

Town of Groton
Select Board Work Session Minutes
January 3, 2023

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

John called the meeting to order at 5:00pm.

Annual Town Report Quotes

Sara reached out to five different companies for quotes on the Town report. We received two back. Sara presented both quotes to the Select Board. The Select Board agreed that since we have had good luck and work well with Bridge & Byron that we should stay with them. **John motioned to go with Bridge & Byron printers for the 2022 Annual Town Report, Tony 2nd, so voted.**

Budget Items

Sara explained that we have the list of warrant articles that was received by other departments. We will need to go over those and finalize the budget at the next meeting. The 1st Public Hearing on the budget is scheduled for February 7, 2023 at 6:00pm. They may have to schedule another work session after the next meeting and before the Public Hearing to finalize everything. Sara has created the posting for the Public Hearing and this will be posted online, on the bulletin board at the Town House and Transfer Station this week and will be in the **1/19/23** edition of the paper.

Sara had put together the budget with the information submitted so far and 2022 YTD totals so far. She highlighted the areas that were over and explained why. The Select Board looked to see what areas needed to be adjusted. The following areas were agreed on that they need to be adjusted:

- Sara explained that after she printed the budgets, she got invoices from Primex for Unemployment and Workers Comp so she adjusted these since they are a little bit lower. This will be reflected on the next draft.
- Sara explained the Transfer Station budget increased some because we received Pemi Baker Solid Waste dues which went up from \$585.80 to \$943.39. She highlighted this on the budget since this is a change from the meeting with the Transfer Station.

Sara will reprint the budget two ways for the next meeting with all of the changes that were discussed; one with full \$215,000 and the other with first year payment on a three-year bond option.

Warrant Articles

The Select Board started looking through the warrant articles that the departments submitted.

Sara explained that she put all submissions on the warrant article lists and the Select Board can decide what to remove, etc. Sara also explained that she heard that they will be submitting a zoning ordinance so she reserved a warrant article for this. The Select Board went over the following warrant articles that Sara put together so far and the Select Board can decide which ones to keep or to remove.

- Article 3 is for the building. This could change once the architect reviewed the information and makes any changes. We also need to decide if we want to do a bond or raise it all in on year. If it is a bond, it is an entirely separate process that we need to have separate public hearings on. Sara got information from bond bank regarding the bond rates and amounts for 2- and 3-year bonds. The rate they used is 4.75% although they expect it to be lower than that but hard to predict for 2023.

- For a two-year bond there would be a \$125,968.75 payment the first year and a \$115,225.00 payment the second year.
- For a three-year bond there would be a \$85,968.75 payment the first year, a \$82,125.00 payment the second year and a \$78,562.50 payment the third year.

The Select Board agreed we should go forward with the three-year bond and the Town can amend it if they would prefer to pay for all of the \$215,000 in on year.

- Article 4 is for the operating budget. This will have to be adjusted to reflect the changes that the Select Board just made to the budget.
- Article 5 is the money to go to the Capital Reserve Funds. There was no money put in this last year so it is important that money be put into this. The Select Board agreed on the following:
 - Public Works CRF: \$50,000. Since we are trying for the building do we want to do any money into the Public Works if the building doesn't pass. The Select Board agreed to not put any money into this and if the building doesn't pass, they will amend this article to put some money into this CRF.
 - Disaster Relief CRF: \$50,000.00
 - Town House CRF: \$10,000.00
 - Police Cruiser CRF: \$10,000.00
 - Truck/Sander CRF: \$10,000.00
 - Heavy Equipment CRF: \$10,000.00
 - Assessing Reval CRF: \$7,500.00
- Article 6 is to see if the Town wants to establish a Road Repair and Paving CRF and put \$50,000.00 into it. This has come up in the past and is something we should really think about to preserve all of the money we have put into the roads. The Select Board agreed we should submit this warrant article but agreed to change the amount to \$30,000.00.
- Article 7 is to raise \$40,000 to refurbish the 2012 International 6-wheeler body and frame
- Article 8 is for the 3% of the Timber Tax for the Conservation Commission from the unassigned fund balance.
- Article 9 is for the provisions of the Standard and Optional Veterans Tax Credit (RSA 72:28)
- Article 10 is for the provisions of the All-Veterans Tax Credit (RSA 72:28-B)
 - These two have been adopted in the past but due to come provisions they need to be readopted in order for us to continue using them as we do. See notes attached.
- Article 11 is for the solar property tax exemption. The Select Board agreed not to put this on this year's warrant and to revisit this next year.
- Article 12 is for the bridge money. We can either vote to change the wording of the Atwell Orange Brook Bridge CRF to be Town Bridges CRF and to change the purpose to cover construction, reconstruction, replacement and maintenance of all Town Bridges. This would require a 2/3 majority vote. The attorney said if you don't think you will get a 2/3 majority vote then we should do it in two parts and establish a new CRF for Town Bridges. This only requires a majority vote. There is wording provided for both. However, NHMA stated that they do not believe it would be appropriate to put these funds into a CRF. They are non-lapsing and there is no time limit on when these should be spent. Since these funds have limitations, they feel it would be inappropriate to mix these with other funds, such as the money already in the Atwell Orange Brook Bridge CRF. The Select Board agreed to keep it in the general fund for a year but then if it isn't used to put in a warrant article next year to create a CRF for this.
- Article 13 is the normal last warrant article to allow the Selectmen to transact any other business that may legally come before the Town.

