

TOWN OF GROTON
SELECT BOARD MEETING
November 17, 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 November 10, 2020 as written, Ron 2nd, so voted.

John motioned to approve the Work Session Meeting minutes of November 10, 2020 as written, Ron 2nd, so voted.

John motioned to approve the Select Board Meeting minutes of November 10, 2020 as written, Tony 2nd, so voted.

NEW BUSINESS:

Information Meeting on potential Public Works Building/Highway Garage

John thanked everyone for coming out. He thinks these meetings are important to make sure everyone gets the same information and we are on the same page before we vote on the Town Garage in March. The Select Board explained that we have been working with the architects since the last informational meeting and had the plans changed based on some of the advice and information that the residents brought forward at the last meeting on the building. The updated plans and costs are based on a 4-bay garage with the offices at the back to save room instead of them being on the side which reduced the cost of the building to \$1,083,409.00. There is still the grant money for \$250,000.00 which will be deducted from this. The grant is only for an entire building and cannot be done in sections so this will only be awarded to the Town if it is built as an entire building such as on the plans. There is \$50,000.00 in the Public Works Capital Reserve Fund that would be applied to this. Also, the Select Board will submit warrant articles at Town meeting to close the Fire and Equipment Capital Reserve Fund and the Perambulation Capital Reserve Fund. This would give \$64,000.00 from the Fire CRF and \$34,000.00 from the Perambulation CRF to apply towards this. With all of these things applied that would leave around \$685,409.00 left for the Town to Bond. This hasn't gone out to bid and we cannot send it out to bid until the town votes on this in March. The Select Board does feel that the cost will be less than this when it actually goes out for bid. The Town contacted the Municipal Bond company and they provided the following bond information based on a 10-year bond with a 2% interest, which they said could be lower, and decided to do it on \$700,000.00 to go a little higher so there are not any shocks at the end:

1st year payment	\$94,500.00
2nd year payment	\$82,600.00
3rd year payment	\$81,200.00
4th year payment	\$79,800.00
5th year payment	\$78,400.00
6th year payment	\$77,000.00
7th year payment	\$75,600.00
8th year payment	\$74,200.00
9th year payment	\$72,800.00

10th year payment	\$71,400.00
Total Payments made	\$787,500.00

John opened it up for questions.

Tim Crosby asked if anyone has given any thought about keeping the building where it is and building a berm around it. John mentioned that insurance has gone up due to flooding down there. It is in a flood zone and to protect the building and the equipment we need to move it out of the flood zone. Tim asked if that was state mandated? John said not. Tim asked if it can be built up. John mentioned that the building would have to be raised and the building is not structurally sound to move. This would be more of a band-aid and not an actual fix.

Tim said that with pandemic he doesn't feel comfortable to do this right now and asked if this project could wait. John said that this is the first time we were able to find grant money for this project, also the Town is at a really good place with all of its other projects, the bond rates are very low and the building costs will keep going up so the only option with the grant and at these prices is to do it now.

Tim mentioned that we will be paying \$87,500 extra in interest and asked if there was another way. John said that the Town will not be able to raise this entire amount in taxation in one year so the only option is to do a bond. The bond rates are extremely low right now. The actual rates today on a ten-year bond are 0.86% but they ran these numbers on 2% to run on the high side to allow room for increase. However, 2% is still a very low interest rate. Tony said the building was originally 1.4 million and they have worked on this for a while now to bring this down. The last time this was presented to the Town was to bond \$1.4 million and this is now been cut in half with the grant and other funds so the Town would only have to bond about \$700,000.00. We will lose the grant if we don't move forward now and we do not know if there is another chance to get a grant. It was explained to us that this grant was a unique opportunity that we may not be presented with again. Tony said that we cannot predict the future and do not know what will come up for other things but the bridge has been done, the roads are all in a good place so this is the time to do it. The building has flooded many times and will flood again. Tim said that this is a garage not a house and it seems very expensive. Tony mentioned that there are codes and regulations that have to be followed.

Ron mentioned that we were also told that we will not get any other USDA grants for Highway equipment or vehicles if we do not move forward with the building. Tony mentioned that USDA said they will not continue to give money towards equipment being left in a flood zone. USDA has provided the Town in the last 6 years with over \$80,000.00 in grants towards Town vehicles and they won't authorize any more grants for items that could be flooded out.

