

Town of Groton
Select Board Work Session Minutes
February 21, 2023

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

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

Budget/Warrant/MS-636

Due to getting the changes in cost from the Architect and talking to DRA about using money from the Unassigned Fund Balance, the budget and warrant article amounts have changed to reflect this. Sara made copies of the updated budget and warrant articles for the Select Board. It was agreed that since the price didn't go up that much that we wouldn't do the bond and raise it all this year. The new wording for the warrant article is:

*“To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **six hundred seventy nine thousand dollars (\$679,000)** to design and construct a new Department of Public Works building, with **one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000)** to come from the unassigned fund balance; **two hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$250,000)** to come from a USDA Rural Development grant; and to authorize the withdrawal of **one hundred sixty thousand dollars (\$160,000)** from the Public Works Capital Reserve Fund; with the remainder of **one hundred sixty nine thousand dollars (\$169,000)** to be raised from taxation. (Majority vote required).”*

Sara explained she also ran the MS-636 now that the budget and warrant are updated so the Select Board need to sign the warrant and the MS-636. **John motioned to sign the DRA warrant, the Town warrant and the MS-636, Tony 2nd so voted.**

Public Hearing on Building

Now that the architect has reviewed the costs and is moving forward, we need to schedule another public hearing before Town Meeting to go over the building and to ask Eric Law to attend. The Select Board agreed that we should have the hearing on March 7th at 7:00pm. Sara will post this in the paper and on the website. She will also email Eric Law to see if he is able to attend.

Next meeting time

Sara explained that our next meeting is scheduled for March 7, 2023 and this is the last scheduled meeting before Town Meeting. It was agreed to meet at 5pm that day since we are meeting with the Moderator at 6pm.

Follow up from Public Hearing

At the Select Board meeting the Select Board will go over the following that came up at the Public Hearings:

- There will not be any changes to the operating budget. The Select Board agreed to keep it as it was including the moderator and ballot clerks.
- Article 3- building. At the Public Hearing we were not sure if we were going to proceed with the bond or not. We got the numbers from the architect and found out that we are able to apply \$100,000 from the unassigned fund balance so we will not be doing the bond. We will move

forward to raise the \$169,000 from taxation to move forward with the building. This will only increase the budget \$6,272 from last year.

- We reached out to USDA and if the building passes at the march 2023 town meeting, how long would we have for the project. They said, ideally the project would be completed within a year of funding obligation but no later than two years from obligation, example January 2026.
- We reached out to see if a shower is required and were informed that Showers/tubs are not specifically required by the code for business, assembly or storage uses. However, depending on the use, OSHA standard 29 CFR 1910.151(c) requires eyewash and shower equipment for emergency use where the eyes or body of any employee may be exposed to injurious corrosive materials. So, it depends on how the facility will be used and if there may be exposure to those materials listed above. We included an eye wash station in the previous round of drawings. The Select Board did agree to move forward with the eye wash station and shower.
- We reached out to the attorney to ask what the best way to proceed with Article 5 is in case the building article 3 doesn't pass and we need to add money for the building; she recommended that it would be best to put the building in there with \$1.00 and then amend that amount as needed.
- We double checked and the Conservation Commission Fund did have \$6,536.46 as of December 2022 as Sara stated at the last meeting.
- The question came up about how much money we get for the Highway Block Grant. This amount does change every year but for 2022 we received \$30,921.84.
- Sara looked into the Veterans Credit. We currently have 34 properties that receive the Veterans Credit; 2022 was higher but some have sold the property. That includes 31 that get the \$500 and 3 that get the totally and permanently disabled veterans' credit of \$1500.
- Also, regarding the comment at the public hearing that a resident thought the credit was increased, we looked into this. RSA 72:28 still states \$51-\$750. Sara also reached out to NHMA to ask if they are aware of an increase and they are not. Also, on the DRA's list about veterans' credits, out of the 259 towns listed, only 23 towns have credit amounts higher than \$500; 78 have credit amounts lower than us and the rest are all at the \$500.00 credit amount.
- Sara asked NHMA if the residents can amend articles 9 and 10 to change the \$500.00 credit amount. NHMA's answer was yes.

