

TOWN OF GROTON
SELECT BOARD MEETING
September 20, 2022

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 Work Session Meeting minutes of September 6, 2022 as written, Tony 2nd, so voted.

John motioned to approve the Select Board Meeting minutes of September 6, 2022 as written, Tony 2nd, so voted.

NEW BUSINESS:

Local Septic Approval for Map 2 Lot 51 (2nd lot)

The septic designer sent in the local septic approval for Map 2 Lot 51, the second lot on the property. **John motioned to sign the local septic approval for Map 2 Lot 51, Tony 2nd, so voted.**

Dave asked for actual address for this septic plan. Tony stated it is 1195 North Groton Road.

SELECT BOARD ITEMS:

School Meetings

John said that he has been attending the school meetings because Alexandria is trying to change the way the Towns pay for schooling. They are trying to change her from paying per pupil like we currently do to by the Towns valuation. They are trying to set up another school meeting for September 27, 2022 at 6pm in library at middle school. However, John and another person are not able to attend that day so they expressed their concerns to Pierre, who is the moderator and school superintendent. John said he told them this is an important meeting and he feels that all of the original members of this committee should be there, especially if they are going to vote. The proposal on the table currently is that they are trying to make it so over four years they will gradually add in the town paying based on valuation, so by year four it will be 100% based on valuation. This would increase the Town of Groton's taxes by a lot and they would go so high that some residents may not be able to afford to live in Town anymore. John said that they are also looking at options to pulling out of SAU4. K-8 would go to the Bridgewater Hebron Village School and then they would go to Plymouth for High School. It may not save money but it could help with other concerns and they would have more control over how the money is spent unlike now. John mentioned if people recall the roofing project that was supposed to be one time but was incorporated into their budget. They are working on getting the meeting changed to mid-October but they will see what happens.

Sara asked if they would be voting at that meeting on what is actually going to be presented to the Towns to vote on in March. John said that is correct. Even if they decide as a group at these meetings that everything should stay as it is currently, that doesn't stop any of the Towns from putting in a warrant

article this year or years following to change it. Alexandria has already got a taste of lowering their taxes substantially so they want to push this through without any concern of the other Towns that may get hurt. Groton is one of the Towns that will get hurt significantly by that.

Dave asked if this vote happens, are any changes made from this vote coming. John said no but yes. As a group, if that group goes out to make a recommendation that it would be better to change it based on valuation, it is going to have more backing behind it for more people to agree with it.

Dave asked if John can have someone attend and vote in proxy to stand in for him if he cannot make the meeting. John said we can so we will look into that if needed but he feels it is important for all the original members to be there to vote since they have been involved. John said they are not really getting anywhere because the votes are always the same.

Ann asked who else cannot make it. John thinks that John Sellers from Bristol cannot make it.

Groton Community Facebook Page

John said this page should be used as an avenue for more positive items and not negative. Also, items posted on there should be factual as opposed to non-factual. One of the comments on there said that the Select Board didn't even mention the nails that were in the road at the last meeting. This is not factual because this was discussed. Instead of posting on there that the Select Board isn't doing anything, maybe post that there is a situation in the Town and to have your eyes open and report it if you see something. This is not an avenue to report concerns to the Town because it is not our page and we do not monitor it. If there is an issue, you should call the Town and let them know. In this case it was a State Road so the State should be called too which would be quicker because we would have to call the State. We have a road crew of one full timer and two part timers so there is only so much time and resources we have and we only have one Police Officer as well. It would benefit the Town more if this page was used in a positive manner and certainly if there is an issue in Town the Town should be made aware and we should all work together on it since we are a small community.

Dave Leone said he doesn't usually go on Facebook but he did see these posts and that is why he posted that he was at the meeting and posted what his understanding of what John said was. John said he appreciates that.

DEPARTMENT ITEMS:

Police Department

Chief Bagan said that he has been working on the nail issue. He hasn't had a lot of contact on this, he has had two residents call and he spoke to them. There is no evidence or proof that this is malicious so he doesn't know whether it was or wasn't. John said he hasn't heard anything lately on this. Chief said that his only concern is that the State did sweep the road several times which has got them off the roadway but this puts them on the shoulder so they are still going to remain. If someone pulls off the side of the road, or passes someone on the shoulder they are going to pull nails up either in the tire or bring them back into the road. If we get heavy rain, it could move the nails out into the road. Until they get moved from that location, we may still have a reoccurrence on occasion. John said this is true.

