

**Miles Sinclair, Moderator.**

- Moderator began the meeting by ascertaining that there was one non-resident present.
- Invitation given for Pledging the United States Flag.
- Reading of the rules of order for Groton Town Meeting – same referenced on the Town of Groton web page.

(Approximately 50 residents in attendance and one non-resident)

Article 1: To choose all necessary Town Officers for the year ensuing.

Article 2: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **seven hundred forty four thousand, four hundred sixty-five dollars (\$744,465.00)** which represents the **Operating Budget** for the ensuing year. Said sum does not include special or individual articles addressed.

**The Select Board recommends this Article 3-0**

Motion made and seconded to accept article 2 as written.

**Christina Goodwin presents the Article** – The Board worked hard... preparing to present the budget to the town at a public hearing after the public hearing they worked more on the budget and made minor adjustments. We also attempted to answer questions from the public hearing. We answered them each week after the public hearing and had a second public hearing.

At the end of 2015 they received a comprehensive wage study including job descriptions. The board accepted the study and in an attempt to provide improved wages for the small support staff at the town wage increases were enacted. Increases in wages were based upon the study and the employee's tenure and positions... (recording unclear)... and determination of where those employees were located within the study.

The Board was working off from many department head meetings where concerns were continually raised about the inadequate compensation of the Towns employees. The Board never intended to rush... (recording unclear)... there was never a malicious thought during the process at all. While we sought to do what was right for the town... (recording unclear).

**Sharon Nelson** - Appreciates the work the S.B. did, but did think they rushed. She was happy that finally the town workers are getting a raise in pay and that they do deserve it. Her irritation was with the speed in which the S.B. moved. There was a second budget hearing, but it was on a stormy night, people assumed it wasn't being held. There should have been another public meeting to discuss the M.R.I. survey and why you did what you did. That meeting never occurred. When Miles was Selectman he was so worried about transparency in government there was a separate warrant article for cost of living adjustment which was good. This is a Town that, no matter how it might irritate the selectmen, likes to have input. They want to know what's happening (referenced the meetings with Iberdrola concerning the windfarm, over a year of meetings and hearings before the town said yes). The last raise was in 2012 for

\$8500.00. Town Clerk received \$1650 and the rest divided among the Administrative Assistant and the Road Agent and the Road Agent's assistants. Because the S. B. had not created a tax scale as it has now, the town needed to find out what other towns were paying their town workers. This survey was marred due to the towns included in the study (Lyme and Hebron) which are wealthier towns than we are and the Town Clerk has been on the job longer. This amendment references the budget lines 4311.1 and 4130.1 proposing that we offer half of this wage increase.

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**Moderator** - brought up the clarification that primarily we are limited to the raising or decreasing an appropriation to whatever level we think is appropriate. Under certain circumstances the warrant article itself may be altered, but not the intent of the article (gave example from 2014. The proposal for the new Dodge truck and original language talked about a trade-in to offset the cost. At the meeting a motion was made to amend the article and the voters decided to keep the truck and not trade it in. The language was changed, but not the intent of the article).

**Bill Jolly** asked for a clarification from the Moderator.

**Moderator** – The S. B. can expend the budget as they see fit.

**Tony Tavares** - commented that only the total amount can be changed. Line items cannot be modified. We can reduce the amount but that doesn't necessarily mean the line will be changed.

**Moderator** - explained that we could go line-by-line through the budget. It would drag out the meeting, but the people could do that. Whatever the bottom line is the Board can expend as they see fit.

**David Leone** - had spoken to Michelle Clark from the Department of Revenue Administration and on March 11<sup>th</sup> and she said they could discuss each line but because it is all in the budget we can pick one line item to discuss if it pertains to the budget and pertains to what we're talking about..

Amendment read by Moderator...

I move to amend Article 2, this year's proposed budget total, to a bottom line of \$737,215, reflecting the subtraction of half of the proposed pay increase for both the Road Agent and the Administrative Assistant.

**Celine Richer** - seconded the motion.

**David Leone** - is in favor of paying a person to do the job as long as they are doing the job competently.

**Steve Spafford** – Sharon’s intent is half this year, half next year. Do it in two increments. The amendment can’t say that, but that is her intent.

**Gary Easson** - Not in favor of this amendment. It is long overdue that our employees get a decent pay raise.

**Pam Hamel** - She hates to be up there to do this. The employees of the Town did need pay increases and it is very important to take care of the employees of our Town. She agrees with some to the things that Sharon had presented about transparency and going forward knowing what’s going on with our employees and how we are paying them. Many things in the survey were taken at face value and the S.B. who needed to apply the survey to our Town and implement a program of incremental raises getting our employees the level they should be. Increases are too much in one year. Some increases were 20 – 28% increases not seen in the private sector. These increases are more than the normal amount because we were behind but we need to have the right balance. Even if this amendment is approved they can chose to still keep things the way they are but it is important for them to listen to the concerns of the community. Where are we going forward with this? One of the members of the S. B. at the budget hearing talked about 4% annual increases which is a lot. Where are we going with that? 4% next year and 4% the following year over 5 years would make the Police Chief’s salary at \$67K which is a lot of money for us. If this amendment passes the S. B. should come up with a pay scale that works for our town and then present it to the town plus a plan for the town clerk whose salary is set by the town meeting. We have not had that discussion. In the past this is set by warrant article. She summarized by saying that our employees need to be taken care of but that the Select Board needs to come up with a plan.

**Moderator** - Town Clerk/Tax Collector salary set by Statute at Town Meeting so if there is not a Warrant Article this cannot be addressed any other way.

**Christina Goodwin** - stated that the Town Clerk/Tax Collector position is in the budget on recommendation from the Department of Revenue. It is in the budget at the minimum of \$17.53.

**Bill Jolly** - spoke his concerns about these items that previously have been dealt with by Warrant Article now being decided by a “tax advisor”. He believes this is a huge mistake on the part of the Board and that we should not get away from presenting these changes by Warrant Article.

**Christina Goodwin** - addressed these concerns by explaining that the S. B. had reached out to NHMA which is our municipal advisor and their attorney and also the Department of Revenue. The S. B. did not wish to do anything inappropriate.

