online but Deb Johnson asked Sara to take it down.

### *Disaster Relief*

Ron asked if the amount of money that was transferred from the Disaster Relief Capital Reserve Fund was all of it. It was explained it was only \$30,000.00 which is about half. He said that he heard a rumor that this is why the Highway Department stopped working on the roads. This is not true.

**Having no other questions or comments, Christina motioned to go into non-public session pursuant to RSA 91-A:3 II (a) and (b) at 8:30pm, Kyle 2<sup>nd</sup>, so voted.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Sara Smith  
Administrative Assistant