

TOWN OF GROTON
SELECT BOARD MEETING
May 20, 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 May 6, 2025 as written, Tony 2nd, so voted.
John motioned to approve the Select Board Meeting minutes of May 6, 2025 as written, Tony 2nd, so voted.**

NEW BUSINESS:

Report of cut/yield certificates

The Town received two reports of cut/yield certificates:

- The first one is for Map 5 Lot 1, operation # 24-193-10-T. This was for a 40-acre cut on Sculptured Rocks Road. The amount of the tax is \$2,740.76. **John motioned to sign the yield certificate for Map 5 Lot 1, Tony 2nd, so voted.**
- The second one is for Map 4 Lot 11, Map 5 Lot 27 and Map 6 Lot 113, operation # 24-193-11-T. This was for a 5-acre cut on Sculptured Rocks Road. The amount of the tax is \$68.78. **John motioned to sign the yield certificate for Map 4 Lot 11, Map 5 Lot 27 and Map 6 Lot 113, Tony 2nd, so voted.**

Building Permit Map 10 Lot 21

The Town received a building permit for Map 10 Lot 21 on the Class VI section of Old Rumney Road. This is for a 1 ¾ story cabin on precast concrete pier foundation with a dry kitchen, wood burning stove, composting toilet, off grid solar and metal roof. They already have a recorded release form on file. Since this is on a class VI section of the road, it needs to go before the Planning Board. They will discuss this at the May meeting and provide their recommendations. **John motioned to table the building permit for Map 10 Lot 21 until the Planning Board reviews it and provides their recommendations, Tony 2nd, so voted.**

Building Permit Map 5 Lot 142

The Town received a building permit for Map 5 Lot 142 on Sculptured Rocks Road. This is for a 36x36 three stall garage with lean to. This will not be heated or cooled. **John motioned to approve the building permit for Map 5 Lot 142, Tony 2nd, so voted.**

Abatement Request: Map 2 Lot 81 sub 04-32

At the last meeting, Sara presented the Select Board with two abatements that Avitar requested due to changes on the property. They have recently sent a third one in that should have been reviewed at the same time. This one is for Map 2 Lot 81 sub 04-32: there was a shed and camper that was removed and they received a tax bill for it. The owner of the camper paid the bill which was \$41.00. Avitar confirmed that it was removed from the property but they were not removed from the property assessment cards when the tax bill was done. Avitar did remove this from the property assessment card and recommended the abatement. It has been removed since and will not be on the most recent tax bill that will be sent. This was already paid so this will be a reimbursement to the person that paid the bill. **John motioned to approve and sign the abatement request, Tony 2nd, so voted.**

Amended Local Septic Approval Map 2 Lot 9

The septic designer dropped off an amended local septic approval and septic plan for Map 2 Lot 9. They have to move the location of the septic due to ledge. All information is correct. **John motioned to sign the amended local septic approval for Map 2 Lot 9, Tony 2nd, so voted.**

Local Septic Approval Map 2 Lot 43

The septic designer dropped off septic plans for Map 2 Lot 43. This designer is not online so there is no local septic approval form to sign. We just sign it like we used to and stamp it with the Town stamp. All information is correct. **John motioned to sign the septic plans for Map 2 Lot 43, Tony 2nd, so voted.**

SELECT BOARD ITEMS:

Addressing concerns on the anticipated upcoming tax increase

John stated that they wanted to talk about the letter that the Select Board sent out with the tax bill that has raised some concerns for everyone. He said first he would like to set the record straight about a few things. There is a lot of wrong information being thrown out there. He said it was never said that the taxes were going to go down. It was actually said that it may go up the first year but it was mainly to ensure that the students had the best education possible and it was to help stabilize the taxes. He said that just because taxes go up, does not mean they will stay at that rate. They have gone down in the past and you can go back and look at the tax history and see that there are fluctuations in the taxes, going both up and down. The letter was sent to let everyone know that there would be a substantial increase in the taxes. What is substantial? They do not know what that amount is so for him to tell you that they would double, triple or only go up half would be him just making something up right now which would be more deceptive than the Select Board being honest so he is not going to give out a number.

A couple of things took place. The first tax bill that was just sent out, is always half of the previous year's taxes so this is half of the 2024 tax rate. For the school, there is money that is given out for funding and grants for bussing, food services and other things. That funding is based on the previous year's budgets. Since there is not a previous year to this new school district, there is no previous year's budget to base this on so we will not get that funding this year and will have to pay the budget 100%. On top of that, for a new school district there are initial costs for set up, etc. All of this will make the taxes go up.