**Celine Richer** - I believe these people work hard and deserve a raise. I read the MRI report several times and the MRI amounts were more conservative than the S. B. amounts. M.R.I.

recommended a \$5040 raise split between the Administrative Assistant, the custodian, and the transfer station attendant. The S. B. intent was good but less conservative than what was recommended. Making up for all the past years in one year is too much. She feels bad that the employees have already gotten the raise, so in order to change now we'd have to say you shouldn't have gotten it. Every year we should set up a plan to get them to the point where they are making what everyone else is making doing their job.

**John Rescigno** - These employees work for everyone in the town. They deserve a fair pay for a hard day's work looking at the time that is put in plus their experience. They deserve to be treated fairly and paid fairly. They were not being paid fairly and the M.R.I. clearly stated that. We stayed within the M.R.I. and the range the people deserved for pay. Our job is not only to you and we respect you and hear what you are saying. The S. B. is running a tight budget. They do not want the taxes to be "driven through the roof" but we want to retain the employees that we do have which we cannot do if they are grossly underpaid. These employees have obligations also. We cannot underpay or they will update their resume and find other jobs. We will not be able to retain good employees and be left with those who may be dishonest or not able to keep good records which would get the Town in trouble long term.

**Sharon Nelson** - She believes we need to treat our employees fairly, but doesn't feel that the Town was treated fairly. Her amendment would also give these employees a raise of \$3500 dollars this year.

**John Rescigno** - said the reason they is such a large increase is because of how low they pay was at the time of the study. The future increases would be based upon a review yearly. John has been involved in this type of management for 25 years and has personally done a wage study adjusting the salary so employees would stay. It costs a lot more to train than retain. We do care about the town and cut the budget in other areas raising the total budget \$56000 per year overall.

**Barrie Sawyer** - asked when the last time there was a raise.

**Christina Goodwin** - answered that is had been 2012.

**Barrie Sawyer** - continued with his comment that for years we have been short changing our employees and now we are being asked to do the right thing and he opposes this amendment.

**Glen Hansen** - directed a question to the board. With these increases, how much has the tax rate raised or lowered?

**Christina Goodwin** – The increase was \$37000 total in wages not all because of the wage study. Some of that is because of changes in hours, new Police Chief, new Town Clerk and Election wages is all included in that amount. Up \$26000 due to workman's comp. and the wage study. The increase associated with the wage study would increase taxes \$.20 to \$.25 per thousand.

**Pam Hamel** – Our Administrative Assistant was not here in 2012 and in 17 months of employment is receiving a 29% pay increase. The amendment is targeting two positions so she is keeping her comments directed to those two positions. Pam said she hates to do this, to bring this up, but the amount of increase for the Administrative Assistant is more than five of the towns that are listed in the survey. She did not get short-changed in 2012, she wasn't here. This is not the right balance. She thinks our employees ought to be paid, but there should be the right program in place to do it.

**Bill Jolly** - (directed question to John Rescigno concerning taking care of employees.). The town needs equal consideration. The dollar amount is not the issue, it was the process of raising it to that amount.

**Tony Tavares** - We are trying to pay employees a decent salary. If we are going to have employees with a decent salary do we have job description for each employee?

**Christina Goodwin** - Yes, there are new job descriptions for all employees. New job descriptions came with the wage study which were adjusted for our town and also available to the public.

**Tony Tavares** - If the S. B. is creating these documents does this appear in the minutes of the meeting? Was there a hearing on this? The Town has been blind-sided concerning the salary increase. If the S. B. has already begun to pay the increase was money taken from some other project and will those monies need to be paid back? The board may have all the good intentions, but this board may not be here in three years. Intent may not be good for the Town. S. B. needs to be careful on how they document and be transparent about these things that are done and if it is done behind closed doors it is illegal because we have "right to know" laws. He is very concerned about how this was done.

**John Rescigno** - Whether for a Town or a Company, employees deserve fair pay. Meetings are held every Tuesday at seven pm we discussed this matter more than twice. It was also posted on line. Foundation was the MRI but the S. B. , hopefully, will move forward and follow all the details that are in the study working with the Town and the people and maintain consistency and a forward motion of the Town. Nothing was done behind anyone's eyes it was all done in the open having several meetings with the Town. These are out there for you to be there and to have input. The object is not to drive taxes up, but we can't continue going on constantly changing employees. We need to have people in place who understand their jobs and know how to work for you.

**Celine Richer** - The Town was blind-sided. This should have been a Town Meeting where the S. B. would have explained the report and explained where the S. B. was coming from. This was a Big Deal. This would have given ownership to the Town allowing people to buy into it. It isn't the issue that any of the people should not get pay raises. We all live on a budget and people

don't get paid enough for the work that they do. It is appreciated what each employee does in this Town including the S. B. but this is hard to swallow when everyone is tightening their belts.

**Jim Gaffey** - No problem paying our employees for what they do. Is there a yearly reviews done?

**John Rescigno** – The S.B. does know that they should have addressed this whole matter differently which Christina said in her opening statement. Yes, there are reviews done yearly.

**Christina Goodwin** – Yes, they are being changed as to how they are being done, yearly, but all at the same time.

**Ted Yeaton** – Tax payers should decide on how much the Town employees should be paid.

**Kyle Andrews** – Is there a plan for raises next year? Does the S.B. have a plan?

**John Rescigno** – Increase if warranted off yearly reviews. No large increases like this year but smaller increases if warranted.

**Steve Spafford** – How much did this study cost?

**Christina Goodwin** - \$4900 which came out of last year's budget.

**Bill Jolly** – Agrees that people should be paid fairly. He is not able to come on Tuesday nights to the meeting because of working out of State. The fact that people deserve a fair wage is not in question. The S. B. has a plan based on performance but once this threshold is met the increases will be based on performance and cost of living increases. We are asked to vote on an incomplete plan.

**John Rescigno** – The MRI study is online so those with access to computer can read it online.

**Moderator** - interrupted arguing.

**Christina Goodwin** – The plan is online, but the plan needs to be fine-tuned by evaluation going forward.

**Bill Jolly** – The problem is you are giving an increase in anticipation of establishing a plan and asking us to vote on it as part of the budget without knowing where it is going.