John mentioned that last year we raised over \$450,000.00 in roads and grants and that puts us in a good place. This would only be raising \$94,500.00 in the first year and then down to \$71,400.00 in the tenth year. This is substantially less than what was raised last year and still gives plenty of wiggle room if the Town needs other things. The Town cannot continue to invest money in the building or equipment that is being left in the flood zone, it is not responsible. The building has flooded many times, twice in the years John has been on the Select Board, and it will flood again unfortunately. Tim said that it he is not saying it won't flood but he thinks the Town should look at ways to mitigate the flooding.

Jim Bilodeau asked what these costs would do to the tax rate. Sara explained that we cannot give exacts but as according to the guidance DRA has provided, you can usually plan for \$1.00 per \$100,000.00. If we kept the budget/warrant articles exactly the same as last year and added a \$100,000.00 payment for the building you could expect it to go up about \$1.00 but that is why the Select Board is saying the tax rate will go down for 2021 taxes for the Town portion because they know the budget/warrant articles will be going down this year.

They know they raised \$598,000.00 in special and individual warrant articles last year, with \$450,000.00 in road work and grants, and they know they won't be raising that much this year. The Select Board feels the major projects are all done so this would be the main thing on the budget for the next ten years. Even though we cannot predict the future. Jim said that what the Town is saying that we would only be adding \$94,500 next year but would be removing over \$450,000.00 of what was added last year. John said that is right. We raised the money for North Groton Road and Sculptured Rocks Road and those roads should be in good shape so we shouldn't have to worry about those. The major projects are done but this isn't to say that there are not some things that will come up that will have to be done in the future or to maintain the roads but they won't have to be built up. Jim said that he just wants to confirm that the Select Board is saying that even if we do the building next year, the tax rate should go down. Tony explained that we can't say what the state and local education tax or the county tax will be but the town portion will be going down next year. John said in essence that is correct but there is no guarantee based on other variable and there are other expenses. Jim just wanted to make sure that his taxes won't be going up \$2.00-\$3.00 because of this and John and Tony both said it will not, it will be lower than it is this year.

A resident said that looking at drawings, it looks like it is partially in the hillside and asked why. Tony and John explained that there is ledge so that is where it has to be. We looked at moving it to other areas knowing that being built into the hillside will cost more in concrete but to move it anywhere else would require removing the ledge, which would be expensive because there are some large boulders and we would have had to blow the ledge out and then you would have to add a lot of material to build it back up so that the parking lot, salt and sand sheds, etc. wouldn't be so much higher than the building. This would cost the same if not more when it was done. Also, it compromises the ground and it is better to build on original ground.

A resident asked if this is a different building from the first time. It was explained that it is and a different architect was used this time. The first architect was \$1.4 million, this one was \$1.2 at first and the Town worked on getting this number down. Tony said they feel it will be even less when it goes out for bid. Tony explained there is a 12.5% increase which is built in to the cost, and he explained bond percent will probably be lower as mentioned before but they are planning on higher since it is not being done this year. With the grant and other funds, the Town will have to bond no more than the \$685,000. This is the highest but it will probably be lower.

Lou said that one of the characteristics on the first building was allowing for washing the trucks and draining the salt water and he doesn't see that anywhere this time. Tony said this has changed, it will just have an angled floor to help it drain out. The other one had floor drains with a holding tank and it was figured out this was not needed and was costly. Lou said it makes him wonder why there was such a strong defense for this three years ago. Tony said that all the DOT sheds took the drains out years ago and pitched the floors because they couldn't afford it the other way.

Lou said that the everyone keeps saying all of the road projects are done but what about River Road? There is a little over 1.5 miles of road there that was paved a long time ago and wants to know if this is being looked into. Tony said that may be one of the other things on this year's warrant, if not this year than next year. Bubba is working on getting quotes on what this could cost to pave. Tony said that is really the only other road in the Town that needs work. Sara explained that we are looking at grant options for that road as well. We applied for and were awarded the NBRC grant for Sculptured Rocks Road and once these funds are 75% spent, we can apply for this grant again which is a 50/50 grant. Of course, there is no guarantee that we would get it but we can apply depending on what the costs are when Bubba receives the quotes. Tony stated that River Road is the next road on the agenda.

