

TOWN OF GROTON
SELECT BOARD MEETING
March 4, 2025

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

Audience Members Present

John called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.

MINUTE APPROVAL

John motioned to approve the Work Session Meeting minutes of February 11, 2025 as written, Tony 2nd, so voted.

John motioned to approve the Non-public Work Session Meeting minutes of February 11, 2025 as written, Tony 2nd, so voted.

John motioned to approve the Select Board Meeting minutes of February 11, 2025 as written, Tony 2nd, so voted.

NEW BUSINESS:

Candidates Night

The open positions are:

- SELECT PERSON 1 position for 3 years- Ron Madan. Ron was in attendance and said this is hopefully his last time. He feels that it is time to get some younger people in with fresh ideas.
- TRUSTEE OF THE TRUST FUND 1 position for 3 years- open
- PLANNING BOARD 2 positions for 3 years- David Madden and Jonathan Belliveau
- ZONING BOARD 2 positions for 3 years- open
- LIBRARY TRUSTEE 1 position for 1 year- Hilary Coles. Hilary was in attendance. This is a position she can run for with also being the Deputy Town Clerk.
- TOWN LOCAL AUDITOR for 1 year- Ann Joyce was in attendance and introduced herself. She is running again and this is her sixth time.

School ballot:

- Article 1 – Election of District Officers:
 - SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER (3 YRS): Bethany Sharp. Beth was in attendance and introduced herself and stated that she is running for the School Board position. She is a parent and an educator. She is very passionate about education and wants to see the BHVS community stay as great as it is right now. She knows that there is also room for improvements so she is excited to be a part of that.
 - MODERATOR (1 YR): Roger Larochelle
- Article 2 – Shall the Pasquaney School District vote to amend Article 3 of the Articles of Agreement among the School District towns of Bridgewater, Hebron and Groton to add two at large School Board members to increase the board from 3 members to 5 members.
(Majority vote required) (School Board Recommends Approval)
 - YES- AMEND
 - NO- DO NOT AMEND

- ARTICLE 3: Shall the Pasquaney School District vote to amend Article 4c of the Articles of Agreement among the School District towns of Bridgewater, Hebron and Groton to simplify the minimum contribution from each town to a minimum of 15 students.
(2/3 Majority vote required) (School Board Recommends Approval)
 - YES- AMEND
 - NO- DO NOT AMEND

2025 Warrant for Town Election

Ruth had given the Select Board the 2025 Warrant for Town Election. This needs to be signed by the Select Board and then we can post it at the Town Hall and Town Clerks office. **John motioned to sign the 2025 Warrant for Town Elections, Tony 2nd so voted.**

SAU108 School Board information

John mentioned that he and Virginia wanted to discuss with the Town the articles on the school ballot.

For Article 2: The reasoning behind having five school board members, which is article 2 on the school board ballot. They want to raise the number of board members from 3 to 5. One reason is that it makes it easier to create a quorum so if one person is out, they can still meet. Another reason is that it helps to have two extra people involved in the decision making to make sure we stay on the right track to control the taxes to make sure they do not go through the roof with unnecessary spending and also most importantly to make sure the students get the best education possible. Virginia added they have to have an odd number by state law. Having more than 3 means you can do committee work. For the last year she has not been able to do any type of committee work with Erick or Mark because with 2 out of 3 there it would have to be a publicly posted meeting. Not as the chair of the board but personally, she strongly advocates for increasing it to 5 for the simple reason that two school board members should be able to have a simple conversation without having a meeting and this will allow that. Virginia wanted to mention that they did seek legal advice regarding the majority vote required. Majority vote is required in each Town so if the other two towns have a majority and we don't, she believes this will not pass.

For Article 3: Virginia stated that the formula that was originally in the articles of agreement was a little convoluted. The calculation led to some questions and there was some uncertainty in the wording. Article 3 is just simplifying the minimum contribution that each town will make. It will be a flat 15 students as the minimum so if for some reason we went down to zero students, then we will still be on the hook for 15. She said truthfully with the way things are going, it is looking Hebron would be first to go below 15.

Virginia wanted to add that she is very grateful for everyone who has supported this, who has showed up, asked questions and participated especially the last year. She is looking forward to having an elected board to be making operational decisions.