**Pam Hamel** - The plan is posted online and also classification of jobs. The plan has serious issues and should go before the people before being adopted. The Animal Control Officer is in the same classification as a custodian or janitor yet the Animal Control Officer carries a gun. Deputy Town Clerk is classified with the Transfer Station Attendant. The Deputy Town Clerk has the same authorities as the Town Clerk. They should not be in the same classification. The Administrative Assistant salary is \$ 25.24/hour or \$52K/year for this little Town of Groton which

is wrong and then increases are based on the ranges that they gave and if these ranges are “out of whack”, then so is the large increase.

**Marilyn Lieto** – suggested we should move the amendment. Much of this information is not appropriate to the amendment.

**Moderator** - has given wide discretion to the speakers because he sees it as all being interconnected.

**Glen Hansen** – speaking on behalf of his road crew assistants. They have been passed over for raises for 3 years or more and Glen has received the feedback. They have not received raises yet are doing the same amount of work if not more.

**Sharon Nelson** – The Road Agent assistants were not a part of the salary increases.

**Moderator** - goes over the rules about the amendment that after the motion has been made to end the debate then the amendment will go to the vote and there will be no more discussion. There must be a 2/3 majority to pass the amendment. Motion was made to move the question and was seconded.

Vote taken to end debate on the amendment passes.

**Sharon Nelson** - and at least 5 other voters requested secret ballot so preparations were made for a secret ballot.

25 no votes and 24 yes votes – the amendment failed by secret ballot.

**Moderator** – We are now back to Article 2 as written. Reads the Article. Floor was open for discussion and since there was none, the article goes to vote.

Article 2 passes.

Article 3: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **one hundred forty-five thousand (\$145,000)** for **repair/reconstruction of a portion of North Groton Road.**

(Submitted by the Road Committee) (Majority vote required)

**The Select Board recommends this Article 3-0**

Motion made and seconded to accept article 3 as written.

**Christina Goodwin** - presents the Article – last year the amount was the same for \$145K and the work went to D.A. White excavation for \$138K then with some change orders for crushed stone and removal of ledge the final figure was \$143,710. The plan is to continue where they left off and go another 1000 linear feet.

**Gary Easson** – It would be good not to have to shut the roads down during the work as it make people have to travel all the way around. It would be better to leave one lane open.

**Steve Spafford** – Why not further, faster and put more money to it if we have to?

**Dave Leone** – The S. B. would like to spend \$145,000 to do this work on North Groton Rd. Referring to the Town’s Hazard Mitigation Plan on page 95 stating that on May 27, 2016 the town will be replacing the Atwell Brook Bridge. If we’re spending \$145000 to replace sections of N. Groton Rd, isn’t that an awful lot of money to spend and have to spend estimate of \$82,000 plus labor to install and the labor would be less than that amount so roughly the same amount on the bridge? How will we address the bridge replacement if it is not on a warrant article?

**Christina Goodwin** - Were those estimated dates or were they set dates.

**Dave Leone** – According to the Hazard Mitigation Plan the State engineer stated that the bridge needed to be replaced in 2010. The town ignored that it needed to be replaced in 2010 and in the final plan says that it will be replaced in 2016. The S. B. or the road agent who is in charge of this hasn’t brought that forward. So if the bridge is to be replaced this year, where is that money coming from?

**Christina Goodwin** – That is not on a warrant article. There is an article addressing the Orange/Atwell Brook Bridge and stepping ahead to speak to that; the first step is that the board will be looking into hiring an engineer but not ready to replace that bridge just yet.

**Moderator** – The speaker was asking a fair question asking where the money would come from for that project.

**David Leone** – The Town stated in their master plan that they were going to replace this bridge and the \$82,000 does not include the labor, but does include the engineering cost to have the bridge done. This is a lot of money to repair the road if we also have a bridge that’s approximately \$150,000 to replace. Thinks the S.B. is asking an awful lot. Doesn’t see the article for the bridge replacement and wonders why the Board or Road Agent according to the Town’s Hazard Mitigation Plan page 95 did not bring this forward to the Town’s people. Is this money that is on this warrant article money that should be spent on the bridge?

**Christina Goodwin** – The bridge is not on the warrants to be replaced this year. We need to take the steps to prioritize and do it correctly. It has been discussed in work sessions and the S. B. will be hiring an engineer to look at the bridge in order for the S. B. to move forward. This warrant article is strictly to do the North Groton Road. The Atwell/Orange bridge is not ready to be replaced by us this year.



**Chuck Stata** – Until we get the engineering study we will not know how to ask for the money from the Federal Government which was not available last year even though the Plan anticipated there being monies available. There's a 90% match from the highway funds. We need to have the engineering done before we know how much the bridge is going to cost so we can apply for whatever state and federal funds are available when they are available. The bridge has been on the line for about 12-15 years. The bridge has been in the Hazard Mitigation Plan multiple times just as many other things. If you don't have it in the budget and don't have the engineering you can't get the funding unless you want to pay for the whole thing out of the Town budget which we don't.

**Christina Goodwin** – We are on the list for the grant. We are not saying that the bridge doesn't need to be repaired and it should be a priority. We have a priority list we are working on and after Town Meeting we should be working on that. The first step is to get an engineer to that bridge.

**Glen Hansen** – In the office we are still getting our bridge inspection each year and this bridge is still classified as an E2 bridge for 80,000 lb gross loads. The bridge has not been red listed yet. He gets more complaints about the road than people driving over the bridge.

**David Leone** - The board has brought a warrant article for us to pay to get North Groton Rd. fixed. This doesn't have anything to do with grants; but this board has neglected to put a warrant article in to repair a bridge that the state told us 6 years ago should be replaced and is in the Hazard Mitigation Plan that states it will be replaced May 27, 2016.

**Moderator** – For information (siting Steve Spaffords comments about why more can't be allocated to do more of the road and David Leones comments about the bridge), if the Meeting feels that the amount of money is insufficient they can raise that amount. It just needs to make an amendment in writing and have it voted upon.

