

Town of Groton
Select Board Work Session Minutes
June 14, 2022

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

John called the meeting to order at 4:00pm.

NLRA meeting at Atwell/Orange Brook

John, Tony, Ron, Bubba and Sara met with Rebecca Hansen from NLRA, John from Fish and Game and James White the Engineer from Stream Works met at the Atwell Orange Brook Site for a kick off meeting. Rebecca explained that they received a grant for the planning so they have been working with the engineer on the issues, designs, etc.

James explained that they started the survey months ago. They were able to go out and see enough that they wanted to meet with the Town and Rebecca to see how they wanted the project to go.

John, Tony, Ron, Bubba and Sara explained what happened with the storm in 2019 and how the river was diverted causing damages to the river, the roads and surrounding properties. The river was running down the middle of the road on Sculptured Rocks Road causing the road to wash out and other damages. Some properties close to the river experienced flooding on their property, their homes and wash outs in their yard and driveways. At the time there was some river clean out and repairs done at that time for emergency purposes to get the river running back how it should and not down the road or on to people's properties but it still needs to be cleaned out better and work done so this doesn't happen again. Town is concerned that this could happen again and if it does there are many potential dangers with that. You can also see the erosion and how when we have bad storms it turns the river a different color from the erosion and it washes into Newfound Lake.

Everyone walked out to the area of concern on the river and discussed what needs to be done and any potential concerns. Below are the concerns that were discussed:

- The property owners could not want the work done or will not allow access. John from Fish and Game stated that he doesn't see this being a problem.
- There is an easement for The Nature Conservatory that they would have to take into consideration.
- How would they get the equipment out there? The access could be a concern. Tony explained the areas that he thinks he could access the river with no concerns.
- They would need to get all necessary permits.
- We would still need to come up with money for the actual works such as other grants or funding opportunities.
- The safety while doing work like this is always a concern.

Tony mentioned that when we did the visit at this site after the storm, we met with Army Corps of Engineers, Fish and Game, DES and others and everyone agreed the work needed to be done. They even mentioned they would give all permitting for the work but no one had any money to do the work which is why nothing has been done yet.

The engineer mentioned there are two options. One is obviously more costly than the other. The more expensive option is to really clean it up nice, make it look really good. This would create a lot of work, would have a lot more engineering and a rough estimate could be around one million dollars right now with how the cost of things are now. The other option is less engineered and more nature based to set the river in the right direction, stabilize the banks, take care of the erosion. This would not look as pretty as the other option but could do the job. Everyone agreed that they do not care how it looks as long as the problem is fixed, and the safety comes first and the erosion and water issues are taken care of. Right now, they would like to do whatever we have a better chance of getting funding for and that will take care of the problem with keeping the towns match cost down.

They also went upstream and looked at another area of concern. There definitely are concerns here as well. It was discussed that if there is enough funding in the grant to add this area on to the project. If not, it will give an idea of costs for the future.

The next steps from here are as follows:

- The engineer will work on this and get costs together. The Town and NLRA agreed that they need to know the costs to know how to move forward and what grants to look for, for the match amounts that would be needed, etc.
- John from Fish and Game said there may be some funding on his end he can look forward to.
- Sara will send the minutes from the original meeting at the site to Rebecca and she can distribute those to whoever needs them. This will show who was in attendance and what was discussed.
- Sara, Rebecca and James will put some notes together to send to Rebecca about today's meeting.

The Select Board thanked everyone for their time.

Saras time off in June

Sara reminded everyone that she is on vacation Monday, June 20, 2022- Monday, June 27, 2022 for her Florida vacation. They are leaving on Friday, June 17th so she will do payroll on Thursday June 16th. Also, there are no meetings on Tuesday, June 21st. The next meeting is Tuesday, July 5, 2022.

Tax Payment Agreement

At the last meeting the Select Board agreed to a tax payment and asked that Sara complete the tax payment agreement form. She did complete this and the land owner has signed this. **John motioned to sign the tax payment agreement, Tony 2nd, so voted.**

Tim Foy Building Permit

Tim Foy submitted his building permit based on the information that the Planning Board emailed him and his meeting with the Select Board. John mentioned that the Select Board can approve the permits with the clause that he will have two years to put up cabin and if not done then he has to tear down the saw mill shed. **John motioned to approve and sign the building permits for Map 10 Lot 14 for the shed and cabin with the clause that the cabin must be built within two years or the sawmill shed must be torn down, Tony 2nd, so voted.**

The owners were in the audience and agreed that this was fair. Sara explained that she will mail him a copy of the building permits which will be on orange paper and need to be posted on the property.

Forest Fire Warden Appointment Form

The Select Board had agreed to appoint Jeremy Haney as the Forest Fire Warden for Groton. Jeremy completed the appointment form. **John motioned to appoint Jeremy Haney as the Forest Fire Warden for Groton and to sign the appointment form, Tony 2nd, so voted.**

Abatement Recommendation, Map 2 Lot 81-4

Avitar sent the recommendation for the abatement for Map 2 Lot 81-4. Sara did the calculations, created a refund check and a notification letter for the Dave Leone Abatement based on Avitar's recommendation. It was approved to reduce the assessment from \$170,100 to \$159,370 which is a difference of \$10,800. **John motioned to sign the Abatement for Map 2 Lot 81-4, Tony 2nd, so voted.**

Local Audit- MS-60

This is done annually by the local auditor and was done by Ann Joyce this year. There is nothing for the Select Board to sign, they just need to review it. This was submitted to the DRA.