Sara asked if Chief knew if Dave pulled the footage. Chief said he told Dave to contact Sara since Chief doesn't have access. Sara said he did email her and she emailed him back on Thursday stating that either herself, Norm or an attendant could let him in and to let her know when he is planning on coming and

that she was there that day until 4pm. She never heard from him so she emailed him again towards the end of the day giving him the hours the Transfer Station is open that weekend so he could go during that time if preferred and she also gave Norms contact information. She did not hear back from him so she is not aware if he went or not. Chief was not sure; last he knew Dave was going to contact Sara for access and hasn't heard from him since. He would like to look at the footage but he is not sure if it would show anything if it is negligence or maliciousness. He is not sure if we will ever know.

Highway Department

Bubba went over the following:

- They replaced two culverts on Edgar Albert Road.
- They ditching and road work on Blanchette and Spectacle Pond Road.

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS:

Nail issue

A concerned citizen wanted to talk to the Select Board in reference to the nails. He wanted to start off by saying he doesn't think it is any fault of the Town that the nails were in the road. He believes it was an accident or a carelessness on someone's behalf. What he has a problem with is the lack of response to the clean up of the road hazard, not just nails in the road. He believes they are a road hazard, just like he believes if the road was covered in trees or rattlesnakes, that would be a hazard that the Town and the State would work collaboratively to clean up that issue.

Speaking from his own experience he found out about the nails on August 27th. On August 27th he picked up a number of nails when he thought the only place the nails were located was down by the Town garage. After that, he was told that this office was made aware of the nails on August 8th based on minutes from August 9th. He doesn't have Facebook and he doesn't follow the minutes, that is his own fault and he takes responsibility for that. What he finds amazing is how there was zero response other than from the Chief cleaning them up one day with Kenny Martell. There was no response from the Town from August 9th until September 11th or 10th when he was spotted picking up nails in the roadway from here to the dump, from here to Hallsbrook and from the bottom of the hill to Smith Road. Other residents have been picking up nails too but he doesn't feel it is the obligation of the residents but he does agree with what John said earlier that we should all work together to get the nails out of the road and solve the problem.

He would like the Town in some way give a statement to the citizens, along with the State of NH which he will get to in a second, as to the lack of response to an emergency in the road, in his opinion there are no facts here, this is his opinion because he believes if there were other items in the road that we more visible, he assures us that the State and the Town would have worked together collaboratively to clean them up the best they can.

As far as the state goes and it being a state road, he couldn't agree any more. Everyone that said that is correct because the State plows this road and does all the culverts and road work. He wants the Town to know that he called Enfield because a woman he knows drove by while he was cleaning the road and as a state employee, she advised him to call the State which he did. He talked to a woman at the Enfield office who advised him that it is not her guys obligation to pick up trash in the Town of Groton on a Groton Road. He told her that he respectfully disagrees and nails are not trash, they are a hazard in the roadway for the obvious reasons of tires, putting aside the financial burden which in his house is \$2,800 alone along with a lot of other people who have had the same issue. What he gathered from the Enfield office was that she was not going to send her guys out because she only had two of them. He also asked her if she was the

person that had the juice to make the call for what they do. She said no so he asked to be put in contact with the person that was. She assured him that a male party would be calling him back. That was well over a week ago and he hasn't heard from them and he hasn't followed up with them. He thought if the State said they would call him back they would but clearly that hasn't happened.

He said that the Town should be jumping up and down at the lack of response but obviously there isn't going to be a response. He believes the Town does hold a burden of safety in this Town, just as if the road was covered in ice, he can almost guarantee our guys would have covered that road with sand for the safety of our residents. He believes there should have been some sort of foot patrol put on by the Town in a controlled or organized manner by the employees of the Town to make some sort of effort to help, not waiting according to the minutes well over a month from the initial complaint.