**Christina Goodwin** – The Road Committee chose to level fund the project this year. Would we want to continue with a larger number? Yes, of course.

**David Leone** – Asked for repeat of Moderator comments.

**Moderator** – The people at Town Meeting have the ability to increase or decrease any appropriation of money proposed. If you don't think that's sufficient it can be increased. Understand that if a motion is made to allocate money to replace the bridge and that is not on the warrant moderator's opinion that you can do that, but the board is not bound by that. You're increasing the allocated money because it doesn't change the original intent to provide the monies for road improvement.

**David Leone** – Article specifically states that the monies are for repairs on North Groton Rd. so if the S. B. is going to spend that much money on N. Groton Rd. and we own one bridge in town

we could have taken that money and replaced the bridge that the state has said needed to be done 6 years ago and the town has said they're going to replace in 2016.

**Moderator** – Could go back to the operating budget and increase the line item on the budget.

**Christina Goodwin** – Could be addressed during discussion on Article 14 – monies allocated for the bridge project.

**Moderator** – That amount could be increased as well.

**Pamela Hamel** – This article has nothing to do with the bridge. It is only for the repairs on North Groton Rd. It has been brought to the attention of the S. B. that it's in the plan for the town so they can put it in for next year.

**Moderator** - Motion made to move the article and seconded.

Vote to move the article with no more debate passes.

Article 3 passes.

Article 4: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **twenty thousand dollars (\$20,000)** for the repair of Groton paved roads.

#### **The Select Board Recommends This Article 3-0**

Motion made and seconded to accept article 4 as written.

**Glen Hansen** - These monies that have been set aside for several years for other projects rather than the rebuilding projects. This allows a little more flexibility to work on some other areas like Sculptured Rocks Road and other main paved roads.

**Christina Goodwin** – This money from last year was spent on the entrance way to Spectacle Pond which had been an issue for many years, and a section on Sculptured Rocks Rd., plus a “mill and overlay” of frost damaged sections of North Groton Rd that were not part of the construction for last year but were dangerous spots.

**Dave Leone** - Money should be saved and put towards the bridge that the Town needs to replace.

**Pam Hamel** – It is important that we have these additional funds to spend for these other projects so supports this article, but would like for the S.B. to see that the Road Agent gets these projects and paving get done during the summer months, not in October or November.

Article 4 passes.

Article 5: To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **five thousand dollars (\$5,000)** for the purpose of repairing and maintaining Province Road.

(Majority vote required)

**The Select Board recommends this Article 3-0**

Motion made and seconded to accept article 5 as written.

**Bob Ferriere** – Article 5 is the maintaining of Province Rd. it would behoove us to continue what we've been doing in past years. Part of River Rd. is taken care of for us in lieu of us taking care of part of Province Rd. to maintain it so it is passable at least up to the bridge. When you get to the bridge you're on your own. This has been our responsibility because of our switching of responsibility for River Rd. and this should continue.

**Steve Spafford** – questioned the exchange of responsibilities.

**Glen Hansen** - Correction: We plow Cheever Road for Dorchester and they plow River Road in exchange. Province Road is a "Cottage Road" which is seasonal maintenance not taken care of during the winter and winter which take a toll on it. People like to go out sightseeing, hunting, fishing, horseback riding and they need to have safe access to travel back and forth. It takes a heavy toll of the road when we have heavy rains. This is a consecutive maintenance program that we do every year we set this money aside.

**Steve Spafford** – Kimball Hill Rd will be having a mining operation with a lot of trucks going in and out. In Dorchester today they are discussing repairing the Province Road Bridge and if that happens can we or the S. B. send the trucks out that way? Ore weighs a lot more than logs do.

**Glen Hansen** – That's only an application that exists right now for that mining operation I don't know if they have pursued it any further. Zoning and Planning board should put some sort of stipulations on these operations, especially Province Rd. They will have an exceptional amount of heavy equipment, trucks running in and out of there and they should pick up some of the maintenance for that road as part of the covenants in their deed should they move ahead with this project. In addition if they are going to run these heavy trucks up and down that road they help with the rebuilding of that bridge and the maintenance of Sculptured Rocks Rd.

**Moderator** – The subject is getting too far away from the issue of the Article. Some of the discussion allowed because it pertained to Province Road, but now getting too far away from topic.

**Christina Goodwin** – Since Province Road is a cottage road we cannot restrict usage to the road.

Article 5 Passes.

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Article 6: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **one thousand, five hundred and fifty-five dollars (\$1,555)** for the purpose of landscaping around the Town signs and monument.

**The Select Board recommends this Article 3-0**

Motion made and seconded to accept article 6 as written.

**Christina Goodwin** speaks to the article – S.B. has received a quote on maintaining and cleaning up two signs one at the Town House and one at the park. They will landscape and put in low maintenance flowers and shrubs. They look pretty rough right now and need to be cleaned up.

Article 6 passes.

Article 7: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **four thousand, three hundred and fifty dollars (\$4,350)** for the purpose of purchasing an 8 foot York Rake to be mounted on the front of the Dodge.

**The Select Board recommends this Article 3-0**

Motion made and seconded to accept article 7 as written.

**Glen Hansen** speaks to the article. The apparatus we are looking to purchased will be carried by the new one ton that we purchased two years ago. Purpose is to make raking the dirt roads a one man operation. It will hook into the current hitch and hydraulics that run the snow plow. The old system needs extensive maintenance which will be about \$2000 parts plus labor. With this old equipment you have to go the wrong way opposing traffic if you want to get the rake to bring the gravel up into the center of the road.

**David Leone** – You need to oppose traffic to use that rake? Is there a problem with that? Is that the same way you plow Bailey Hill Rd?

**Ted Yeaton** – The price seems rather high. Who is it purchased from?

**Christina Goodwin** – There were three quotes one was \$20,900 one was \$4,685 last was \$4,350.

Article 7 passes.

Article 8: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **three thousand four hundred fifty dollars (\$3,450)** for the purpose of purchasing and installing a new fence at the Transfer Station.

**The Select Board recommends this Article 3-0**

Motion made and seconded to accept article 8 as written.