Lou said he is looking at the Capital Reserve Funds that are going to be requested to close out. He understands that we probably will never have a Fire Department so we don't need this but would the Town be okay to close

the Perambulation fund? This was established because we at some point will have to hire someone to do the perambulation. John mentioned these have been done and will not have to be done again for a long time. Tony said that Miles has been working on the perambulations so he asked Miles if he wanted to speak to this. Miles agreed. Miles stated that he was on the Select Board from 2008 to 2014. While he was on the board it was brought to his attention that under NH Law you are supposed to perambulate once every 7 years. Most towns don't do this but the Select Board at the time wanted to pursue this to make sure the Town was covered and doing it correctly and there was a belief at the time that the Town didn't have this information. Throughout the process of this Miles went through, page by page, all of the old records of the town to find out the dates and which lines were perambulated and how many times, etc. They tried to get professional surveyors to do it and they had hired Alan Barnard for the Groton/Alexandria line and Kyle and Miles did the Groton/Plymouth line. In trying to get professional surveyors to do it, they actually had a meeting and invited people here. His interpretation is that they really didn't want the work and when they submitted a bid it was exorbitant. For the Dorchester line they wanted around \$50,000.000. Miles did walk all of the lines in town so we have now done all of the perambulations. Miles just did the Alexandria line on Friday because he told the Board that he had concerns about this so he will be bringing his concerns to the Select Board at the next meeting. Miles said all of the perambulations have been done. As of now the monuments have been identified, some have been straightened where they needed to be straightened, we have GPS coordinates, Miles has created binders for each one with photographs and photographs of the old town records. Miles wanted to credit Pam Hamel. We thought we didn't have the information and it turns out we did; we just didn't know where to find it. Pam had brought up idea to get them all done, just do it once and then we are better than most of the Towns in the State. Ideally you want blazed lines and it makes it easier to follow, but that takes maintenance and the blazings last between 7-10 years. If we could get someone to do that, that would be great. The monuments overtime with the freeze/thaw cycles will start leaning and they are heavy and stick into the ground just as far as they stick out of the ground. Miles said he doesn't know how many other people we will find that are willing to do this. He said he is a nut case when it comes to this. He really enjoyed it. It is difficult walking through the woods and he falls at least once every time he does it but the Town is in a good place now. Miles said he is actually the one that recommended to the Board to consider doing away with the Perambulation fund. Lou asked if this means we don't need it. Miles said not any time soon. That would be a topic for a future board to address and decide if they want to refresh the blazes or perambulate again but we have all of the information now that we need to identify the perambulations.

Lou said that on regards to the building itself, given that some monies were eliminated but it looks equivalent and looks like it is costing the same so he is having a hard time why this is a better bang for his buck, he feels it is the same if you don't look at the grants and other funds. One of his neighbors got estimate for butler building. He knows it is not the same thing but this particular one was a similar footprint with same number of garage doors and it was a quarter of the cost but would leave a lot of room for pouring the foundation and other items. John mentioned that there are various codes that would have to be followed for the Town that you wouldn't have to as a homeowner. Tony mentioned this also covers the well, septic, electrical, generator, bathroom, etc. and all of the stuff we need for the codes and ADA compliance. All of that stuff adds up. Tony referred everyone to the list of costs which has complete breakdown. Lou asked if the code calls for two doors and it was explained that it does and there will be one that was left off these plans. Lou said it appears that only the office is heated. John said the garage is heated as well to help melt the ice and snow off the vehicles. Tony explained that floor heat for highway garages is very efficient. John said the current garage is heated. Bubba said that they spend about \$3,600.00 a year to heat the current building and they keep it at 55.

Deb wanted to comment that the building and provide information regarding the existing building. It has flooded to many times and may be hazardous to our employees. Changing it is not going to help, it is better to get out of the flood zone. If we leave the building in the flood zone then we have to meet FEMA codes which means we would have to spend a lot of money or we would be tossed out of the flood insurance program. Deb agrees we have to get this out of here. Deb said that while we have some control over the town budget and

the Town portion of the tax rate but we have none over the school and county budget/tax rate and it is her understanding the county budget will increase so we have to plan for that. In order to keep the tax rate down we will have to lower and keep the costs down. Deb agrees that if we don't do it this year we will be in more trouble and the cost will only go up and we won't have the grant money. Deb would like everyone to consider that many in town are on fixed budgets. Also, many people that would vote for this may not come to town meeting if it is packed and people are not wearing masks. John mentioned that this has been discussed and we are looking at options.

Gary Easson said that he is glad minutes are being taken and there will be proof that the Select Board said the town portion should go down and the Town will hold the Select Board to that. His biggest concern is that contractors in town will not be given a fair chance. If this is awarded to a general contractor, they will want to use the people that they are used to working with and won't use local people. John mentioned that we have to use a general contractor so that someone that knows that they are doing oversees the project and can be held accountable. The Select Board will ask that they give the local contractors a fair chance but they will only have so much control over who is chosen. John mentioned that the Select Board will make the best decisions when choosing a general contractor and the general contractor will have to follow federal guidelines. The Select Board will not oversee it entirely because they do not have the knowledge but they will do what they can to make sure the local contractors are given a fair shot. When the Town does projects, they always give the local contractors the work and has given Gary himself many jobs in town.