Grant update

Sara has started filling out the grant application but has to wait for the traffic counts and the information from Mike Vignale to finish it up. The grant application is due by July 1, 2022 and we don't meet again until July 5, 2022 but the Select Board will have to sign it before it is submitted. **John motioned to come in and sign the grant paperwork once it is ready, Tony 2nd, so voted.**

Flag Update

Dan will be in after Sara's vacation to pay his part. Once this is paid, he can take the old flag pole.

Circle Program Inspection

Tony did the inspection of The Circle Program. He asked Sara to send the letter that everything is all set but the fire extinguishers must be inspected by July 1st.

Building repair update

Sara did put the items to be repaired in the newspaper. The only one that has contacted Sara to do a walk around to see the items is Dan so she has met with him and went over the list. He will work on getting us a quote and is getting his certificate of insurance. Paul Cole said it was too big of a project for him but he has some siding if the Town is interested.

Meeting with Eric Law from USDA

Eric asked to meet with the Town to go over the building grant and the new grant that the Town applied for. He wanted to see where we stand with the garage. Sara explained that in May of 2021 we had our Town meeting where we presented the information to the Town with the grant, the bond, other monies, etc. but there was a lot of commotion so this was voted down. Prior to this meeting the Select Board did hold an informational session regarding the building and the grant every few months.

Eric mentioned that there is a current grant application that the Town submitted to the USDA for the backhoe. He asked if this would be stored at the public garage and it was confirmed. He said that they will not approve this grant because of that and the federal government is at the point where they are saying move it or lose it. He is willing to go can go to a meeting to say why we would lose it.

John explained how the Town meeting went. He also explained that he stated many times that we could lose this grant, how we will not continue to get other grants for equipment being stored there, how our

insurance company could drop us or stop paying for repairs, how the costs will continue to go up the longer we wait and so much more. The Town has tried many times for this building and it continues to get voted down. They even had a special town meeting to show the cost would go up if we do not do this now.

Eric said the good news is that the sources of money are pretty ample. Eric asked about the ARPA funds. Sara explained that Groton is getting about \$63,000.00 total. This comes in two payments and we already got our first payment. That payment was spent on mold remediation from the past flooding at the Town Garage since the building was voted down and the employees still have to work out of there. We have not received the other payment but would be able to apply this to the new garage if the Select Board agreed to do so.

Sara also said that any time we receive any information on grants we reach out to see if the building would qualify and so far, it has been a no every time for a various number of reasons. Eric asked if we have worked with congressional on this. Sara explained that we have worked with Senator Guida's office and they have also looked for funding and haven't come up with anything. The Town explained that the Governor was even here during the last storm and was going to help but we haven't heard anything. Our congress is aware of the issue because they did a write up in the paper about this \$250,000.00 USDA grant.

Eric recommended looking into earmarks. There is direct spending from the federal government for specific projects. He said to reach out to our congress, explain the project and see if there is any other funding. He said to make sure we mention "congressionally directed spending".

The Town explained that we have tried hard to get all the information out there, we have listened to the residents feedback and made the building smaller, we have had informational meetings, had all of the information online, had displays up at the Town House, have had handouts, have got quotes from different companies (which were still in the same ballpark), drove home the grant that is a onetime opportunity that we could lose, the lowest bond rates but they still think it can be done for cheaper and are afraid this will make their taxes go up. John mentioned that they even showed that the taxes would still be lower than they have been with this building because we have done all of the road work, other projects, etc. in the past that cost more than this would for a yearly payment. Bubba explained we even tried to just do salt and sand sheds but they do not want any more money put into this project. They even closed out a few older accounts and this money was going to go to the building but instead it went to the general fund. They think we have spent too much on this already so the Select Board decided that we were not going to bring anything up at Town meeting this year except to put money into the Public Works Capital Reserve Fund which they did vote to put \$100,000.00 in there. They all say they agree it needs to be moved but do not want to pay the amount it takes to do so.

Eric said that before they pull the grant money, he is willing to meet and present this side. He will explain that the pricing will go up, that interest rates are going up and that currently the Town has the \$250,000 grant, about \$160,000 in the Capital Reserve Fund, another \$30,000 from next ARPA payment and we are going to try for congressional directed spending. He isn't pulling the money now; we have one more town meeting day which will be at the March 2023 Town meeting. He or one of his employees will have meetings before the Town meeting to discuss the potential loss of the grant and that we have to move the building and now is the time. He will let the people say no but this will show that the current Select Board, AA, Road Agent have done everything that they can and it is the Town that has been holding this up. He will point out it will definitely have to get done in the future so it could be their

children having to make this decision and having to pay for it. He will have all of the amount we have spent so far on the building for repairs, mold remediation, etc. along with the day-to-day costs. He will talk to them and it is different coming from a third party. Now they will be saying no to this \$250,000.00 not to the building. Then it will be up to them to lose this grant and this opportunity.

Right now, the grant for the backhoe is a no. They do not want to put money into equipment being stored there and he will tell them this too.

Sara will look into the congressionally directed spending. As the Town meeting gets closer, we will work on planning these meetings and getting him the information he needs. The Select Board thanked him for coming out to discuss this with them.

Having no other business to conduct, John motioned to adjourn at 6:55pm, Ron 2nd, so voted.

Respectfully submitted,

Sara Smith
Administrative Assistant