**John Rescigno** - This money is going to be used to repair and replace the fence around the transfer station.

**David Leone** – How did the fence get damaged?

**John Rescigno** – Fence damage is from plowing and snow getting pushed into it in some areas.

**Steve Spafford** – Is fence going around the South end so that trash doesn't blow into the neighboring properties?

**Joe Koslow** – That was not figured into the cost. The main fence is what we're looking to replace. The woman who comes to do the geological survey for the landfill was out a month or two ago and she noticed what shape the fence was in and advised the S. B. if we didn't get it fixed that she was going to notify the State. We need to do something and the main concern is the line of fence.

**Christina Goodwin** – Although that wasn't calculated into the total we should probably look into it. There is another article coming up that might help with some of that.

**Ted Yeaton** – Would like to know how old the fence is. It seems to be more than a maintenance issue.

**Christina Goodwin** – We don't know how old the fence is. At least 6 years old.

**Ted Yeaton** - How long is it estimated this new fence last?

**Christina Goodwin** – We received two estimates, one for \$5000 and the second for \$3450.

**Joe Koslow** – They didn't tell us how long it would last.

(Some back and forth with people not being recognized by the Moderator)

**Ted Yeaton** – Replacing the fence every 5 years seems "overkill".

**John Rescigno** – We can't control what "mother nature" does, but anything other than that we can hold those people responsible if damage is done. We can assure that the fence is installed properly to help with future problems.

**David Leone** – Was at the hearing when this was discussed and agree with Mr. Yeaton that this fence has been replaced more than once since I've been in town. Believes the fence has been replaced at least three times. And it's the recollection of Mr. Leone that every time the fence was replaced or repaired it's because someone has hit it with the plow or the town tractor or pushed snow on top of it which has caused the fence to deteriorate. This needs to be addressed. The town does, by law, need to have that fence in front of the transfer station. We are spending an awful lot of money to replace a fence at the dump that keeps getting damaged by the town.

**John Rescigno** – That is something that needs to be addressed. That is a critical area where money is being wasted. We will need to look back and hold people accountable that do the damage. We have cameras over there. We can review those tapes and try to police what happens.

**Sharon Nelson** – I don't think it is the town plows, isn't that part of the road plowed by the State? State plows did the damage.

**Christina Goodwin** – The state plows go by and we plow the parking lot area. There are cameras up there now, so that may help.

**Elizabeth Jespersen** – When talking with the Transfer Station attendants she understands that the majority of the damage is caused when the state plows wing back the shoulders and they are pushing a lot of snow up against that fence. It will be good with the cameras we can find out what's happening and prevent that from happening to the new fence.

**Pamela Hamel** – This is the first year the state has plowed that section in many years. The town had always plowed on behalf of the state.

**Christina Goodwin** – Both state and town plowed the road before.

**Glen Hansen** – The state would come through after the town was finished plowing and they would push the shoulders back.

**Moderator** – For information, when Miles was on the S. B. the fence was repaired once.

Article 8 passes.

Article 9: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **five thousand dollars (\$5,000)** for deposit into the Police Cruiser Capital Reserve Fund. (December 31, 2015 balance: \$6,048.47)

**The Select Board recommends this Article 3-0**

Motion made and seconded to accept article 9 as written.

**Bob Ferriere** - This reserve fund was established to purchase a police cruiser when one is needed. Even though we've purchased one recently we are setting aside \$5000 now instead of the whole amount at once.

**Frank Grelle** – Did we sell the old one and how much did we get for it?

**Chief Thompson** – Yes, it was sold for \$4650 (recording is unclear).

Article 9 passes.

The \$4600 went into the general fund.

Article 10: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **twenty thousand dollars (\$20,000)** for deposit into the Public Works Capital Reserve Fund. (December 31, 2015 balance: \$20,007.23)

**The Select Board recommends this Article 3-0**

Motion made and seconded to accept article 10 as written.

**Christina Goodwin** - This money is for the getting the public works building for the highway department out of the flood zone. We applied for a grant and are still on a waiting list. We purchase the property last year across from the transfer station. We increased the amount this year from \$10,000 to \$20,000 with the intent to make steps forward toward getting this project completed. After Town Meeting as suggested in our public hearing we will be putting together a building committee. There are some residents who have come forward to be on the building committee so we can take steps to have that building built and get the highway department out of the flood zone. This is a reserve fund that puts the money away so when we're ready to do this project it will not all come from taxes that year.

Article 10 passes.

Article 11: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **six thousand five hundred dollars (\$6,500)** for deposit into the Assessing Revaluation Capital Reserve Fund (December 31, 2015 balance: \$26,019.10).

**The Select Board recommends this Article 3-0**

Motion made and seconded to accept article 11 as written.

**Christina Goodwin** By state law we need to assess every 5 years and that is this year. A large chunk of the money will be used paying for that this year. It is easier to put money away instead of paying in one lump sum for the assessing. Beside the revaluation we will be going out for bids to see if we will stay with the same assessor or not. This assessor is going to finish this project and then we'll be going out for bid for the next round.

**Elizabeth Jespersen** – What is the amount for the assessing this year?

**Christina Goodwin** - \$26,900. There is a budgeted line for assessing in the budget. That is for Construction changes and for property changes that happen every year. That is in addition to that money. This money is only for the revaluation of the Town.

**Ted Yeaton** – Would like to see the S.B. choose someone else to do the assessing. I think taxing a bob house on my property is a little ridiculous.

Article 11 passes.

Article 12: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **five thousand dollars (\$5,000)** for deposit into the Heavy Equipment Capital Reserve Fund (December 31, 2015 balance: \$39,191.79).

**The Select Board recommends this Article 3-0**

Motion made and seconded to accept article 12 as written.

**John Rescigno** – This reserve fund was created in 2006 by the Town to set small amounts of money aside for the purchase when needed of heavy equipment.

Article 12 passes.

Article 13: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **five thousand dollars (\$5,000)** for deposit into the Disaster Relief Capital Reserve Fund (December 31, 2015 balance: \$60,360.49).

**The Select Board recommends this Article 3-0**



Motion made and seconded to accept article 13 as written.