A resident asked if there will be a will there be a full-time supervisor or project manager on site. The Select Board said there will be a general contract overseeing the project and they will be the ones held accountable for the project. He also asked if the costs include the salt and sand sheds. It was explained that they are included and for both of them together they are under \$50,000.00. Tony mentioned they have warranties for around 20 years as well.

Peter Smith asked if this gets approved in March, what is the time frame for construction and occupancy? The Select Board said that it will be depend on how things are at the time but we would hope construction would start as soon as possible with hopes to be in it by Fall.

Tony wanted to stress again that three years ago it was \$1.4 million. We have redesigned the building, made it smaller, moved things around, removed items and we got it down for the Town to raise \$685,000 and he truly believes it will be even less that that when we put it out to bid. This is the figure we have to go with at Town meeting. We won't know until we put it out for bid what the actual costs will be but if the price is lower feels it will be lower, we will only bond what we have to. Tony said that we have this grant and aren't sure if we will get this again. He said the town portion of the tax rate will go down next year. He cannot say if the school will go down or the county but the town portion will. The school is 65% of our taxes and then the county is on top of that. The Town is around 20% of the taxes right now. The school went up over \$2.00 last year and they only went down \$.04 this year even with all of the COVID19 stuff going on.

Lou asked if money has been set aside for whatever we are going to do with the current building? This has not been done yet. We will be looking at tearing it down and possibly some mitigation funds to do so. Lou said that once we are not in it anymore it will be a free-standing liability. It was confirmed that this will be torn down. Lou asked if the Town has any idea how much this will cost. It was explained that looking at what it cost to do the old library it would probably be around \$15,000.00 or so but we wouldn't know until we put it out for bid.

Suzanne Bilodeau asked if we do not spend the \$1 million will the grant amount be lower. John said that the grant is based on the plans we have today. Tony said this grant was a set amount of \$250,000.00, it is not a 75/25 or 50/50 grant. Sara explained that when we started with the grant process the building was \$1.2 million and the grant was \$250,000.00 and when it went down to \$1,083,049.00 it didn't change the grant amount, it

was still \$250,000.00. When we originally asked, we were told it would stay at the \$250,000.00 based on the plans. We have asked if when it goes out for bid and if it comes in lower than the \$1 million if it would be less and they are looking into that and we haven't heard back yet so we will follow up on this. John mentioned that we cannot modify these plans now, but the bid could come in lower.

Pam asked how many miles of road are maintained in Groton. Bubba said there are 14 miles so 28 lane miles. Pam said there is no question that we need a new garage and we were fortunate enough that this building existed in 2005 when they had the flood and moved the town offices up here. She thinks everyone will agree that the Town garage should have never been built there. Over the years the Town has lost documents, vehicles, equipment and all kinds of things. Having a garage up on the hill across from the Transfer Station has numerous benefits and like every big construction project there are a lot of opinion about what is considered necessary. That is where she is coming from with this, what is necessary in a building, what is needed to maintain 14 miles of road. There are a lot of people that live on private roads that don't benefit from this and may not even travel on a Town road at all. Her concern is that she feels the Groton voters spoke clearly and voted clearly that they didn't want to spend a million dollars on a building. There were a hundred people and she feels they were riled up and didn't want to spend that much money. She understands there are regulations that drive the cost of the building up but she still thinks the voters said that we will do something at a lower cost which is why she is surprised that they are proposing a million-dollar building. John and Tony said that it is \$685,000.00 that the Town would have to raise not the entire \$1.4 million like last time. Bubba also wanted to mention that it wasn't last year, it will be three years now, and that \$1.4 million was the price for the next year, and would go up to \$1.6 the following year so it would probably be even more now. Pam said everyone keeps saying the tax payers' dollars would only be \$685,000 but as a tax payer she has been putting money into the Perambulation and Fire Capital Reserve Fund for years now so those are her tax dollars. And even the federal grant is her tax dollars so it all is still tax dollars, some more direct than others. Her point is that it is a million-dollar building for this very small community that has 14 miles of roads and she doesn't understand it. She is surprised and the way that she would have approached it after hearing from the Townspeople, is that Highway Department along with the Select Board come up with a list of items that they wanted for this complex and they put them in an order of priority and then they contact an engineering firm and come up with a number you think the Town will actually go for, for example \$800,000.00, and say how far can you get us for this. They would then come back with a plan. Then you could come to the Town with that information and all of the grants, Capital Reserve Funds, close the Perambulation and Fire Capital Reserve Funds and this would bring it down to \$402,000.00 which is less than what the Town voted on last year for all the road and grants. You could do the building with no bond. John mentioned that what Pam just said is basically what the Town did. We started with a list and cut it back and this is as low as we could get it to protect our equipment. Pam said it can be protected, it doesn't have to be inside. They could be kept under overhangs and there are a lot of different ways to do it. Tony said when you work with winter maintenance you have to have the items heated because of the sand and salt that sits in them. It is hard to do the stuff outside. He knows, he has worked for DOT for 33 years and the trucks that were left outside he had nothing but problems with, they would break chains, the brakes freeze up, hydraulic oil freezes up, water gets in them and they don't run. We have over a ½ million dollars' worth of equipment that they are trying to protect, especially in the climate we live in. In a small town like this when you need to go out you need to thaw the trucks out. You also have to have a place to work on them. Pam said she understands that but doesn't think it needs to be as big as it is for 14 miles of road. Bubba mentioned that this building is only 700 sq ft bigger than what we actually have now and most of that 700 sq ft is where the mechanical room, office and the bathroom are.

