

TOWN OF GROTON
SELECT BOARD MEETING
October 6, 2020

In Attendance: John Rescigno, Tony Albert, Ron Madan and Sara Smith (Administrative Assistant)

Audience Members Present

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

MINUTE APPROVAL

John motioned to approve the Non-Public Work Session Meeting minutes of September 15, 2020 as written, Ron 2nd, so voted.

John motioned to approve the Work Session Meeting minutes of September 15, 2020 as written, Ron 2nd, so voted.

John motioned to approve the Select Board Meeting minutes of September 15, 2020 as written, Tony 2nd, so voted.

John motioned to approve the Work Session Meeting minutes of September 23, 2020 as written, Tony 2nd, so voted.

John motioned to approve the Work Session Meeting minutes of September 28, 2020 as written, Ron 2nd, so voted.

NEW BUSINESS:

Miles Sinclair- Suggestions for Highway Garage

Miles had asked to added to the agenda to discuss some ideas for the Highway Garage. Miles mentioned that he bumped into Tony and was made aware of the some of the changes that have taken place from the public hearing in September and was looking for more detail and thought the Town should be informed as well.

John mentioned that they are working on revising the building to move the offices, restrooms, etc. to the back of the building to save on the size of the building which will save on concrete, roofing, etc. Tony mentioned this is new since he saw Miles but this would reduce the size from 92 feet to 75 feet. Bubba mentioned that after that last meeting he went and measured every vehicle and took into consideration what everyone said at the meeting. If we move the offices to that back of two of the bays, we could do a pickup and the backhoe and still have room for the offices in the back of those two bays. The other two bays will be the deeper bays for the bigger equipment. The office sizes are a little smaller than they were as well and we did away with the storage unit. This took off around \$130,000.00. Miles asked what the costs would be with that and if it includes bond interest. Bubba said we are still waiting on final numbers but that would bring the building to around \$1,050,000.00. The plan is to see about closing out the Perambulation and Fire Capital reserve funds so the money from these would go back to the general fund so we could submit a warrant article for those amounts to go towards the building. We would still have the grant of \$250,000.00 and the money in the Public Works Capital Reserve Fund which would also be deducted from the amount to be bonded. This would bring it under \$700,000.00 to be bonded, depending on the final numbers we are waiting for and we will have the totals with bond interest by the next meeting.

Miles said he wants to be clear that he doesn't dispute that the building is needed but he wants to make sure we get the 2/3 majority vote that is required. He also recognizes in his opinion this is the best opportunity since we have been working on this to make this a reality and he wants us to be successful. He has some other ideas that are designed to make primary focus at town meeting this project and knows that the Select Board is at the discretion to adopt or reject every single one of them but these are all designed to make the primary focus of Town Meeting 2021 this project and he thinks if we can minimize any other interference it is more beneficial. His ideas were as follows:

- He also was going to mention the Perambulation and Fire Equipment Capital Reserve Funds.
- He thinks we should utilize the money to the extent that we can from the unreserved fund balance for two purposes being to stabilize the tax rate and if any excess monies that the Select Board feels in their discretion that they can use to reduce the cost of the project.
- He thinks it is very important to keep the focus on what the main priority is, which is to get this warrant article to pass and construct the building.
- Present a lean town operating budget and warrant articles to only needs at this point, not wants.
- There are certain Capital Reserve Funds (CRF) that we contribute to on a regular basis that he would urge the Select Board to review all of them and see if any of them can be put off for a year. He came up with at least two and one of them is the Heavy Equipment CRF since it was mentioned that we are not buying anyone heavy equipment in the near future. Also, the Atwell Orange Brook Bridge CRF could wait since we will not need a bridge for about 75 years.
- The Town normally does a warrant article for about \$20,000.00- \$25,000.00 for the maintenance Groton Town Roads but he is suggesting foregoing this or lowering it this year. He feels that we are in a really good place road maintenance wise. He knows that River Road still needs work but his suggestion would be to forego this warrant article for the \$25,000.00 but he knows in last year's warrant there was an article that passed for \$100,000.00 so he thinks we should submit that and use some for River Road and if there is excess money that could go towards other Groton Roads.
- The last suggestion he has is that he showed the Select Board the article in the paper about the Polonsky decision in Bedford. The Town used to be able to hold on to deeded for three years and at the end of the three years if the property owners hadn't redeemed it, it becomes the property of the Town. For example, if they owed \$10,000.00 in back taxes and the house sold for \$250,000.00, the Town could keep the \$240,000.00. That was recently overturned by the NH Supreme Court. They determine that was an unconstitutional taking of property. There is no reason at this point for the Town to hold on to these properties longer than necessary. They really should be back on the Town tax rolls so he doesn't think we should deny people a reasonable opportunity to redeem their property if they can. There is a process for that and there is an additional fee so he thinks maybe wait one year for the prior owners but beyond that he would urge the Select Board do a complete review of town owned properties and any with clear deeds we should put on the warrant next year to sell these properties. Miles said to use realtor was a better option than an auction to get more money for the Town but in order to do that it has to be a separate warrant at Town Meeting.

John mentioned we have discussed the majority of the things Miles discussed and will definitely look into these suggestions. John said as they know the Select Board has done a phenomenal job the last few years with keeping the budget low and the towns portion of the tax rate low while accomplishing a multitude of large projects that have greatly improved the Town. They definitely want the building to go through and want to do what we can as this is probably our last chance to be able to take advantage of a

grant coming through and we know that USDA may not approve grants going forward if we do not have a new building. John said we need help from the people to squash rumors that we don't need the building, or that we are building a taj mahal, or that we should move the building that is down there or the other things. We also need help spreading the word that we are looking at the budget and doing what we can to keep a reasonable tax rate and keep it where it is without going up at all.

Miles said that he does know how hard everyone works and he respects that job that they do and there were many people on the board in the past that did just as much. Everyone has been striving to make Groton a better town. Miles said his hats off to Tony for being on the board. He still remembers Tony's Dad saying "there was nobody in Town that cared more about the Town than him" and if there is anyone that has the pulse of the Town in regards to what they think the Townspeople are looking to adopt or not, Tony is it. John agreed that we are fortunate to have Tony on the board. Tony said he has lived here all his life and isn't going anywhere now.

All-Ways Accessible Agreement

The Town of Groton uses All-ways Accessible every year for our elevator inspections and maintenance. They have sent a new contract for 2020-2021, which is \$100.00 more than the 2018-2019. **John motioned to sign the 2020-2021 contract for All-Ways accessible, Tony 2nd, so voted.**

State of NH- Election Notification

Ruth asked the Select Board to sign the notice that the polls will be open between 8:00am and 7:00pm on Tuesday, November 3, 2020 for elections. **John motioned to sign the election notification, Tony 2nd, so voted.**

Tony Albert mentioned that the Select Board met with Tony Tavares earlier and it was agreed to do a warrant article to change the elections from 8:00am to 7:00pm to 11:00am to 7:00pm. It is a long day and Hebron does the shorter hours and it seems to go well for them. The Town will submit a warrant article and see how the people vote.

Class VI Road Letter

Jason Cormier submitted a request to add a top layer of crushed stone to the Class VI section of Bailey Hill Road from the Will Colburn section down to 306 Bailey Hill Road. **John motioned to approve both the Class VI Road improvements request for Bailey Hill Road, Ron 2nd, so voted.**

Building Permit- Map 6 Lot 15

The owner submitted building permit for their property on North Groton Road for 24x34 garage. They went before the Zoning Board and Planning Board for the special exception for the mechanics business and both boards had public hearings and have approved moving forward with the building permit. There was an issue with the posting for the Planning Board public hearing. Apparently, it was never posted even though Sara did send the request so the Planning Board will have to have another hearing but the Chair doesn't think this should delay the building permit. The Select Board agrees. However, they marked that it will be heated or cooled but didn't submit the PUC approval which will be needed. **John motioned to sign the letter requesting PUC approval and motioned to come in and sign the building permit once the PUC approval has been received, Tony 2nd, so voted.**