**Bob Ferriere** – The Disaster Relief Capital Reserve Fund is there so when we have a need or unforeseen disaster we will have monies set aside. It's good to know there are funds available in case a road gets washed out or other emergencies.

Article 13 passes.

Article 14: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **five thousand dollars (\$5,000)** for deposit into the Atwell/Orange Brook Bridge Replacement Capital Reserve Fund (December 31, 2015 balance: \$51,037.89).

**The Select Board recommends this Article 3-0**

Motion made and seconded to accept article 14 as written.

**John Rescigno** – This fund was created in 2006 for the purpose of putting money aside for the replacement of the Atwell/Orange Bridge.

**Dave Leone** – Since the Hazard Mitigation plan states that the bridge will be replaced in May 2016, why didn't the Board address this in a warrant article or change the warrant article? The way the warrant article reads the bridge cannot be replaced now. We can add more money to it but we can't replace the bridge even though the State said it needed to be replaced in 2010 and the board acknowledged that it was going to be replaced in 2016. That is the date in the Hazard Mitigation Plan that was sent off to FEMA. Why didn't the town move forward to replace this bridge? Mr. Leone states he feels the bridge is a lot more of a hazard to public welfare than the bumps that are in the road. Mr. Leone has a quote from 3 days ago for \$82,000 which includes the engineering but does not include the labor to replace the bridge.

**Moderator** – Is this comment leading to any kind of motion to be made?

**Dave Leone** – Disappointed the Board did not move to replace the bridge and just chose to put more money to it when it is a public hazard.

**Steve Spafford** – That is the only bridge that the town owns. All the other bridges in the town are owned by the state and we don't need to worry about paying for those. This is the only bridge with green sides on Sculptured Rocks Road.

**Christina Goodwin** – The board missed the date for the bridge replacement in the Hazard Mitigation Plan. We are going to be looking at an engineer this year and if Dave Leone would like to share that quote with us, we do not have any quotes yet.

**David Leone** – Will email or hand the quote to the S. Board. In May of 2013 he brought it forward that this bridge did need to be replaced and it should have been replaced. What would

happen if someone got hurt on that bridge and we knew six years ago that it should have been replaced and we neglected to do it?

**Moderator** – Cut off comment.

**Christina Goodwin** – This board is prioritizing and moving forward to get the bridge done. We would not want anyone to get hurt. We are moving forward in fixing it.

**Glen Hansen** – The NH DOT has inspected the bridge and it has not been “red listed”. If it had been “red listed” this board and everyone would have jumped right on it.

**Ted Yeaton** – Has been in the town for 25 years and in the logging business his whole life. During that time a lot of logging was going on in town and many loads of logs across that bridge. That bridge has been in rough shape ever since he’s been in town.

**Moderator** – The DOT estimated that the bridge was built in 1937.

Article 14 passes.

Article 15: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **five thousand dollars (\$5,000)** for deposit into the Perambulation Non Capital Reserve Fund (December 31, 2015 balance: \$24,782.02).

**The Select Board recommends this Article 3-0**

Motion made and seconded to accept article 15 as written.

**Christina Goodwin** – Plymouth Line has been finished. Alexandria line is supposed to be finished and we are just waiting for the final report to come in. Hebron is in the process. Hebron has us on their warrant as well. The cost to do each line varies. One quote to do the Plymouth line was well over \$20,000. The town currently by statute is supposed to walk or pay for someone to come out and walk the lines that they share with these other towns and make sure that there is a report out there to where those lines are. Often things get moved, trees get cut down that were part of the town line at one time. We are supposed to do this every 7 years and it hasn’t been done in a number of years so we are trying to catch up.

**Sharon Nelson** – One year we didn’t need to pay for perambulation because we had Kyle and Miles who did it. Maybe they would be interested in doing it again.

Article 15 passes.

Article 16: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **five thousand dollars (\$5,000)** for deposit into the Town House Capital Reserve Fund (December 31, 2015 balance: \$25,088.95).

**The Select Board recommends this Article 3-0**

Motion made and seconded to accept article 16 as written.

**Bob Ferriere** explains that this fund was established to take care of things that might go wrong with the Town House building for instance roof, painting, plumbing, heating or whatever is needed.

**Steve Spafford** – What is happening with the septic?

**John Rescigno** – The pitch was not proper. The pitch on one part of the pipe was greater than the other section inside the building, so what they were able to do was to get it to go into the pipe that goes outside into the septic tank a little lower. There was a little play to be able to drop it down and increase the pitch, so that along with the use of single ply toilet paper should take care of that problem.

Article 16 passes.

Article 17: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **five thousand dollars (\$5,000)** for deposit into the Truck/Sander Capital Reserve Fund (December 31, 2015 balance: \$5,029.94).

**The Select Board recommends this Article 3-0**

Motion made and seconded to accept article 17 as written.

**John Rescigno** – The Truck/Sander Capital Reserve Fund was created in 1985 to put smaller increments of money into the fund so we have it when we have to replace a truck or a sander.

Article 17 passes.

Article 18: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **eight hundred fifty dollars (\$850)** for support of the Groton Historical Society.

**The Select Board recommends this Article 2-1**

Motion made and seconded to accept article 18 as written.

**Pamela Hamel** - The Groton Historical Society would like to thank the town for their support. This is the 4<sup>th</sup> year for this warrant article. With the support of the town and various donations most of the external work of the museum has been done as well as providing handicap access ramp and materials were purchased for preservation of artifacts. In 2014 the process of redoing displays was started and many changes still in motion a number of which are slated for completion this spring. There will be a “grand reopening” June 18<sup>th</sup>. The museum had been closed since 2012 due to access issues. The Groton Historical Society is here for the Town of Groton working to preserve Groton’s past for its future. The Historical Society is more than just the schoolhouse. The building the Town Meeting is held in is there today in large part because of the roll the Groton Historical Society played is seeing that the building was restored. I have a couple of artifacts here; a newspaper article from December 24<sup>th</sup> 1997 with an article entitled, “Groton’s Historic Town House Topic of Special Meeting - A Special Meeting of the Historical Society – How to Save the Building from Being Torn Down”. That is the situation that existed in 1997. Another article stated that due to the State Fire officials report that the 200 year old building was not suitable for town meetings any longer, the Groton Historical Society became concerned and hosted a meeting to inform the towns’ people of the problem and to propose solutions for its preservation. One of the things that came out of that meeting is this warrant article that the Groton Historical Society brought to the town in 1998 to see if the town would vote to authorize the selectmen to appoint a “Needs Committee” of towns people to develop a long term plan for the Town House and to appropriate the sum of \$2000 for professional assistance. That article passed, a committee was formed and we are now sitting in this building because of that.

