

Town of Groton
Select Board Work Session Minutes
April 16, 2024

In attendance: John Rescigno, Tony Albert, Ron Madan and Sara Smith (Town Administrator)

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

Minute Policy

At the last meeting the Select Board asked Sara to create a policy for the Town. Sara created the policy and printed for the Select Board to review and sign. **John motioned to sign the Minute Policy, Tony 2nd, so voted.**

Sara will email a copy out to all departments, boards and committees to make sure we are all following the same minute procedure.

Map 2 Lot 123

The buyer that we had the agreement with came in and paid the amount to purchase the property. Sara reached out to the attorney to see what the next steps are. She stated the following:

Once the buyer brings in the rest of the purchase price (which he did on 4/9/24) + \$90 for his half of the transfer tax + \$12.68 (the latter two need to be separate checks made out to the Grafton County Registry of Deeds), the selectmen will sign the attached deed and then we will send it to the registry with the two checks.

The buyer will need to complete and file the PA-34 form for DRA.

<https://www.revenue.nh.gov/forms/2016/documents/alt-pa-34-v1-0.pdf>

The buyer will also need to apply to the planning board for a voluntary merger.

John motioned to sign the deed, Tony 2nd, so voted. Sara will not send this in until we get the two checks from the purchaser.

Meeting Request

Shannon LaFreniere requested a meeting with John and Deb regarding some flood plain concerns. Sara explained that she believes it would have to be with the Select Board and the Planning Board because John and Deb cannot make decisions without the rest of the board. Sara said she would bring this to the Select Board to see if they wanted to meet with her first or have meeting with her and the Planning Board. The Select Board agreed that they will meet with her and then we can have the state go out or refer her to the Planning Board if needed. Sara will see if she is available for the next meeting on May 7, 2024.

NHPDIP Email regarding SB 553

The Town received an email regarding SB 553. A Senate Bill ([SB 553](#)) would require public funds from localities be invested in NH banks, where the NH Bankers Association, the lobbying arm for the banks, argues that according to a study it commissioned, the money would better serve the state's economy by investing it with them, versus through investment with its competitor, the NH Public Deposit Investment Pool ("the Pool"). The assumptions behind the bill are speculative and will likely result in dismantling the Pool, harming public entities and local taxpayers. The banks claim funds in the Pool are not safe because they are not insured or collateralized. NHPDIP states this is misleading

The Pool was created more than 30 years ago by the NH legislature after the state's five largest banks failed and the FDIC became the single biggest property owner in NH. Today, pursuant to [RSA 6:45-47](#), the Pool is operated by the state Treasurer with the assistance of an Advisory Committee, including representatives from the NH Bankers Association.

The Pool offers public entities, including but not limited to municipalities, counties, school districts, trustees of trust funds, commissions, agencies, and the state itself an option for investing public funds in a program that focuses on safety, liquidity, and a competitive return. The Pool is rated AAAM by Standard and Poor's Ratings Services, indicating excellent safety of investment principal and a superior capacity to maintain a \$1.00 per share net asset value.

A public hearing has been scheduled before the NH House Finance Committee on SB 553 at 2 PM on Wednesday, April 17, 2024. If you believe the Pool should be preserved, or minimally that the issue should be carefully studied through a legislative study committee process over the course of the next year, they encourage we attend the hearing to express this perspective and to let our local legislators know. Arriving early is suggested as seating is often limited. Municipal officials can also provide feedback to the NH Finance Committee using their online portal [HERE](#).

Their hope in writing is to ensure local governments across the state have an opportunity to evaluate whether SB 553 would be positive or negative for their individual communities so that they can express these views to legislators. In Durham, they have found the Pool to be an asset and are concerned about legislation that would potentially dismantle it as a viable, safe alternative investment vehicle for municipalities at local option.

Sara said we have used NHPDIP since she has been here and even before that. We keep most of our money in there and it is safe there and gains interest. Sara asked the Select Board if they would like her to go on the link, they provided to leave our feedback or sent a letter or what. The Select Board asked Sara to reach out for proof our money is safe with them. They are okay with Sara providing feedback through the link they provided once this is received.

Building Permit Map 3 Lot 6-2

The Planning Board and Select Board reviewed a building permit for Map 3 Lot 6-2. The owner started the process for the solar panels just to see if they would qualify, but decided not to move forward with it. The company was still moving forward and the owner is dealing with this. The building permit was never sent because the owner never sent in the release form for the private road. Sara did let the owner know this was never sent to the installer and she marked on it not to send as the owner is not doing it. She also marked this in Avitar.

Letter from Hilary Coles- resignation from Minute Taker

Hilary sent a letter that effective immediately, she needs to resign as minute taker. John asked Sara to post this position again.