The last thing she wanted to remind everyone of is that March 25, 2025 at 6:00pm is the school's version of the Town Meeting where they will have the final budget. It is very important for people to attend to make sure that we understand there is no reimbursement for special education and other areas. John added also for food. Virginia said that food services is not too big of an item but there is so much that kicks in year two that will lower costs. She is framing this as a short-term ouch for a long term yay. This is about stabilization, making sure that our kids are going to buildings without mold and that are upkept well. Sara added that she thinks it is great what they did for the teacher's salary. Virginia said if you have the #19 school in the state, you want to keep those teachers. We are not just saying they are doing a good job and are really nice, they are performing. That would be such a loss for us.

Virginia wanted to add that the Village District still exists so the maintenance of the physical building is the responsibility of Bridgewater and Hebron which is a huge benefit for us. We have always paid for cumulative

maintenance of all of the buildings but Bridgewater and Hebron have always paid for this building and that will continue. Tony said that is one of the things that Virginia said at Town meeting last year that stuck with him is that the only building in SAU4 that is up to par was BHVS and all others were in need of repairs. He said we have the best school in the district. Virginia said she understands people's hesitation with the funding formula being a maybe but to her the infrastructure issues are not a maybe. That will come down the line in the next five years. She feels we are setting ourselves up for consistency.

Tony said that is what we stressed as well. We did not say it was going to be cheaper, we said there would be growing pains, but in the long run it will be stabilized. Virginia said the fact that the kids can now go to Plymouth if they want for high school and that there is about a \$3,000.00 cost difference for the school but they are making that no cost difference for the parents is such a huge opportunity for Groton families. Tony agreed and added that when they built that high school, they tried to get out to go to Rumney and Plymouth because they couldn't have built the high school and further from Groton. The kids on River Road are on the school bus before 6am and do not get home until after 5pm. That is a long day. The bus routes will be shorter now too. She talked to someone who lives on River Road and his daughter will be in kindergarten this year. He said her bus route is 30-35 minutes to get to BHVS which is shorter and he thinks it is great. For him, he is already thinking about Plymouth and how much savings that will be for him and his family. Tony said that most of the people he talks to, unless they already have kids in Newfound High School now, want to send their kids to Plymouth. Virginia said and there might be families that live in Bridgewater that it would make more sense for them to go to Newfound and that is a great opportunity for them to have that choice. She feels this is very positive and she is very optimistic. Tony said he thinks the K-8 will be positive too. He wishes his daughter could have stayed at BHVS. He said she gets along with everyone but she lost a lot of good friends in 5th grade. Virginia said there are so many other K-8s and there are other social opportunities beyond the school. It is valid to be concerned if you never step out of that smaller pool but there are ways to get creative and give the kids other opportunities.

BHVS Community Open House

All members of the Bridgewater, Groton and Hebron communities are welcome to visit and tour the school on Wednesday, March 5, 2025 from 4pm-5pm. Sara mentioned that she sent feedback from residents that they did not receive much notice so people were not able to give their works notice or asked that they do it later in the day. There are reasons they chose that time but they also may look at doing another one. John said they will do individual tours as well so you can contact the school if you are interested. Virginia said that the meeting on March 25th will also be held there so you will be inside and, in the gymnasium, to get an idea of what things are like.

Charter Communications Franchise Renewal Agreement

The Town received the Franchise Renewal Agreement from Charter Communications. These agreements are for 15 years. This is just an agreement for Charter Communications (aka Time Warner Cable and Spectrum) to provide cable, internet and phone as an option for services to our residents in Town. Sara sent the agreement to Primex for review since it has not ever been reviewed by the current board or administrator. Primex said that no changes were needed. **John motioned to sign the Charter Communications Franchise Renewal Agreement, Tony 2nd, so voted.**

Building Permit Map 7 Lot 31

The Town received a building permit for Map 7 Lot 31 on North Groton Road. This is for a 264 square foot shed. **John motioned to approve the building permit for Map 7 Lot 31, Tony 2nd, so voted.**

