

Town of Groton
Select Board Work Session Minutes
September 19, 2023

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

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

Law Firm Question

The Town received an email that stated *“As you may or may not know, Gardner, Fulton & Waugh (“GFW”) provided legal services to the Town of Groton at one time. As a result of a merger with GFW, Drummond Woodsum took possession of the Town’s legal files in 2019. Drummond Woodsum is undergoing a process to return files that are 10+ years and older to current and former clients and I’m writing today to determine who would be authorized to communicate with on behalf of the Town regarding these files.”*

Sara reached out and said she is the contact. She sent her a letter and the file they are referring too. It is only one file but since there have been issues on and off for many years with this one, Sara didn’t know if we should request the file or due to the age of it and no current concerns if we should have the law firm destroy them on the Town’s behalf.

Sara discussed this with our current Town attorney and she said *“that would have been many, many years ago. We recently did a similar purge. If they have a list of matters on which they represented the town, get it and give it a read, but I’m guessing all of those files over 10 years old (and probably over 20 years old, since we’ve been representing the town at least that long) can be destroyed.”*; *“I’d run it by the selectboard, but if it’s an ongoing problem, you might want to grab the files and just stick them in storage.”*

The Select Board agreed that even though it is older, since we have had recent concerns with the same property that we should request the files to keep on record in case we need them in the future. Sara will email back and request the files.

Hard Road to Travel Workshop

The Hard Road to Travel Workshop is scheduled for Wednesday, October 4, 2023 in Concord. It is \$65.00 a person. This is a good workshop for both Bubba and Sara to attend. Bubba works with this every day and Sara fields a lot of questions regarding this. Sara asked if the Select Board is okay with her signing herself and Bubba up and posting the office as closed that day. The Select Board agreed that both Sara and Bubba should attend and are okay with posting the office closed that day.

Cemetery resignation

Michelle Sharp emailed that she is resigning from her position as Cemetery Trustee. The Select Board reviewed her email. We currently still have two trustees. Sara said that Ruth is aware of the resignation as well since she was on the email.

Update on building plans

The USDA architect sent over their questions and concerns regarding the new plans and Sara sent them to our Engineer and Architect the same day. They are working on getting these answers so we cannot move forward until they do.

The Select Board asked that Sara reach out to the DRA, and if they do not know how, to then reach out to the attorney, to see what needs to be done to encumber the funds raised from the Town for this and if we can encumber the money that was coming from unreserved fund balance.

Enforcement Officer Update

Sara reached out to MRI and to local towns to see what they do for an enforcement officer. Below is the information that she received:

- MRI: Yes, we offer this service subject to availability. We have one person and he's usually bouncing between a few towns. I think you may have used him once before on an enforcement issue. When/if you need him, you should give me a heads up and I'll see if he has any availability.
- Hebron: has a compliance officer who reviews building permits to ensure the proposed project follows the zoning ordinance regulations. Sara asked if he would be interested in doing this for other towns and she said she would ask him. We have not heard back on this yet.
- Bridgewater: The Select Board are the enforcement officers and review building permits and the fire chief would inspect the inside for heating sources, etc.
- Rumney: they do not have zoning so they do not have building permits. The other items fall on the health officer, Fire Chief, or MRI.
- Danbury: Does not have an enforcement officer or building inspector.
- Dorchester: they have a permit officer who approves building permits and visits sites as they deem necessary, which is usually one of the Select Board Members. Once a permit is approved, Avitar visits the property to make sure what is being built is being assessed accurately. They have very limited zoning but any variances or exceptions are approved through the ZBA.
- Bristol: has an enforcement officer that follows up on land use permits (their version of building permits) which are required because of their Zoning Ordinance. They have someone who works 35 hours a week that they are proposing to be 40 hours in 2024.

The Select Board thinks that, since we do not have a lot of things that need enforcement, that we can reach out to MRI if something comes up.

