

Town of Groton  
Select Board Work Session Minutes  
December 20, 2022

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

John called the meeting to order at 6:00pm.

***Meeting with Carol Miller on Broadband***

This meeting was rescheduled for 1/3/23 at 6pm. It was agreed we should meet at 5:00pm to allow time for this meeting along with the budget items, warrant articles and performance evaluations that we have to do.

***Opening Town House during outages***

There were some concerns that the Town House was not opened on Saturday during the outages. We need to come up with a plan of during an outage at what point should the building be opened.

There were also concerns that wellness checks should be done during these storms. John asked who would do this. The resident said the EMD. John asked what that would mean for liability if something happens to them. It also poses another problem if we do not check on everyone because we cannot access some people's roads or driveways. John mentioned this to the Chief but he said what about the people that do not want you on their property.

Tony said they did it in Hebron when there was below temps and ice storm and no power for like three days. They opened the shelter and checked on everyone but this was the fire department which has 10 people and no one wanted help, they all had generators or were all set. Tony said they should call 911 if they need help.

The resident also said that NHEC had no idea we lost power. John called them today and asked how they are made aware of power outages. They have circuits throughout the town and they are notified if there is no power. She looked at his address and was able to give the updates as to when the power went out and when it came back on. She said they do not even need people to call. She also said that these outages were all caused by trees that fell outside of the right of way. Tony said it was so wide spread and the people who came were from Ipswich.

John said there is a point where it become your own responsibility to prepare for the storm. You know we are getting a storm you should have food, water, etc. Of course, that would be different if it was more than one day.

John said he knows we were supposed to meet on Saturday for the Emergency Management Meeting which we had to cancel due to the storm but we should discuss when we should open the building during a storm or emergency. There is a good chance we could open this up and the people have no way to get here. Tony said we could have the ambulance come get them. They should all call 911 if they are in a situation that they need help. Tony said no town around here opened up. Lebanon did but they are the only ones we know of. Tony also said that we shouldn't make a decision here today. The Emergency Management Director and Deputy should be involved and for now we should take it on each storm and work with Bill and Patti to see what they think.

**John motioned to go into non-public session pursuant to RSA 91-A:3 II (a) and (b) at 6:10pm, Tony 2<sup>nd</sup>, so voted.**

**John motioned to return to public session at 6:15pm, Tony 2<sup>nd</sup>, so voted.**

**John motioned to seal the non-public minutes, Tony 2<sup>nd</sup>, so voted.**

#### ***Post on Facebook***

Dave Leone did a post on the Groton NH Community Facebook page. He mentioned the road clean up and the building. John will address this post during the Select Board meeting.

#### ***Budget Items***

- We received an email from Alan Barnard for the River Road Annex to come out of the Cemetery budget. If we pay this out of 2022 budget it will put cemetery over by about \$140.00. This would also mean that we will not be able to encumber the \$350 Beede bill that was motioned to encumber because there would not be any money left to encumber. **John motioned to approve to pay Alan Barnard this year which will make the cemetery over by \$140.00 in their budget for this year and pay Beede next year out of the 2023 Budget, Tony 2<sup>nd</sup>, so voted.**
- The backhoe should be ready January 9<sup>th</sup>. We usually keep the 2022 budget open for a few weeks to allow bills to come in. Also, checks are good for 180 days after they are cut. This will avoid having to encumber the funds which can affect our unreserved fund balance. **John motioned to pay out the backhoe out of the 2022 budget since that is what was voted no and since it will be ready 1/9/23, Tony 2<sup>nd</sup> so voted.**
- At the next meeting Sara will have an up-to-date budget with YTD totals so far but we do usually continue to pay 2022 bills for the first few weeks in 2023 so this will not be the final one.
- Casella: The Casella prices have increased but the contract is due to expire in July of 2023. Sara will work on the RFP before then. When do we think is a good time to start this process. The Select Board agreed to start this about two months before.
- Sara provided the Select Board with the list of employees and their pay last week so the Select Board could review this and decide what to do regarding wages. The Select Board asked Sara to look at what the total would be if we did a 10% increase for everyone based on the hours, they worked this year.