Local septic approval- Map 2 Lot 115-1

Stephen Tower dropped off a Septic Plan and local approval for Map 2 Lot 115-1. All the information is correct. **John motioned to sign the local approval for Map 2 Lot 115-1, Tony 2nd, so voted.**

Trick or Treating

Halloween is Saturday, October 31st. The Select Board would like to allow it and let the people decide if they want to participate or not. It was agreed the trick or treating hours should be 5:00pm-8:00pm. Sara will post this online and on the Groton Facebook page.

DEPARTMENT ITEMS:

Highway Department

Bubba went over the following items:

- The final paving on Sculptured Rocks Road from the October 2017 storm is finished. They will be coming back to do the rest of the shoulder gravel. Fred and Norm did the driveways that were on that section. We are close to closing out the FEMA project.
- All three culverts have been installed for the Sculptured Rocks Culvert Project. There are some items that still need to be done before it will be considered completed.
- Sculptured Rocks Road project- Mike Latulippe provided a schedule for the road work which is as follows:
 - October 5-9: Complete culvert installations. Begin underdrain piping near Hardy Country Road.
 - October 12-16: Remove reclaim asphalt, add gravel, replace reclaim STA. 51+50-59+00. Remove reclaim asphalt, add gravel, replace reclaim STA. 19+00-34+00 as needed. Complete underdrain installation.
 - October 18-23: Complete gravel work to STA. 34+00 build stone lined ditches.
 - October 26-30: Fine grade road, install base course asphalt paving. Install shoulder gravel.
- The new truck has arrived and the vinyl lettering was done yesterday. Bubba is very happy with the truck.

Police Department

Chief Bagan explained that he will be purchasing two radar-controlled speed signs. Slim asked how much the units are. Chief said they are around \$3,400.00 each.

COMMITTEE UPDATES:

Building Committee Meeting or Road

Bubba said that he feels bad that the building committee wasn't able to be that involved in the changes because we had to move fast with the USDA grant and with COVID made it hard. Bubba may try to have a meeting with them before the next informational meeting and let them know it wasn't to keep them out but it was the circumstances. Ann said that she understands and thinks the other members do too.

The next Informational meeting on the building will be November 17, 2020 at 7:00pm.

Cemetery Committee

Slim mentioned that Jim Gaffey called and told him that when trustees are planning a cemetery, they need to do a layout and would be hiring someone to assist with this. Sara explained that Jim had reached out and asked to be added to the October 20, 2020 meeting agenda to discuss this with the Select Board which may change their budget.

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS:

Building questions

- Miles asked if the Town is deferring the construction of the salt and sand shed. Tony said they won't be taken out but it is something to look at. The salt one is definitely needed but the sand shed can be revisited.
- Tony mentioned that we did find out that in order to get the grant it has to be a complete building.

1061 North Groton Road

The residents from 1061 North Groton Road wanted to meet with the Select Board regarding the letter they received about parking and having a dumpster in the right of way. The Select Board stated that they did notice the cars have been moved. The residents are concerned that the letter says the right of way is 33 feet from the center of the road because this means that their porch and house are in the right of way and it has been this way since the building permit was approved. The Select Board said they understand this and the house and porch obviously cannot be moved. The right of way is 33 feet from the center of the road but they are asking that cars, dumpster, etc. be at least 6 feet from the pavement. They are trying to get the dumpster removed and have been moving the cars. The Select Board explained that they are not the only ones that got the letter and are okay with the changes they made so far. The Town appreciates them reading the letter and responding.

Having no other business to conduct, John motioned to adjourn at 7:30pm, Tony 2nd, so voted.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sara Smith
Administrative Assistant