Tony Tavares would like to add that when we write up the warrant it will say the entire \$1,083,409.00. The people will only see that and the people that are here can hear the explanation but the ones who are not here will only see that large number. He recommends having a public hearing the month before town meeting and the reasons need to be written up, explained and handed out so people can see the reasoning behind it. Unless it is explained to everyone, people won't see past this cost and it will be turned down. He feels good

communication is needed. He feels we need a new garage and this is a better location. He also feels that the population is growing and we will see more people moving here which will help alleviate some of the tax burden but will increase these requirements that the Town will have to provide from the Highway Department. The Select Board agreed these are good ideas.

Tony Albert said that even with a ten-year bond there would be room for other projects but all the roads have been mostly done, even Blanchette Lane, Edgar Albert Road, Fletcher Road, Bailey Hill Road, Old Rumney Road, all dirt roads, with the exception of River Road so we are in a good place to do this now.

A resident asked how they tested for ledge. Bubba explained that test pits were dug and we are at the ledge. The Town also spent some money in between projects to clear the lot and dug to the ledge which is lower than we thought but a little higher than we hoped. Bubba said that site work won't be as much as they said it would be three years ago because of the site work that has been done.

Miles asked the Select Board if they looked into the items he brought up at the last public hearing. The Select Board did look over the plans again and moved the offices to the back and got rid of some storage. They looked into closing the Perambulation and Fire Capital Reserve Funds and will be putting warrant articles together for this. We are also working with the attorney and looking at the process for selling Town owned property and if all is good the Select Board will decide to which ones to sell and will put a warrant article together for this.

Miles asked if the tax rate has been set yet and if there was any extra money from the fund balance that could be used for this project as he suggested. John mentioned that the tax rate was just set, there is no extra money and this was the next thing they were going to discuss so they will share the information now.

Tax rate

John mentioned there is an increase in the tax rate. The overall increase is \$1.33. The town's portion of the increase is \$1.74. The 2020 tax rate breakdown (compared to 2019) is as follows:

1. Town portion went from \$2.07 to \$3.81, an **increase** of \$1.74.
2. Local school went from \$8.00 to \$7.96, a **decrease** of \$0.04.
3. State education tax went from \$3.62 to \$3.79, an **increase** of \$0.17.
4. County tax went from \$3.14 to \$2.60, a **decrease** of \$0.54.
5. The overall tax rate went from \$16.83 to \$18.16, an **increase** of \$1.33.

The reason for the increase of the \$1.74 for the Town's portion is due to the increase in the budget for 2020, which was voted on at the Town Meeting in March 2020. John explained that the Town's portion looks at the budget which includes the warrant articles. This tax rate is for what was voted on at the 2020 March Town Meeting. The Select Board looks at the wants and needs and put totals together so they don't present all warrant articles to the Town, only the ones that they feel are priorities. Then the Town can vote for what they want or think the Town needs. Last year the Town voted on over \$500,000.00 in special and individual warrant articles, with over \$450,000.00 being road projects or money towards our portion of grants. The Town is now in a good place and most of the larger projects and roads are taken care of, besides River Road. That means the town portion will go down since there will not be as much on the warrants in the next few years, although we cannot predict the future and what may come up.