#### ***Junkyard follow up***

- For the one property that went to court, he will pull the orders and see if we can file a contempt. The Contempt may say if they don't pay the Town can file an attachment to the property. This is not like a tax lien, more like a debt collector. Once he pulls the order, he will get back to us with our options.
- For the one that didn't go to court, in order for the attorney to send a letter to collect it would need to be ordered by the court. However, this never went to court so that would be harder to do. To go to court now on this is not a good idea for about 15 different reasons but the main one being that the property is in compliance and they did clean up and there is nothing new to report. A judge won't take kindly on taking his time on a property that is in compliance now for past dues and even if they grant past dues owed, they wouldn't grant the cost to cover the attorney fees to go to court which would be more than the person owes the town now. The Select Board said to keep sending invoices and asked Sara to reach out to attorney to see if we can charge interest or a fee of \$100.00 each time that we send an invoice.

### ***Email from Planning Board/Deb for clarification***

Deb emailed back from the response we sent after the last meeting. We sent her the following:

*As far as the Tiny House questions and concerns, the Select Board thinks we should leave tiny house label out and say any house not on a permanent foundation cannot remain permanently on the property and put definition on how long it can stay there. This could be camper, tiny house, camp, etc. They don't think we should dictate what size house someone can live in. Tony made a going point that mobile homes still have wheels and are on blocks and their intention is to be permanent so that is something to consider.*

Deb responded asking what would be considered a Permanent Foundation, with the following options:

- one on a crawl space would have a small positive adjustment, or
- one on a full foundation/basement would have a little greater adjustment or
- one on piers/tires would have a small negative adjustment

John said anything you have it bolted to. Sara will email Deb with this and that John should be able to speak on behalf of the Select Board at the next Planning Board meeting.

### ***DES Subdivision follow up***

Deb Johnson emailed that she finally got subdivision paperwork today from Kevin French. She had a conversation with him weeks ago to make sure he and the property owners understood that the Planning Board has final approval. She did have another conversation with DES on the matter hammering home that they could create a subdivision but only the Town can approve and record a subdivision following a public hearing. While this worked out ok, without involving town/PB lawyers there may be a point in the future we will need to be more aggressive. She did not think now was the time to pay Lawyers to write a letter that may end up in litigation. She said to let her know if the Select Board think we should still have our lawyers write DES a letter and she will take care of it, but it will cost us. Just leave it as is!

### ***Meeting with Bubba***

Bubba met with the Select Board to go over the following:

#### *Last Storm*

During the last storm, there was a lot going on. At first the red international broke down. It was an issue with outfitters so Bubba will still work this out with Viking. While that was down, Charlie Coursey came in and helped out with one of his guys. We also had Fred. Then a hydraulic line then went in the big orange truck. That was down for about 5-6 hours. Between the help of Coursey & Sons and Dan the mobile mechanic, they were able to make a new hose and get that truck back up and running.

There were a lot of trees down. Fred went home to rest for a while and the plan had been to run the big truck. They were down a guy as well. Around midnight he noticed the state stopped coming through so he knew something was wrong. There was a big tree down so he plowed around it to keep at least one lane open. He decided to run the pick up all night which could maneuver around the trees and debris better. They didn't clear that tree until noon on Saturday. Bailey Hill and Cheever fell behind due to this. Come to find out there were about 30 trees down on Halls Brook Road and two of the state trucks broke down so that is why they were not out. They cut trees all night trying to get up Halls Brook Road. There were literally trees down everywhere. Everything was cleaned up by 4pm on Saturday.

Then there was a huge tree down on Bailey Hill Road. They had finally cut the tree on Bailey Hill Road but it was only cut to get one vehicle through. Rick Belanger helped to push the logs off until they could get up there on Monday to open up the road. That was a huge help and Bubba is so thankful for his help.

For the red international, the clutch came off and the serpentine belt came off so he brought it back to the garage. The belt took some wires off. On Monday they were able to fix this. He was able to rewire everything. They think the clutch bearing came off of it. Viking said they have never had this happen and they offered to send the kit. Bubba will call them and he will try to get the money for the mobile mechanic costs out of them.