The Select Board agreed that we should post the position online again.

John motioned to go into non-public session pursuant to RSA 91-A:3 II (a) and (b) at 6:15pm, Tony 2nd, so voted.

John motioned to return to public session at 6:20pm, Tony 2nd, so voted.

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

Public Works Building Information

Sara had reached out to the following people since the last meeting regarding our options for the building:

- Sara reached out to the attorney to see what the next steps will be since we did not raise enough money to match the costs we received on the bids. The attorney confirmed that we cannot spend more than what was appropriated, with the breakdown of how it was appropriated, without getting additional town meeting approval, unless there are other grants we can tap into and the town has adopted RSA 31:95-b, which allows the Select Board to accept and expend unanticipated revenue. We can either wait until next year's town meeting, or we can petition the court to allow you to have a special town meeting. That is only authorized if there is an emergency that cannot wait until next year, but we can possibly argue that prices are going nowhere but up.
- Sara also mentioned that it has come up to move forward without the grant and use the money we have raised to at least start the project and hopefully get done the site work, septic, the building shell, etc. She asked her what the next steps would be if we decided to do this. The attorney confirmed that we can legitimately spend \$429,000 but she wouldn't recommend doing any site work or order anything nonrefundable until you have all the funding, because what if town meeting says no next year or at a special town meeting? Then we have a partially built structure that is no good to anyone.
- Sara reached out to Senator Hassan's office for funding options. They recommended reaching out to Senator Shaheens office.
- Sara reached out to Senator Shaheens office. Elizabeth from her office called Sara this morning and they had a discussion regarding this. She looked into some things and emailed back that we would not qualify for Congressionally Directed fundings because we already have a USDA grant and they are the same. She said she will look into other options and will message me. She also mentioned that if we did get selected for another grant, we cannot usually spend the money on the project prior and it can be 8-12 months before we even know if we are selected. Then the entire process can be 2-3 years before we get the money.

Sara mentioned that the amount given above, the \$429,000, was the amount from the warrant article in 2023. We have since raised another \$50,000 at the 2024 Town Meeting. We encumbered \$269,000 which was for the \$169,000 from taxation and the \$100,000 from the unreserved fund balance that was voted on at the 2023 Town Meeting. We also said at the 2023 Town Meeting to use \$160,000 from the Public Works CRF. However, we had \$170,000 in the Public Works CRF as of 12/31/23. There could be a little more in there now due to interest. At the 2024 Town Meeting we voted to put \$50,000 more into the Public Works CRF. This hasn't been transferred over yet but when it does that will make \$220,000 in the Public Works CRF. All of this together makes \$489,000.00 the Town has for the building without the grant money.

John said that he was talking to Terry at Bridgewater said that we may be able to have some of the requirements removed since we are a small town. He recommended reaching out to Michelle from North Country Council to see if there is anything that can be done about some of these requirements. Sara will reach out to Michelle.

The Architect stated we could possibly move forward without the salt shed and just do the building. Sara stated that if we do anything different, such as changing if we use the grant or not moving forward with the salt shed at this time, then we have to have a meeting with the Town because the grant is what was in the warrant article that the Town voted on. The warrant article only states for the Public Works Building but when it was discussed at the Town meeting it was told to the Townspeople that the salt shed would be included so we would need to let them know if this changes.

Bubba agreed that we would have to have a meeting. He also said that if we did move forward with this without the salt shed, we could keep the building down where it is for the salt and sand for now and keep

the new backhoe down there. He said he will also reach out to Nick in Rumney to see how much it costs for what they did down there.

The Select Board agreed that our first step should be to reach out to Michelle at North Country Council and also see if Casey can give a breakdown of the costs from the extra requirements due to the federal grant and then decide to move forward from here. Sara will reach out to Michelle. Tony was already talking to Casey about this so he will follow up with him.

Meeting with Bubba

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

- Sara mentioned that she got an email from HSEM regarding the Hazard Mitigation Funding for the North Groton Road Culvert that her and Bubba applied for. It is moving forward to the next step which was a public notice that had to be posted. Sara posted this online and on bulletin boards today and sent to local paper to be posted there on 4/25/24. She said it is not final yet but HSEM said that since it moved to this step it is looking good.
- Sara talked to DOT and they said the bans will be lifted tomorrow for the roads in Groton that are still posted. Bubba said he is comfortable lifting the bans in Groton.
 - Permit to exceed request: Sara received a request for a permit to exceed for this coming weekend but since the bans will be lifted by then this will not be needed. She will let the resident know.

Reminder

Sara reminded the Select Board that her office will be closed tomorrow for training in Concord.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Sara Smith
Town Administrator