Sara explained that this year the Town didn't have as much money in the fund balance to apply to the taxes like it has in the past. This budget included the NBRC grant for the road work on Sculptured Rocks Road and the USDA Truck grant that the Town applied for and was awarded. Although the Town doesn't pay for the entire portion of these projects, the State is required to show the entire amount in our budget. However, the state also shows the grant portions in our revenues, which did offset this. Another reason the Town's portion

increased is that the Town did not have as much money in the fund balance to apply to the tax rate as it has had in the past. The main reason for this is that in 2019 the Town raised \$183,821 for the Town's portion of the grant match for the culverts on Sculptured Rocks Road. There was a delay in getting money from the State to start the project so due to that and the July 2019 storm, this culvert project was not done in 2019. Therefore, those funds had to be reserved to do the work in 2020, because it was budgeted in 2019 and not 2020, and these funds were reserved from the fund balance that we use to apply funds to reduce the tax rate. This left \$189,977 in the fund balance which didn't leave the Select Board much money to work with to reduce the taxes. The Select Board applied \$150,000.00 from the fund balance to bring the Town tax rate down but this only leaves \$39,977.00 in the fund balance which is well below the recommended amount and is risky being this low but the tax rate would have been even higher if they didn't apply this amount. We worked with the DRA on this and had many conversations with them about this.

Pam asked what we have for unpaid taxes. Ruth went to get the information. There is \$91,158.39 in unpaid taxes currently but this will go up once the tax bills go out.

Miles mentioned that if it goes down next year, people won't see that until December of 2021, in those tax bills. The first bills in 2021 go by the 2020 tax rate and is half of that.

Sara explained that they put together an explanation letter for the increase which explains these things and this will be put online and will be available at her office and at Ruth's tomorrow. Sara explained that this increase is not what we were hoping for but it goes by what was voted on last March.

Miles asked where the Town is at with the budget. John mentioned that it is still in process and after all the first budget meeting the operating budget went up about \$36,000.00 from last year but there are more changes that the Board discussed in a work session tonight that will bring that down. Out of that \$36,000.00, \$25,000.00 is for Groton Paved Roads. This is usually a warrant article and not in the operating budget but at Town Meeting last year the Townspeople recommended this be moved to the Highway budget since it is on there every year. The warrant articles are not due until December 31st so we do not have these totals yet.

Miles said that brings up another one of his suggestions from the last public hearing was to do away with the \$25,000.00 and put this towards the warrant article for River Road. Bubba seemed the \$100,000.00 would take care of River Road. He asked if this was decided on because she decided to just have the \$100,000 instead of the \$100,000.00 and the \$25,000.00. Tony said that the idea was to keep that where it is in case the warrant for River Road was turned down, we would still have some money to do some things on River Road, whether that be ditching, culverts, etc. The Select Board said that they will relook at this.

Miles mentioned that another thing he brought up was considering foregoing some of the other Capital Reserve Funds. He asked if it was just the Perambulation and Fire or were there others. It was explained that those are the only two that it was agreed to do a warrant article on closing them. They have discussed a few others but that is under a warrant article and the warrant articles are not due until December 31st and are still being worked on. There will be some that will not be closed but no money will be added to them this year such as the truck/sander capital reserve fund since we have new trucks and are looking good there for a while.

Miles said he strongly urges the Select Board to bring the cost down as much as they possibly can. John said they are working hard on that. Miles said he has been stressing for a long time, that he believes we need to do the building and with the grant money and everything else, this is our best opportunity, at least in his lifetime to get this. Tony said that they are listening to everyone and the last time they met with were looking at bonding \$950,000.00 but they have made changes, decreased the size of the building, took everyone's suggestions and got it down to only bonding \$685,000.00. Tony said they are trying and any way they can get it

down lower they will. To get the \$250,000.00 locked in this is the price we have to move forward with and present to the Town but we can make changes after Town Meeting and after it goes out for bid.

Miles overall concern is reaching the 2/3 vote. When he was working at the polls on election day, he checked the booths after voters left and the flyers were either left in there, or in the trash, and he doesn't think that speaks very well to how the people are taking this. Miles asked everyone that was there to raise their hands if they would vote for this to get an idea. There was close to 2/3 for the people in the room but that isn't everyone that will be there.