Building Permit Map 2 Lot 75

The Town received a building permit and release for municipal liability for Map 2 Lot 75 on Macdonald Lane. This is for a 30x60 slaughter house with a one-bedroom apartment that is two floors built on a slab. This will be heated and cooled so they did submit the PUC approval. They also provided the DES septic approval. This is on

a private road so this went before the Planning Board and has been tabled until their March meeting **John motioned to table the building permit for Map 2 Lot 75 and the signing of the release of municipal liability until the Planning Board provides feedback, Tony 2nd, so voted.**

Report of Excavated Material/ Excavation Tax- 24-193-01-E

Mike Ethier submitted his report of excavated material for tax years April 1, 2024 to March 31, 2025 for his location at Map 5 Lot 47-G. This report was for 1750 cubic yards of gravel, 2352 cubic yards of sand, 280 cubic yards of loam and 841 cubic yards of fill, totaling 5222 cubic yards. The amount of tax is \$104.44. **John motioned to sign the excavation tax for operation 24-193-01-E at Map 5 Lot 47G, Tony 2nd, so voted.**

Intent to Excavate- Map 5 Lot 47G

Mike Ethier submitted an intent to excavate for the tax year of April 1, 2025 to March 31, 2026 for his property on Map 5 Lot 47G. He submitted payment for the \$100.00 fee. The intent of for 2500 cubic yards of gravel, 3500 cubic yards of sand, 250 cubic yards of loam, and 1500 cubic yards of fill totaling 7750 cubic yards. Sara explained it was agreed last year that until we get the site inspection done and the issues resolved that the Select Board will not be approving any intents to excavate. She mentioned that she did not see him, the report was brought to her window by someone else so she could not discuss any of this with him. Sara asked if she should have the attorney draft an email explaining this or if she should. The Select Board agreed that Sara should reach out to our attorney. **John motioned to table the intent to excavate until we have the site visit and the other issues are resolved and to have Sara ask the attorney to draft a letter, Tony 2nd, so voted.**

Abatement Recommendation, Map 6 Lot 47

Avitar sent the recommendation for the abatement for Map 6 Lot 47. Sara did the calculations, created a refund check and a notification letter for the Abatement based on Avitar's recommendation. It was approved to reduce the assessment from \$453,900 to \$381,600. **John motioned to sign the Abatement for Map 6 Lot 47, Tony 2nd, so voted.**

Support Letter for Lakes Region Mutual Fire Aid (LRMFA)

Lakes Region Mutual Fire Aid (LRMFA) is applying for the Congressionally Directed Spending through Senator Shaheens office. This is for an Emergency Services Infrastructure Project and they are asking for support letters. Sara drafted a support letter using the talking points that they provided. Tony said the location is on the former state and they sold it so they are forced to move. They are into now for 1.9 million. They already have a grant but this is another one. **John motioned to sign the Support Letter for Lakes Region Mutual Fire Aid, Tony 2nd, so voted.**

Plodzik & Sanderson, PA Engagement Letter for MS-535

Plodzik & Sanderson, PA sent their engagement letter to do the MS-535. This is estimated to be \$4,000.00 like last year. **John motioned to sign the engagement letter, Tony 2nd, so voted.**

DEPARTMENT ITEMS:

Highway Department

Bubba was in attendance and went over the following.

- They have been busy plowing and sanding.
- They had a problem with the higher ups at the State DOT regarding posting the roads. We were just informed yesterday that they are being posted today. We usually are made aware ahead of time so we can plan accordingly and let others know such as loggers, construction works, etc. We couldn't give anyone notice. The state roads are posted as of today. The town roads will be posted effective 3/10/25. There was a question if there is any chance, they will unpost it next week when it is colder. Bubba said

he doesn't see how they can. He said everyone says that it happens this same time every year but it does not go by a date, it goes by weather.

Transfer Station

The Transfer Station will not be taking construction debris or mattresses and furniture until the road ban is lifted. Tony mentioned this is a Freeze ban. It was also mentioned that you can get exceptions which is what we usually have to do for Casella to empty the bins. Usually these are granted for early morning hours when it is still colder out.

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS:

Thank you

John thanked everyone that is running for a current position this year, it is greatly needed.

Having no other business to conduct, John motioned to adjourn at 7:32pm, Tony 2nd, so voted.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sara Smith
Town Administrator