Letter from 160 Halls Brook Road

The Town had sent the owners of 160 Halls Brook Road a letter asking what the intent is with the RV on the property. The owners send a letter back stating the following:

"We are writing in response to your letter dated February 7, 2023. In June of 2021, before we purchased our property, the land broker selling the property told us that there were no covenants or restrictions on the property and that we could use an RV. We called the Groton Town Hall to confirm that there were no covenants or restrictions on the property and that we could use an RV. The town's response was that we could indeed use an RV and that there were no covenants or restrictions on the property. We signed the Purchase and Sale on July 9, 2021 and closed on August 18, 2021. Starting August 20, 2021, we began using the property, working and camping on weekends, long before the new zoning ordinance was established March 8, 2022. Our intent with the RV and property is to continue to use it as we have since August 20, 2021, until we finish building our home on the property. We have no intention of living in the RV full time."

The Select Board agreed that they are okay with them having the RV since it was there before the zoning went into effect, as long as they are not living in it year-round.

Congressional Direct Spending

Sara explained that she looked into and attended a webinar for Congressional Direct Spending. This is for FY2024. Sara can look into if there are options for the building but there are a few problems with this. One is that it is for FY2024 and the building is on the warrant this year. Also, there is a 20% town match and for federal the FY starts October 1, 2023 so we would have to have our 20% match raised and appropriated by then. The other question would be what amount to apply for since we are getting the USDA grant, etc. This will take time to apply for. The email just came out on 2/14/23 and Sara attended the webinar on 2/15/23 but the requests need to be submitted by 3/10/23.

The Select Board agreed that since it is for 2024 that the project will already be almost complete for the building but we can look into options for the culvert on North Groton Road or the sand shed. Sara will see if either of these projects would qualify.

John motioned to go into non-public session pursuant to RSA 91-A:3 II (a) and (b) at 5:30pm, 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 provided the Select Board with an update on broadband. She will write up a summary of what we have done and where we are at so we can hand it out at Town Meeting or with the Town report. She will send this to Sara. The Select Board agreed that we can put this out at Town Meeting.

Carol said that the round 2 application for \$40 million has been awarded to Consolidated Communications. This will send fiber to the premise homes around the state including many counties but not Grafton. That will go to executive council to vote on that tomorrow.

NHEC is on track for summer installation. These installs go fairly quick and because they go so quick you may want to be aware that some installs for other companies, not NHEC, haven't been the best. We want to make sure these installs with NHEC are good with no problems and that we have a good contact number for technical support so we can communicate our issues and have them respond in a timely manner.

Tony said the only concern at first was the cost but this won't cost the Town any money so we are happy about that. The residents can decide if they want to set it up. Once it goes into effect, we should put the information up about the affordability options.

The Select Board doesn't have any other questions for Carol. Carol said that we are in good shape. Tony said it has gone well. Carol agreed and stated she is very pleased. Once the service is in place, it will make a world of difference for everyone.

Carol said she may have NHEC come back out and talk to the Select Board about where they are at with the project. She will shoot for March 21, 2023 at 6pm.

Election Day

The Select Board is okay with Sara being a ballot clerk again and closing the office on March 14, 2023 for the elections. Sara will post this.

Meeting with Bubba

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

- Roads are posted effective today. Sara posted this last week on the website and at the Town House and Transfer Station.
- Permit to Exceed Road Ban: We received an email from John Gubellini who is a contractor for NHEC. They are in the area doing electrical work for the broadband cable coming to the area and are looking for permission to travel the roads when conditions permit such as cold days and mornings while the roads are frozen. Sara had drafted a permit to exceed that states these conditions. **John motioned to sign the permit to exceed, Tony 2nd, so voted.**

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

Respectfully submitted,

Sara Smith
Administrative Assistant