Miles said that Tony Tavares suggestion of a detailed explanation is a great idea for precise sharing of the information. When Miles was on the Board, the Northern Pass came forward and had an alternate route that was coming through Groton. The Board discussed it and decided to reach out to the Townspeople. He personally made over 100 calls himself and talked to the people about it and solicited their input on it. In the end the Select Board didn't take a position, they presented what the Townspeople wanted. The people appreciated this and he got a number of thank yous after. He thinks the Select Board should do some of what Tony suggested and maybe the Select Board making some calls. They could each take 1/3 of the phone numbers we have and take an hour a night to make the calls. He said that if each of the current Select Board made calls, it would gain a lot of appreciation, would answer questions, and give a better understanding of this project. Miles feels if the vote was today, he doesn't think it would pass a 2/3 vote.

Pam said the tax rate won't help with the people voting on the building. The people will be very upset about this and this has just made an uphill battle. The Select Board said they have already discussed this but people need to understand that this tax rate is for what was already voted on in March 2020 and does not include the building. Tony said that the towns portion will go down next year and that we got a lot done for that money that the Town voted on. Next year the tax rate will go by what is voted on at the March 2021 meeting which doesn't have as many projects as last year. The roads are in a lot better shape.

John explained that not only are the roads in better shape but that increases the value of properties for anyone living on those roads. Also, a lot of mitigation was done to handle the storms so that there will not be as much damage to the roads for future storms. They should be better equipped to handle it.

Peter wants to stress the fact that the new building will have multi uses. It could be an emergency shelter if needed. Even though the Town House is the emergency shelter it could provide as a backup if more room is needed, it can hold more supplies for emergency's, it could be used for events if bad weather exists like Old Home Day, fundraising if needed, or other events. It is a big addition to the town so the more use it has the better.

Miles said his final thought on lowering the overall costs, he is not looking to jeopardize the grant of \$250,000.00 but if something needed to be cut out his suggestion is to get the building done the first year and delay the salt shed and sand shed for the years after. If we have an option of presented something that we think won't pass and just roll the dice, or just get the building to get the vote passed and then do the rest later. It will get us where we want to be, maybe not as fast as we want but we could use the current salt shed and the sand area that we do now.

Pam asked if there is a plan for moving forward with improvements and renovations at the Transfer Station. She also asked if the slabs have been done yet. Tony mentioned that the slabs have not happened yet but they are trying to. We have someone for the concrete but need someone for dirt work. We had someone booked and they backed out and now everyone is booked and we are running out of time now. If it cannot get done this year, we will have to encumber the funds but would rather get it done this year. There is nothing on the plans for next year for the Transfer Station as of right not but there may be the next year.

Pam wanted to add that in all of the years she has lived here, Old Rumney Road looks nicer than it ever has. Dave Leone did a great job.

John said that the Select Board recognizes that tax money is everyone's hard earned money so the Town makes sure to spend it wisely to get work done. The Select Board are tax payers too. He said they take all of the suggestions to heart and act on the ones they can. He thinks the letter and phone calls that were brought up earlier are a great idea and they will do whatever they have to do. Miles said he just doesn't want the Select Board to have regrets after it is voted on and wants them to do everything they can beforehand. Tony said they appreciate it all of the ideas.

It was asked if the plans and reports are online. Sara explained that all of the reports, costs and plans are online.

The Select Board thanked everyone for coming out to the meeting and appreciates everyone's ideas and feedback. They will keep everyone posted on the next meeting.

Rebecca Hanson- NLRA DES funding

Rebecca Hanson from NLRA reached out to the Town because they had just received word that DES had invited them to submit a full proposal for their 2021 Watershed Assistance grant. For the full proposal, she needs to present full details of the projects they will complete using this funding so she requested this meeting with the Select Board to discuss projects and budget. She has until December 31st to put more detail in so she needs specific projects and budgets. She submitted some list of projects and culverts that were from 2014. Sara explained that she is pretty sure that almost all of the culverts on that list for Sculptured Rocks Road and North Groton Road have been replaced. The Road Agent, Bubba, had just left to go check the roads but Sara can go over the list with him and then get back to her. We could set up a call if needed. Rebecca said that would be great and asked that we look at the list and compare to what we still have for issues for things that impact the lake. If there is something on the list that we want to add to her project we need to let her know. If the grant is awarded it will be around \$10,000-\$15,000 per town and she wouldn't expect the money until May.