#### *USDA Building Meeting Update*

Sara mentioned that on 12/15/22, her and Bubba did a zoom meeting with Eric Law and Rena Peck from USDA regarding the Public Works Building. Sara explained that since we last spoke, we put together a new building committee composed of professionals in the industry and residents. They used the building designs we had to use an Amish Company to give us a quote and building design through them. We also voted to use the ARPA funds on a new site plan and septic design to move the building and clear where we want the building to go. The committee came up with a quote of \$625,000.00 for the building with the salt shed, no sand shed at this time. They were happy to hear that we are showing promising efforts of moving forward with the project so they can still stand behind the grant at this time. Sara and Bubba asked them what they need from the Town. USDA stated that they will need an architect/engineer to review the building committees site plan, building plans and costs. This 3<sup>rd</sup> party would need to stand behind this, verify the design and costs and stamp it. Once that is done, USDA would need a revised/amended application with this information. Sara reached out to Studio Nexus that we worked so well with before to see if they were willing to review this information for us. We are waiting to hear back. If not, we will have to find someone else. Sara also messaged Casey and told him what we needed from him to send to the architect/engineer. Eric said to be prepared that the architect/engineer may have some changes to make regarding design, costs, etc. Studio Nexus did email back stating that it sounds like the building committee has done a good job of putting together a more reasonable proposal that will hopefully garner enough support for the project to move forward. They can review the plans and discuss them with the state fire marshal's office (who will issue the building permit and inspect during construction) to confirm their findings. They asked us to send them along and they can develop a proposal for reviewing the documents. Sara asked Tony if he sees Casey if he can stress that we need this information asap.

Sara and Bubba asked what this meant for the grant since the cost is lower. They stressed how much the Town needs this money and the lower we have to raise the better chance the money. Sara also mentioned that we are using ARPA funds for the current work and that would cover architect/engineer as well. She also mentioned that we put \$100,000 in the capital reserve last year so we have a little over \$160,000.00 in that account as well. Eric said all of these steps are promising and show good faith. Eric and Rena looked things over and after some back-and-forth discussion between all of us, and the grant guidelines, as long as everything looks good with the architect/engineer they should be able to do the \$250,000.00 still. Sara stated that this means if the building is approved at \$625,000 building with the \$160,000 from the Capital Reserve, that would leave \$215,000 to raise from taxation. If cost goes any lower than the grant amount could go down. They said that since the original intent is the same, we would still qualify for the grant.

The other discussion that we had was about the sand shed being put on later and about grants in the future. He said if the building passes in March, since USDA had to turn the Town down the backhoe

grant this year, they will work with us on the next grant after Town meeting to assist the Town with other costs. Therefore, they could look at another grant for the sand shed at that time. The only thing is that we would need to send them an email stating that we are withdrawing from the backhoe grant so that will help with applying for another grant in the future. They know they told us we couldn't get the grant and no more grants until the building is moved but this email would help for future grants. The Select Board agreed we should send this email so that it doesn't hurt us for other grants in the future. **John motioned for Sara to send an email stating that we withdraw from the backhoe grant, Tony 2<sup>nd</sup> so voted.**

#### *Backhoe Update*

Bubba said the latest email stated that they should have it by January 9, 2023 if not sooner. Sara mentioned that she discussed this with the Select Board earlier and if it is here by then it can still be paid out of the 2022 budget as the Town voted. We do not want to encumber the funds if we do not have to as it can affect the unreserved fund balance but the Select Board did vote at the last meeting to encumber these funds if we have to.

#### *Bridge letter*

The Town received a letter that there was a one-time bridge payment from the State in accordance with Senate Bill 401 for payment for maintenance, construction and reconstruction of municipally owned bridges. The amount for Groton was \$19,831.52. We haven't received the payment yet but should be soon. This payment can only be used on the maintenance, construction and reconstruction of bridges and we are in good shape right now. The Atwell Orange Brook Bridge is new. Tony said the three culverts on Sculptured Rocks Road are categorized as bridges due to the sizing but they are also brand new and in great shape. The Select Board asked Sara to reach out to who sent the letter and ask how long we have to use this, explain all of our bridges are in great shape right now and ask if we can put this into a bridge Capital Reserve Fund for use later on for maintenance. Tony also mentioned that we may want to change the classification of the Atwell Orange Brook Bridge CRF to Town Bridges CRF.

#### *FEMA money*

Sara explained we got the check from HSEM/FEMA for the funds we were owed for the storms and hopefully we will be able to do the final close out for the October 2017 and the July 2019 storms.

#### *Friday's storm*

Bubba said that Friday doesn't look good. There are flood warnings due to heavy rains and strong winds. Then it is supposed to get real cold which could cause flash freezing. He said you really can't treat the roads until rain is done. Tony agreed. Bubba will mention this at the Select Board Meeting and will put together a post for the Facebook page.

**Having no other business to conduct, John motioned to adjourn at 6:55pm, Tony 2<sup>nd</sup>, so voted.**

Respectfully submitted,

Sara Smith  
Administrative Assistant