Everything from the new SAU108 was submitted to the DRA and on time back in January. They were trying to change the original tax bill amount so that it would be split more evenly between the two tax bills, instead of a lower one now and a substantially higher one at the end of the year, to try to ease the pain somewhat. Unfortunately, the DRA did not look at it any of it until April, at which point they said it is too late and the deadline has passed. They didn't pass the deadline, it was all submitted on time, DRA just didn't look at it. The Town of Bridgewater worked with Hebron to create a new bill to get through the Senate to challenge the DRA in the sense that they could change the amount of the first tax bill to have it broken up more evenly between the two bills. Bridgewater and Hebron are going along with that. It went to the House and was paused in the house and hasn't passed yet. The Groton Select Board discussed this with Ruth. Ruth had concerns that were legitimate concerns. For the first tax bill, there is an RSA that states that we need to have the warrant to Ruth by May 15th, there is a deadline it has to be sent to the DRA and the bill has to be due by a certain date. There are penalties if that does not happen. Ruth explained that to the Select Board and showed them the RSA. They agreed as the board, that Groton should move forward with the first tax bill as we normally do and not pause it in case it does not go through the senate and does not become a bill. Which, it did get paused, so they do not know what is going on with that.

They also knew that last year, the Select Board kept extra money aside in the unreserved fund balance to offset this tax bill. There is a good chunk of change that they have. He said he does not want to give that exact

amount because that amount changes based on this year. He doesn't want to be held to a certain amount but there is a substantial amount of money that can help to offset the taxes.

Hopefully everyone remembers the \$50,000 that Groton tried to raise as a warrant article. They said at that time that the tax bill was going to be higher so they were trying to raise money but the DRA said that they cannot raise money on the tax bill because it was for the school, which raises their own money, and the tax bill hadn't come out yet so we had to squash that.

Where the Town stands now is that there is probably going to be a substantial increase in the tax bill to which they cannot say the amount. They chose to follow the law as written because they felt it was the safest thing to do. They feel that they have the money that can help to offset the taxes. The second year that local school tax amount should go down because they will be able to get the grant money that they cannot get the first year and the initial set up costs will not be there.

Ron stated that there was a lot of people complaining on Facebook about this but no one showed up to talk to the Select Board about it. Most of the Select Board do not have Facebook and Facebook is not somewhere that they will ever look to address concerns. John said the best place to get information is here.

John said they also sent that letter out because they wanted to give people a heads up. They could have just kept their mouths shut and just taken the beating once in December when the second tax bill goes out, instead of taking it twice but they felt like the letter was the right thing to do to give people the heads up.

Ann asked if anyone complained to them as a Board, or has it just been on Facebook. Sara said that both her office and Ruths office phones have been ringing a lot with question on this. She said there is a lot of misinformation out there so they are trying to correct that. They are trying to be transparent with no information which is hard to do. Ruth said she had the same guy accost her twice about it, like the first time he did not understand what she said. Sara said that even if Groton stayed, the local school taxes would go up. They are doing a new building and Tony added that all of their buildings need repair. They feel that either way, the local school portion of the taxes would go up. They do not know at this time what the numbers are or what any of the other tax portions will be such as the state education or county portion. They will not know until they start setting the tax rate in October or November. John added that if we stayed, the other towns could very well go back to putting that warrant article back in to change the tax formula, which would have severely hurt the Town.

John said that again if anyone has questions or concerns, they should contact the Select Board office or come to the meetings so the concerns can be addressed. They are more than happy to explain to a crowd of people instead of when no one comes and he is speaking to no one.

SAU 108 School Board Position

Beth Sharp had posted on the Groton Community page that she had to resign from the school board. She took a position with the school so there is a conflict of interest so that position is open. For all of those people that are really concerned about their taxes, please do put in your name and run for that position. If anyone is interested in this position, the Select Board office can give you information on who to contact at SAU108.

DEPARTMENT ITEMS:

Highway Department

Bubba was in attendance and went over the following:

- All of the gravel roads got rolled and graded.
- We lucked out with the rain and all of our road help up. The State Road took it pretty hard in some spots.

- They had planned on changing one culvert on Edgar Albert Road near the Grelle's house and they were going to fix a header at the beginning of Edgar Albert Road. However, come to find out, that culvert was very rotted so they ended up replacing that culvert as well. They did have some problems earlier in the spring with water not getting through there fast enough. Now they should be better off on that road.
- Morrison is now working on Province Road with the money we said that we were going to start putting in to the road before the bridge is installed. It looks like the bridge may be one year delayed but it will still happen.
- Fred Brooks is retiring. Tomorrow is his last day. He said he will be available in the event of an emergency. He has been a really great help for the last seven years and he will miss him. He has been a huge asset for the Town and we are sad to see him go. The Select Board agreed.

COMMITTEE ITEMS:

Fishing Derby

The annual kids fishing derby will be Saturday, June 7, 2025 starting at 9am. Bubba said that he will not be around this year for it but the pond will be in good shape. There has been a lot of growth.

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS:

There were no questions or comments from the audience.

Having no other business to conduct, John motioned to adjourn at 7:21pm, Ron 2nd, so voted.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sara Smith
Town Administrator