D. Smith was key in heading up the committee for the restoration. He was asked by the Historical Society to speak on behalf of the warrant article; all this just to let you know that the Historical Society really is here for Groton. There are some people who don’t believe tax dollars should support us, but we are asking you as individuals in this community to support us so that we can continue this job of preserving Groton’s past for its future. We are asking that you support this by saying “yes”, to the \$850.

Article 18 passes.

Article 19: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **one thousand dollars (\$1,000)** for support of the Newfound Lake Region Association (NLRA).

**The Select Board recommends this Article 2-1**

Motion made and seconded to accept article 19 as written.

**Bob Ferriere** – The NLRA is an organization of people who are concerned about the watershed area around Newfound Lake. Some or most of you are familiar with the fact that 25% of the water that goes into Newfound Lake comes from the Town of Groton. The quality of life actually is affected by the quality of the water and everything else in the environment is

concerned. Having gone to several of their meetings I feel that it is very important that all towns get involved in doing what's best for our future generations. Already over several years the clarity of the water has gone down 22%. If we (all the towns around the watershed area), don't do anything (this will not improve). Groton is just one small part of that watershed but it's our responsibility to support a work that is greater than Groton itself or any of the other individual towns surrounding the lake; to accomplish something that no one town can do by itself. The amount that they're asking for is worth the investment for our future generations for drinking water and for recreation. Let's be part of the solution.

**Ann Joyce** – Why is it increased by \$500 from last year to this year?

**Bob Ferriere** – I don't know why the increase except it takes a lot of testing and evaluation.. The State testers come down and that all costs money and everything gets more expensive with time.

**Christina Goodwin** – They asked for this amount last year and the S.B. just submitted what we have always submitted. This year we put it up to the voters whether they wanted to pay the full request or not.

**David Leone** – As a licensed well installer and septic installer; our water quality is very important. Not a lot of things we need but our water should be clean.

Article 19 passes.

**Point of order:** On pages 72 through 84 are other non-profit entities that are just paid out of our general budget. Why are only two of these on Warrant articles and the rest just paid?

**Christina Goodwin** – We've always had NLRA and the Historical Society on Warrant articles and the others have just been in the budget but that's a good point.

Article 20: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **three thousand dollars (\$3000)** for the purpose of purchasing a storage container for use at the Groton Transfer Station. This sum to come from fund balance and no money will be raise from taxation.

### **The Select Board recommends this Article 3-0**

Motion made and seconded to accept article 20 as written.

**John Rescigno** – This is coming from fund balances and not through taxation. Basically what we're doing is getting a container to be kept at the transfer station and it will be used to house recyclable items and small electronics and various other items to be picked up and taken away for proper disposal.

**David Leone** – Is this container something that will be considered permanent at the transfer station?

**John Rescigno** – It will be considered permanent but can be moved.

**David Leone** – Does the town have permits by the state to alter the transfer station as we have it and add this container? In the past we had to get permits to add the dumpsters because it was an addition to the transfer station. Any changes to be made up there requires a permit to do that. Wiht that being said, when we did the wall last time so we could accommodate the dumpster and that change we've done that twice in the past (name of company) charged us \$21000. The second time it was done, I drew the plans for the town for no cost so if you look into that could you find some price between zero and \$21000 if you need a permit to place this container?

**Christina Goodwin** – Nothing is being changed. Just a storage container is being added to the space. The reason we're adding it is we want to be able to take electronic there instead of them ending up dumped by the side of the road or having Elizabeth Jespersen take them to Staples.

Article20 passes.

Article 21: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **(\$6,000)** to the highways & streets material budget (line) to insure the adequate upkeep of ALL town maintained roads (Submitted by Petition).

Motion made and seconded to accept article 21 as written.

**Jim Joyce** – I talked to Glenn a few times in the past about the condition of the culvers and soft shoulders on my road (Edgar Albert), and I'm sure some other. He's been great trying to fix by pushing dirt around in my opinion. Glenn said in order for it to be fixed it would need to be re-ditched and they would need riprap type material to shore up the sides of the road. He's more than willing to help but there's not enough money in the materials line. So normally he gets \$4000 in the past, this year \$5000 so we're asking for an additional \$1000 to bring the total up to \$6000 so he has the material to do what he needs to maintain the town roads.

**Moderator** – So you're not looking to appropriate and additional \$6000?

**James Joyce** – No, just enough to bring it up to \$6000. At the time of the petition we didn't know what the amount would be. I thought it would be \$4000 but it turned out to be \$5000.

**Moderator** – This was submitted by petition which requires 25 signatures.

**Christina Goodwin** – The petition is in the office.

**Jim Joyce** – According to the RSA it is a certain percentage of registered voters... 10.

**Moderator** – Are there any other petitioners present? Do you agree that this is a total of \$6000?

**Jim Joyce** – Materials budget line was short in 2010, 2012, 2013, and 2014 and also because of the washouts on Sculptured Rocks Rd., and Edgar Albert Road... a total of \$7719, so historically he's been short on materials line to take care of town roads.

**Ted Yeaton** – We just voted for \$20,000 for repair of Groton roads though it says paved roads, Why isn't this just added into that?

**Christina Goodwin** – This was a "petition article" submitted by the voters. It should be added into the budget but it was submitted as a petition article so needed to be added in here.

**Dave Leone** – The roads as they're being maintained now I feel as though there's enough money in the budget to maintain the roads that we have. That road has been maintained by being graded and gravel added to it for as long as I've been in town and as long as the town has been obligated to maintain that road and maintain other roads. I feel as though we don't need more money for materials in the budget, we need to maintain the roads we have which means the roads need to be properly graded so that we can use the road. It's not a question of adding more money in materials; it's a question of having the roads properly graded so that we can use what we have.