He only became aware because he had nails in his tires at his house. He didn't know it was from here, he thought it was from somewhere else until the day after when he was advised on the 27th that there were nails in the road on the corner by the Town garage so he went and picked them up. He was then told they were all over the road so he took it upon himself to walk almost the entire road, finding well over 300 nails himself. Someone said they should have a litter crew go clean it up. His response to that, and he doesn't know if he is right or wrong, now you have people working on behalf of the Town and if someone gets run over the Town could be liable. He doesn't think it is an obligation of the residents because of the safety concern, unless we have a detail set up in an organized fashion.

He hopes his point has been made but he wants to make sure a plan is in place if something like this were to happen again, and not putting it off on others because it is a State Road or Town road and then it leads to everyone posting on Facebook running their mouths behind the Towns back without coming in here with some sort of solution. This was his first opportunity to come talk to the Select Board on record and he wanted to make sure to do that they hear it from him directly and he is hearing from them directly. He cannot speak on anyone's behalf. He understands there are people on the board that are on emergency services and he would hope that the safety of the roadway would be one of the concerns such as bicycles, motorcycles, foot traffic, school buses and citizens. When there are that many nails and not one person that is paid for by the Town or State was out there to fix the problem, he cannot accept it. He said what he had to say and he wants to make record that now he is aware that Town employees have gone out to pick them up, and the sweeper has gone through, but it should have been done sooner. Also, with all due respect all the sweeper is doing now is pushing the nails to the end of people's driveways and other roads which will cause problems down the road like the Chief referred to earlier. Until an effort is made of putting your feet on the ground and looking and picking up nails with bare hands, he doesn't feel this issue is going away. He said if more nails appear in the areas, he looked which the only areas of this road, from Hallsbrook Road west and from the dump to Dave Maddens, if that makes sense to the people reading this. He has checked those areas a number of times and hasn't seen additional nails there but there are other areas these nails can be found. He is sure he has missed a bunch of them but he has 4 plastic bags, not sandwich bags he big bags, full of nails. He made sure to label each one.

Part of him wanted to bring in the bags of nails for a dramatic presentation but we all get it is an issue and there are a lot of nails. He doesn't like talking behind peoples back so he wanted to let the Select Board know what he has said and how he feels about it. He hopes this meeting will make a difference going forward in the event of some other road hazard. He is friends with the Road Agent and he knows that his best interest is this road especially in the winter time. He answers to the Select Board so he wanted to come to the Select Board so we can be sure that this won't happen again and that the people that run their mouths on the computer will see that someone said something to the Select Board about it so it is now on the record. He has had nails and most everyone in this room has had nails so we are all frustrated.

He didn't come for a fight, he just wanted to make a statement. If anyone thinks it is fault of the Town that there are nails on the road, he will put on record that is absolutely ridiculous. The concern is the apparent lack of response to this.

John said if they do reach out to the State and they don't respond to you, reach out to the Select Board. There was an issue where we were dealing with the local garage. We got Senator Giuda involved and John reached out to the head Chief in Concord. We will help out but we can't if we don't know that someone reached out to them and didn't get a response. When this first happened, we did get an email but it seems to be such a large issue.

Sara said on August 8th one email was sent which we received on August 9th stating that they found nails while they were running and the Select Board discussed this at the work session on August 9th. At that meeting Tony said he was out walking and found some too. Tony said he cleaned about 50. The Select Board thought that it was a isolated situation from someone going to the dump. Sara said once it escalated, if everyone that posted on Facebook, or talked to others in Town about, and the people that said they called the State would have called the Town then they would have known how widespread of an issue it was. We did end up seeing it on Facebook but it is not our page and we do not monitor that page. Before the last meeting, the only people that came to us were from the same family, living on the same road. We knew they had them but until the employees came across the Facebook posts on their personal time, we didn't know how many people did. Once we were aware it was a bigger issue we did reach out to DOT. She said she would pass it on to the Supervisor in our area. We never heard back from them with what they were going to do. Once we heard that there were more nails, we reached back out to DOT and talked to the Supervisor there and then put communication regarding this and the sweeping of the road on our website and on our Facebook page. Sara said she understands completely what the concerned resident was saying and understands the frustrations but the residents can complain on the Facebook page that isn't monitored by the Town then how will the Town know. They should be emailing or calling the Town, so we know how big of an issue it is. There were only three people total that emailed or called the Town, but apparently there were a lot more than that posting on Facebook or telling others that they had nails in their tires. John said that he doesn't even follow that page so he didn't see any of those posts.