Tony mentioned that there is an issue on Orange Road where the river bank is unstable. The Select Board met with DES, Army Corps, Fish and Game and the Senator to see what can be done about cleaning out Atwell/Orange Brook. They walked the river everyone was in agreement that something needs to be done, even said they would approve the permitting but no one had any money to do the work and the Town doesn't. Emergency work that was done in the river during the July 2019 storm to stop the water from flowing into residents' houses and down the town road. The Town explained that they had sent letters to the Army Corps of Engineers along with the State to see what can be done to clean out and dredge the river so that this doesn't happen again. The concern is that with each storm the damage worsens so we are concerned that it could get even worse and risk people's lives. There are trees in the water, and you could see where the bank had washed out and erosion occurred. Due to the steepness of that bank and where it was located, DES feels that bank will never be able to be fixed. The Town expressed concern that if it continues to erode and drop material into the river it will build up. The Town explained the three different areas where the water breached the bank and took out people's homes, driveways and sections of Sculptured Rocks Road. The River was flowing down the middle of the road. Tony Albert said he would walk with her at the site and show her what needs to be done such as where it needs to be widened, cleaned, etc. She took Tony's phone number so they could set this meeting up. The Town agreed that this would probably be the best use of that money.

Sara confirmed that she will meet with Bubba on list and Rebecca will set up a meeting with Tony.

Rebecca ended the meeting by thanking Groton for all they do and their support to NLRA. The Town thanked Rebecca for all of the work that her and the NLRA do.

Building Permit Map 6 Lot 78

The owner submitted building permit for their property on Dodge Road for a 10x20.5 shed that was delivered. They were not aware that since it was delivered that it still needed a building permit. This is on a private road so they did submit the release of municipal liability form. **John motioned to sign the building permit and release form for Map 6 Lot 78, Tony 2nd, so voted.**

Land Use Change Tax, Map 6 Lot 63-11, Map 6 Lot 63-2 and Map 6 Lot 63-8

The Select Board received recommendations from Avitar on a land use change tax that was submitted for Map 6 Lot 63-11, Map 6 Lot 63-2 and Map 6 Lot 63-8.

- For Map 6 Lot 63-11, this 2.26 parcel was assessed entirely in current use but as a result of a sale of this property, the property is no longer contiguous with other property with significant acreage to qualify to remain in current use. The estimated market value is \$22,000.00 which results in a land use change tax of \$2,200.00. **John motioned to sign the land use change tax for Map 6 Lot 63-11, Tony 2nd, so voted.**
- For Map 6 Lot 63-2, this 3.13 parcel was assessed entirely in current use but as a result of a sale of this property, the property is no longer contiguous with other property with significant acreage to qualify to remain in current use. The estimated market value is \$23,000.00 which results in a land use change tax of \$2,300.00. **John motioned to sign the land use change tax for Map 6 Lot 63-2, Tony 2nd, so voted.**
- For Map 6 Lot 63-8, this 11.34 parcel was assessed entirely in current use but as a result of a visit to this property on June 23, 2020, Avitar observed that a driveway had been constructed that led to a camper that had been set up on a cleared site. This was confirmed by another visit on October 20, 2020 which resulted in a 0.75-acre area no longer qualifying to remain in current use. The estimated market value is \$20,000.00 which results in a land use change tax of \$2,000.00. **John motioned to sign the land use change tax for Map 6 Lot 63-8, Tony 2nd, so voted.**

Local Septic approval Map 2 Lot 6

Darlene and Dan Hewes dropped off a Septic Plan and local approval for Map 2 Lot 6. All the information is correct. **John motioned to sign the local approval for Map 2 Lot 6, Tony 2nd, so voted.**

Supplemental Intent to Cut Map 9 Lot 1

FORECO submitted a supplemental intent to cut for Map 9 Lot 1. The original intent to cut was approved and assigned intent to cut number 20-193-06-T. The acreage of cut increased from 10 acres to 25 acres and added some other species to be cut. All the information is correct. **John motioned to sign supplemental intent to cut for Map 9 Lot 1, Tony 2nd, so voted.**

DEPARTMENT ITEMS:

Police Department

The Police Chief mentioned that a resident called about the costs of the police reports. They had called and requested 8 reports. He filled out the request form that was previously in place which stated it is \$10 per report. She thought this was a lot since each report was only one page but he explained it is priced by report. He contacted Hebron and they charge \$35 per report. The Select Board and the Chief agreed this is a reasonable price and to keep it \$10 per report.

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS:

New Prosecutor

Miles noticed in the minutes that the Police Department is using a new Prosecutor. The Chief told Miles that they are now using Plymouth Court Jurisdictional Association (PCJA).

Old Town Reports

Tony mentioned that he his Mom had found some of this Dads old reports and donated them to the Groton Historical Society. The oldest report they had was from 1900. They are interesting to read and are still in good shape.

Having no other business to conduct, John motioned to adjourn at 8:45pm, Tony 2nd, so voted.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sara Smith
Administrative Assistant