HB349 info

John asked for the following regarding HB349 to be added to the meeting for discussion:

- Schedule a public meeting to discuss with the Townspeople/Virginia's email:
 - Virginia sent an email because she is unable to attend the Select Board meeting tonight because she is leading an SAU4 Budget Committee meeting that night. Hence, she sent the following questions/concerns:
 - In the 9/20 meeting of the HB349 Steering Committee they will discuss the timing of public info sessions. Given her involvement, she'd like to be present for the first Groton session. She will be travelling for work 10/5 to 10/13 so she proposing a session the week of 10/16. Is that week suitable for the SB? The

Select Board agreed to schedule a meeting for October 17, 2023 at 7pm at the beginning of the Select Board meeting.

- Prior to the meeting, she'd also like to consider:
 1. She heard Ruth has a sheet where residents can sign up for the town's mailing list. Assuming that's true, can you confirm how many residents are currently on that list? It would be great to have a signup sheet handy at the HB349 info session. Sara did look at Ruth's list. It is for email and there is currently two people on it. The Select Board will mention this list at the meeting tonight.
 2. Beyond informational meetings, she wants to make sure the Groton community has a voice in this new school district. Has the selectboard considered any additional members of the community to invite to the sub-committees? If not, she has some folks in mind that she thinks would be assets. The Select Board stated that we need more people in the audience so we need to get the townspeople to attend these meetings.
- Webpage for greater communication regarding HB349 updates and info:
 - John mentioned that Bridgewater created a website for updates on HB349. Sara explained that she has put a link to Bridgewater's page on our website. The Select Board agreed this should be good enough and we do not need to create our own website. By having the link to their page ensures that everyone is getting the same information.

The Select Board agreed that we should make a flyer stating that we will be having a meeting 10/17/23 at 7pm at the beginning of the Select Board meeting to discuss HB349 and the potential new school district. They said the flyer should state "want to have a more controllable tax rate and better education, then join us on 10/17/23 at 7pm for a factual conversation regarding HB349 and the potential new school district." Sara will create this flyer and send it to the Select Board for review. After this meeting, we will create another flyer for the steering committee meetings that take place every Wednesday.

Hazard Mitigation Meetings

The Hazard Mitigation Meetings are starting October 3, 2023 at 4:00pm. They are scheduled for 2 hours and will be once a month, on the first Tuesday of the month. We already have budget meetings scheduled for October 3, 2023 at 5:00pm so would you all be able to meet at 3:00pm that day? The next meeting date, November 7th, we can push Ruth and Bubba back to 6pm and then do Sara's budgets at another meeting. These meetings will take place through zoom. Sara has to send her the information on who we want to attend these meetings so she asked the Select Board who should attend. It was agreed Sara, John, Tony, Ron, Bill, Patti, Bubba, Fred, and Chief Bagan should attend. Sara will ask if we need other people to attend to reach our hours and if so, we can ask the Town Clerk, Fire Warden, Transfer Station employees and others to attend but only if needed.

The Select Board said that it would be too hard to meet at 3:00pm with work schedules so they asked Sara to see if we can do an hour for first meeting on October 3, 2023 at 4:00pm and then the rest of the meetings we will be fine to take place from 4:00pm-6:00pm.

Updates on building repairs

- The fire escape railing and boards have been replaced and it is sturdy again.
- The basement door has been replaced.
- The front deck and back decks were power washed.
- The front deck raining and some boards were replaced. They will be back Thursday to start prepping for staining and paint and hopefully will do that on Friday.
- The Transfer Station door will be replaced tomorrow.
- They tried a few latches for the window and couldn't find one that worked so they will keep working on that.

Avangrid

John asked the Select Board if they think we should have a meeting with Avangrid about the decommissioning plan and costs. John asked Sara to send an email stating that the current Select Board was not around and were not around for the original meetings, they have read the agreements but they would like clarification on the decommissioning plan and costs and who is responsible for it.

Having no other business to conduct, John motioned to adjourn at 6:54pm, Tony 2nd, so voted.

Respectfully submitted,

Sara Smith
Administrative Assistant