The concerned resident said that with all due respect he has a hard time believing that the Town wasn't aware of the situation. John said that we are not saying that we were not aware of the issue. When it was first brought to us there were nails in the road that people had been cleaned up. When we were made aware it was continuing and more widespread, we did reach out to DOT. They later had the sweeper out and swept one day. We were then told there were more nails so we reached back out to DOT and talked to a supervisor and they sent the sweeper back out a few more times.

The concerned citizen understands but is still concerned by the timeframe. He doesn't doubt the town made the call and he doesn't doubt that people didn't contact the Town directly. He did contact the State and people he knows directly but he didn't come in here to file a formal complaint because quite frankly he doesn't think it is Sara's problem because she is not the road agent or the Select Board. He wanted to come in here and talk to the Select Board themselves. He does understand the see something say something.

John said that Sara did contact the Select Board when she received the complaints. The resident doesn't doubt that but still feels the response could have been considerably faster and there should have been more of an effort to locate the road hazards. He said that he debates that the Town said it didn't appear

to be as big of a deal as the Facebook post they happened to stumble across made it out to be. Sara said that is not the case, the Town didn't know it was a big of an issue until they saw the Facebook posts. This post made them aware it was more nails than we thought in the road and a lot of people were getting nails in their tires. In the beginning it was one email that stated they were out for a run and found nails in the road and they cleaned some up. The Town knew of someone who was moving and cleaning out their house so it was chalked up to a dump run gone bad. Thought it was taken care of. Then it was brought up that there were more nails and they thought it was malicious.

The concerned resident asked if it would be fair to assume that the cure for these problems is to call the Town directly and inundate Sara with phone calls. John said yes. Sara said yes as well and she will tell them to call DOT as well. This doesn't mean that the Town wont call but just like with calling the Town, we want to know how many people this is affecting and by everyone calling DOT, it will show it is a bigger issue then just the Town calling them. John said that if one person calls Sara and says they found nails, is way different then many people calling so we know how big the issue is.

John said he understands the residents' frustrations. Sara said this is learning experience for everyone involved and could have been handled differently. The resident said he thinks the Town wants to hear that. He said it isn't Sara's job or anyone's job to monitor Facebook but he believes that the Town has an obligation to the roadway so if the State doesn't do anything we should call the commissioner of safety and if he doesn't do anything then you go higher up. It just frustrates him to hear everyone talking about the Town when they didn't come to the Town to say anything. He doesn't want to badger the Select Board but wanted to say what everyone is thinking and what he is thinking and hoping for a resolution.

The resident asked if it would be fair to say that this could be discussed and the Town could have some emergency plan in effect in the event that something like this were to happen again. The Select Board agreed.

John said that the Select Board appreciates him coming in to discuss this.

Slim said that next month the Conservation Commission will be doing a clean-up. Knowing all of this, and he had another nail, they will make sure they all have gloves they can pick them up with. A resident said to make sure they are wearing good footwear as well. He said his nail was picked up somewhere from his road to Rogers Road.

The concerned resident said that is bound to happen more but if everyone can know there has been an effort to clean them up then he thinks this will die down. He said he could care less what people say on the internet but he cares what someone says here and to the Select Board. He wanted to let the Select Board know that he is glad sweeper went through but people are now running their mouths that they are now being swept into their roads and driveways. He said the sweeper has made a difference because he is not finding them like he was but there are still concerns.

Dave said it is very suspicious to him. His uncle was a roofer for years and all nails that were taken off were put into a special spot and they got carried to a certain place.

Tony said if someone is doing it deliberately, he cannot figure out why they would do that, especially if they are driving the road. The resident said it would have to be someone not coming back this way. His theory on if someone is doing this maliciously is you would think they would do it more than once and they are not in the same places they were and is not a designated 10-foot area, it is the entire State portion

of the road. He is looking in the cracks and everything and isn't finding anything else. It is hard to make a judgement unless an investigation is done, which is not directed at the Chief. It could have been off a trailer or could be someone being a criminal. If this was looked at as a criminal investigation it is well over a felony level, just based on one resident. Chief agreed. Erik has done over 60 plugs in the town which is thousands of dollars in felony level criminal case but how do you prove who did it. He doesn't expect a resolution of how they got there but just pick them up.