- Sara mentioned it has come up in the past to do a warrant article for paving the Transfer Station but no one submitted anything or got any quotes on it this year so she didn't add it. The Select Board agreed that this will not be added this year.

Reschedule Emergency Management Meeting

We had to cancel the last two Emergency Management Meetings and need to reschedule. The Select Board asked Sara to see if Saturday January 14, 2023 at 9:00am works for everyone.

Junkyard information/email from attorney

The attorney emailed back. He went through the file for the one that went to court in the past and we have orders for costs and civil penalties, but there are no orders about an automatic attachment or other relief along those lines. Instead, we would need to file a motion for post judgment attachment. We already have one drafted from last year when these questions came up before and the Board decided to do the letters instead. He asked if the Board would like to move forward with a Court action. The Select Board agreed to move forward. Sara will email the attorney.

Regarding the other property that we asked about last week, the Select Board agreed we send him a letter stating that we appreciate him cleaning the yard and coming into compliance and will waive the charges. Sara will have this letter ready for next week so the Select Board can sign this when they sign checks. **John motioned to come in and sign the letter when it is ready, Tony 2nd so voted.**

School info/letter to Town

John mentioned that they are willing to bet that someone will bring a petitioned warrant article to the School Budget Hearing on February 4th so he would like as many people to attend as possible. There will be a meeting at the State House on this. He isn't sure of the date yet but we should be there to speak to this. He thinks there should also be parents there to speak to it. At the February 4th meeting there will be a town to try to change it. Groton, Hebron or Bridgewater will then try to amend this. We need people there to stop this.

John showed the letter that Bridgewater created. The Select Board agreed that we should do the same letter. Sara will work on this. Sara will also reach out to the Supervisors or the Town Clerk to see if they have a list of registered voters with mailing addresses,

Jury Duty

Sara mentioned that she was chosen for jury duty for 2/6/23. She asked for a deferral due to budget hearings and town meeting until after Town Meeting. However, when looking at this it states she could be doing this for a week or more depending on the case and if she is chosen. She can always come in and do payroll and stuff at night for a few hours each week to stay up on everything but it would be a lot to do this every day. However, when looking into the handbook it looks like the Town doesn't pay for jury duty. The Select Board agree that it is a civil duty and that full time employees should get some type of pay. Sara will look into what other towns do and work on updating the policy.

John motioned to go into non-public session pursuant to RSA 91-A:3 II (a) and (b) at 5:40pm, Tony 2nd, so voted.

John motioned to return to public session at 6:00pm, Tony 2nd, so voted.

John motioned to seal the non-public minutes, Tony 2nd, so voted.

Meeting with Carol Miller on Broadband

Carol Miller met with the Select Board to provide an update on broadband. She spoke with NHEC recently and they are due to build out in Summer of 2023 and everyone should have fiber available by Fall. We do not need to do the RFP since we already have the partnership that is lined up and they are using their own money and grant money. Groton is served 100% so all members will get fiber to the premise. They average cost per customer will be around \$70.00 a month. The fiber will be a lot faster of an internet option.

John wanted to confirm that she said this will be up and running by Fall and will not cost the Town anything. Carol confirmed that this is correct and this is the best position a town can be in. This will cover all residents that have NHEC. John asked if this will be part of the electric bill or a separate bill. They will be called NH Broadband LLC so she is thinking a separate bill but she will find out for sure.

She said we may want to promote the Affordable Connectivity Program (FCC Discount Program) that is available to families on certain income levels. NHEC is working on getting certified now. She went through a presentation on it that she will send to Sara as well. This is to ensure that households can have connection for work, school, etc. This would be up to a \$30 discount for internet and a one time \$100 discount for laptop, computer, or tablet purchased through certain providers. The household would need to fit into the eligibility guidelines, then apply and find a service provider who participates, which NHEC will and Spectrum currently does. [Acpbenefit.org](https://acpbenefit.org) is where you apply.

It was agreed to meet again on February 21, 2023 at 6:00pm.

Meeting with Bubba

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

- They had the repairs done to North Groton Road shoulders for as much as they could see. There could be more that they cannot see. Right now, it was agreed to pay this out of Bubba's budget for 2022 since he has some money left. However, once they do more work once the snow/ice is gone we should take that out of the disaster relief CRF. There were also damages to River Road, Province Road, and Edgar Albert Road. Sculptured Rocks Road had some ice dams but that was mostly just due to the parking lot and the way the water ran off, which is something that should be looked into.
- He is still trying to fight with Viking on the warranty for the red truck. We will have to pay Dan the mobile mechanic for the work that he did on it.
- The backhoe is still looking like next week. We are still currently paying out of the 2022 budget so if it comes in we can cut the check next week out of 2022 budget since that is when it was approved.
- The old backhoe blew a line last week.
- John mentioned that considering all obstacles Bubba did a great job.
- Jeremy is scheduled for back surgery so he may be out for a while.

Having no other business to conduct, John motioned to adjourn at 6:52pm, Tony 2nd, so voted.

Respectfully submitted,

Sara Smith
Administrative Assistant