**Christina Goodwin** – The way this petition article is written we're going to add \$6000.

**Moderator** – I've been re-reading it. I think we've clarified what the intent of the petitioners was as long as we have detailed minutes that reflect that the amount looking to be added is not \$6000 it is to make that line a total of \$6000 by adding another \$1000 to the materials line. As long as that's clarified in the minutes I think we're OK.

**Bob Ferriere** – Should he have that written down amending this? I'm not OK with just changing it. Until just now I thought he was looking for \$6000 more. It needs to be written to say \$1000 more.

**Moderator** – I don't think that is necessary because you're dealing with what the intent of the article is. They've just explained what that intent was. Whether this was a bit unclear or ambiguous, I think that's been resolved because he's told us what the language was supposed to mean. As long as it's clarified in the minutes so there's no question about what the intent was it doesn't need to be amended. Should the petitioners think differently it's certainly within their right to submit a written amendment to address that.

**David Leone (point of order)** – You refer to it being recorded in the minutes of the meeting so that it's quite clear as to what the intent was. In the past what I've found by reading the minutes of the meeting is that we read the minutes and it says that the town voted on an

article and whether it passed or it didn't pass. The minutes haven't been written out that actually state what happened in the meeting. I asked our former clerk had she changed what I thought was the proper way to do it and write in the minutes who made the comment and what the comment was so that you can go back and can look and see and you understand why you vote had gone that way. Are our minutes being written so that we can go back and see that this is written into the minutes as to what is being done?

**Moderator** – I have heard similar concerns raised before that there wasn't sufficient detail in the past minutes, but we now have a new town clerk/tax collector. Would your intent be to produce more detailed minutes?

**Ruth Millett** – This has been brought up to my attention several times and yes, there will be more detail in the minutes, more discussion.

**Moderator** – We do record everything as we speak.

**Tony Tavares** – The best route to take would be for the author of this petition to amend it to \$1000 and then there's no question. I wouldn't want to rely on a recorder to pick up everything that going on here. I think it should be changed in the wording and made clear.

**Moderator** – I understand your position.

**Sharon Nelson** – Asked for clarification from the petitioner.

**Barrie Sawyer** – I look at this and it's quite specific. It didn't say add \$6000. It says that that particular line item the total is \$6000. What's the problem?

**Pam Hamel** – This warrant article says to me \$6000. The town budget has a line item with money in it. I think it needs to be changed because I think the DRA is going to look at this, I don't care what the intent is, they're going to look at this and say you're adding \$6000.

**Christian Goodwin** – My experience with the Department of Revenue they are going to add \$6000 to your warrant article. They aren't going to take the intent into consideration.

**Petitioner** – I want to amend this article.

(writing out the amendment)

Amendment submitted:

#### Article 21

To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate this sum of \$1000.00 to the highway and streets materials budget line to insure the adequate upkeep of all town maintained roads – this special article is a special warrant article per RSA 32:3 VI (d). The governing body recommends this appropriation. (Submitted by petition) (Majority vote required).



Amendment seconded by Elizabeth Jespersen.

Vote on the amended article passes.

Now voting on article 21 as amended

Article 21 passes.

Article 22: To see if the Town will vote to transact any other business that may legally come before the Town.

Motion made and seconded to accept article 21 as written.

**Sharon Nelson** – Asks if Miles will come back as moderator for the year.

**Moderator** - Didn't realize so many years have passed since 2008 when a vacancy came up on the S. B. and he took that position and Lou Lieto became moderator. He has been doing this for almost 8 years. It didn't seem like that long to me. Lou is a man I have great respect for. He's so much smarter than I will ever be. Unfortunately he couldn't be here today. I think he's done an excellent job as Moderator. Even though he's not here Marilyn is, if we could give a round of applause in thanks. (Applause)

**Christina Goodwin** – I want to thank all those who brought in food today and to thank Elizabeth Jespersen. She made a couple of things and has been making coffee. She's always ready to volunteer to do things. (Applause)

I want to also thank Ann Joyce. Ann has filled in as interim Town Clerk/Tax Collector since January 1<sup>st</sup>. She participated in training and provided much coverage for the office and we appreciate Ann and all she has been able to offer. (Applause)

The Old Home Days committee is recommending to the S. B. to combine the Old Home Day and the Groton Recreation Committee. The Groton Recreation Committee has had no one unfortunately on it for a number of years, but the Old Home Day Committee is willing to take over and hopefully plan a few events. We need to check with the DRA to see if they can be combined and it may be on a warrant next year to do that if the S. B. chooses.

We did receive a donation from Groton Wind of \$5000 for the intent to look at cisterns and a dry hydrant. You'll notice that this warrant was not on the warrants this year. The S. B. decided to remove it and put it on our priority list and make plans to move forward and also to be able to use that money to install a dry hydrant somewhere in town. Some places we've already

looked at are up new Spectacle Pond and by River Road because there's nothing over there. We'll be looking at other locations with the Fire Chief.

The S. B. has a priority list of projects so they don't slip through the cracks. We'll be making a plan to move forward on each of these projects. Anything heard today in the meeting we'll be compiling a list of the comments and questions and will be updating during S. B. meetings and hearings.

**David Leone** – I would ask that the S. B. read the Hazard Mitigation Plan and check the dates. There are several errors that have been written into this plan and the S. B. should take appropriate action to correct the errors that have been written into the plan.

**Elizabeth Jespersen** – A birthday card for Pam Yinger is out on the S. B. desk for anyone who would like to sign it.

**Moderator** – Noticed yesterday that the propane tank is listing. Frost could be part of it.

The S. B. can at their discretion change the date of the deliberative session. If the people want to change that and go back to the way we used to do it there must be an article on the warrant.

Motion made and seconded to adjourn the meeting.

Town Meeting Minutes respectfully submitted by Ruth Millett, Town Clerk/Tax Collector for the Town of Groton, NH

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ruth Millett', is written over the typed name. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.