Dave asked the resident in his opinion if there is anything the Town can do to get the word out, like a sign, flyer or something. The resident said he thought of that too but didn't know but did state that if the flat tire happens on the interstate and gets run over, maybe being informed could have avoided that. It doesn't set right with him.

John said that even with the Town cleaning up the nails, the Town employee still has a risk of getting hit and killed. The resident said absolutely and agreed there are risks.

John said in the future we can put this posted at the Transfer Station on the boards there since everyone goes there and can put it on the website to make people aware.

Chief said that he did open a number for this in case it develops into a criminal case but he has no evidence at this time to move one way or another. He does have the number if someone wants to reach out for the number if they need it for insurance or not. It is neglect or could be criminal but there is no evidence to prove that. It is obviously over and above a random nail so it may be covered but he doesn't know how the insurance handles that.

Ann said nothing personal but no one comes here and no one reads anything so it is a lovely thought to post it but people need to be more involved. The only time they get involved is at Town meeting and then they don't have the information, they don't listen or get involved. John said this is exactly how Alexandria will increase our taxes by \$250,000.00 a year. The resident said that for the record he did say that he could guarantee that he would get chastised for not coming to more meetings and the regulars would give him a hard time. He said who else is here that has been running their mouths. Sara said that is exactly one of the problems and the last meeting it was posted for everyone to come to the meeting and none of the ones that were complaining or posting online came to the meeting.

Bubba said on the other side of that is that there is a lot of information on the webpage but people say they don't know. If someone can go on their phones and check emails every day then you can check the Towns page to see what is going on. Sara agreed and said if they can check Facebook and post on their then they can check the page too. It doesn't take that long. The concerned resident agreed and said that at the beginning of the meeting he said on record that it is his fault that he doesn't go on the town page or read the minutes. He thinks it is an obtuse statement to say someone doesn't care unless it happens to them, he guarantees that if anyone had \$3,000 into tires, they would be out picking up nails too and again he is not trying to blame anyone. Once it happened to him, he started to investigate this and saw August 9th was the first complaint and there was a lack of response.

Bubba said he isn't just talking about this incident. He is talking about anything going on in the Town. It is important, it will be posted on the main page so you don't even have to look for it. Sara said if it is Highway related you will see it on the main page and on Highways page so people cannot say they couldn't find it.

Dave said he was at the last meeting when nails were brought up. He wasn't here because of the nails, that was the first he had heard of them. The concerned resident asked if he attends all meetings, he said he does not.

Ron said they weren't used nails. Chief said they were not. They were rustic, they were not used, no asphalt on them, no heads were crumbled so obviously someone found the box that has probably been there for 20 years and who knows if they fell off going to the dump or if they were thrown there. The resident said some were clean and new too. Chief said he found some nuts and bolts but who knows if it was from the same place, mostly it was one-inch galvanized roofing nails.

Tony said he hopes this is done.

Tractor/Mower

Dave Leone asked how much we paid for the Tractor/Mower. Bubba answered \$24,500. Dave said there are rumors that over \$30,000.00 was spent on this. John mentioned that if people came to the public hearing, we had on that they would have known. John said the Select Board had a public hearing on this before it was purchased because they decided before they spend that money, they want to give the Town an opportunity to know since it is their money. Sara explained this was posted in paper, on the website, on the bulletin board at the Town House and at the Transfer Station.

Dave thinks that it is a poor way to spend towns money if we are mowing under the powerlines that the power company sent a letter stating that they are going to come through and cut 12 feet on either side of the wire.

John said it was used to concentrate on the ditches. Tony said it was for the ditches and for near people's driveways and end of roadways to provide visibility. Dave said what he saw was more than ditches and stuff that he thinks the power company would come through and clean up. It was asked if the power company has been out like they said. Dave said that after the last time the Town complained they did clean up and has made a big difference on how much he has lost power.

Having no other business to conduct, John motioned to adjourn at 7:40pm, Tony 2nd, so voted.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sara Smith
Administrative Assistant