

2021 TOWN MEETING MINUTES

Meeting comes to order at 9:00am on May 8th at the Everett Hobart Memorial Park, 115 Sculptured Rocks Road in the Town of Groton, NH

Moderator: Tony Tavares

Select Board Members: Ron Madan; John Rescigno; Tony Albert

Supervisors of the Checklist: Pamela Hamel; Gina Rescigno; Virginia Parker

Administrative Assistant: Sara Smith; Public Works Director: Robert Ellis; Town Clerk: Ruth Millett

Non-residents in Attendance and allowed by the body to answer questions related to their expertise –

Groton Police Chief: Michael Bagan and our Town Council: Laura Spector-Morgan

Moderator, Tony Tavares thanks the Ballot Clerks from the 4 elections that took place in Town this past year (State Primary, State General, General, and Town Elections) - Bonnie Lane; Judy Demers; Virginia Parker; Miles Sinclair; and Bob Ferriere.

Moderator welcomes new Town's People.

Moderator, Tony Tavares dismisses the reading of the current Town Officials and newly elected persons.

Results of the election held March 9th 2021 are as follows:

Select Board, John Rescigno; **Town Clerk/Tax Collector**, Ruth Millett; **Planning Board**, Forrest Blake and David Labar

Appointments Made: Virginia Parker to **Supervisors of the Checklist** for one year and Virginia Parker to the **Conservation Commission**.

444 registered voters in the Town of Groton – information from the Town of Groton Alpha List 5/8/21.
96 registered voters in attendance at Town Meeting on May 8th, 2021

Moderator draws attention to the Rules of the Town Meeting in the Town Report, and answers questions regarding these points of order.

Meeting opens with Pledge to the American Flag.

Deliberative Session May 8th, 2021

Moderator reads Article 2:

Article 2:

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **one million eighty-three thousand nine hundred eighty four dollars (\$1,083,984.00)** to design and construct a new Department of Public Works building, and to authorize the issuance of **six hundred eighty five thousand dollars (\$685,0000)** of bonds or notes in accordance with the provisions of the Municipal Finance Act (RSA 33); to authorize the Selectmen to issue, negotiate, sell and deliver such bonds or notes and to determine the rate of interest thereon and the maturity and other terms thereof; to authorize the Selectmen to apply for, obtain and accept federal, state and other aid, if any, which may be available for said project

and to comply with all laws applicable to said project; and to authorize the Selectmen to take other action or to pass any other vote relative thereto. The remaining appropriation will be funded through an anticipated **two hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$250,000)** USDA grant, the withdrawal of **one hundred forty-eight thousand nine hundred eighty-four dollars (148,984.00)** from the Public Works Capital Reserve Fund. Further, to raise and appropriate from taxation up to \$100,000.00 for the first year's debt service payment.

Recommendations required (3/5 ballot required)

The Select Board Recommends This Article 3-0

Moderator: This article has an issue that is affected by Article 5. Article 5 will be raising funds to be placed in the Capital Reserve Fund. You can have an opportunity to discuss Article 5 before we get into article 2 to place money from article 5 into article 2. We will need someone to make a motion to consider Article 5 before Article 2.

John Rescigno made motion to move Article 5, Ron Madden seconded the motion.

Vote taken to move Article 5. Motion carried.

Moderator reads article 5

Article 5:

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **one hundred fifty-five thousand eight hundred ninety-four dollars (\$155,894)** to be added to the previously established capital reserve funds. The Selectman recommend this special article. (Majority vote required)

Disaster Relief CR Fund (December 31, 2020 balance: \$30,180.29): \$50,000.

Assessing Reval CR Fund (December 31, 2020 balance \$34,842): \$7000.

Public Works CR Fund (December 31, 2020 balance \$60,051.95): \$98,894

Total Capital Reserve Funds \$155,894

The Select Board Recommends This Article 3-0

Moderator opens discussion on Article 5

Dave Darlington: I assume the \$98,894 comes from Art. 4. I think you have to consider article for before we can appropriate the \$98,894. I motion to move article 4 ahead of article 5.

Article 4 has the same amount of money, but if you read the article, if that is approved, monies from those two funds will be transferred into the general fund. Article 5 which raises the \$98,894 Would be raised by the taxes. Monies will be transferred from the public works capital reserve fund and not from the general fund. That becomes a bookkeeping manipulation.

Bill Jolley: This is in addition to raising funds for the general fund, this is additional taxes that will be collected?

Moderator: That is my understanding.

Bill Jolly: This is an additional \$150K to be raised through taxation in the coming year and it's not being transferred out. It's not intentionally opaque, but yet it is with all the money being moved around. It's addition money to be raised in the form of taxes to go toward the capital reserve fund which they are going to try to apply toward this to the building of the shed?

Moderator: Yes

John Rescigno: When you follow the laws of the state things get a little complicated. The \$98K will be offset by the money that's in Article 4. Yes, it is raised in taxes essentially on paper, but the money's eventually offset by the money that's taken out of fire and equipment and Perambulation Capital Reserve funds. Although the money on paper is coming out of your taxes it's offset once the DRA does the paperwork.

Laura Spector-Morgan, (Town's Attorney): You cannot transfer from one capital reserve fund to another. It's stupid, but it's a rule. So, when you cancel a capital reserve fund that money goes into the general fund. Article 4 is going into the general fund. Article 5 is going to be raised through taxation but when it comes time to set your tax rate the Selectmen will have the opportunity to take some money left over and apply it to reduce the tax rate. Their plan right now is, if article 4 passes, is to take that \$98K dollars and apply it towards your tax rate so that this \$98K isn't actually raised by taxation. So, yes, it is raised by taxation but the plan is to offset it at tax setting time.

Dave Leone: If someone wants to speak and they are not a resident of the town...

Moderator: We have two non-residents who I feel are qualified to speak to answer questions when they come up relative to the issues that are before the Town. One being the Town's Attorney and the other being the Police Chief when questions come up about the Police Department. If anyone objects without having to go through a vote each time, raise your hand now, if not we'll take that as an acceptance of their speaking. Since there are no hands up, we'll vote on Article 5.

Moderator reads the Article 5 again.

Voting on Article 5.

Bill Jolly: Makes a motion to hand count; Peter Bailey seconded.

Vote on motion passed.

Hand count: 41 yes, 43 no

Article 5 fails.

Moderator reads Article 2 again.

Selectmen are amending Article 2 due to the failure of Article 5.

Moderator reads a historical clip while the Selectmen, and Attorney discuss the amendment to Article 2 due to the failure of Article 5.

Amendment presented to Article 2. (see amended article below, there were still adjustments to be made).

John Rescigno motioned to accept amendment to Article 2 as presented; Ron Madan seconded.

Discussion on the amendment

Bill Jolly: Wouldn't that also change... not a huge amount... wouldn't that also change the \$100,000 for the first year's debt service to raise through taxation.

Selectmen change the amounts in the amendment for the first year's debt service from \$100,000 to \$120,000.

Dave Darlington: Going from \$100K to \$120K that's the first year's impact on the tax rate?

John Rescigno: Yes, that is what we will be raising through taxes for the first year's bond payment.

Christina Goodwin: The figures don't add up.

Laura Spector-Morgan: Yes, you're right.

Bill Jolly: This amount will continue over the life of the bond as well is that correct?

Laura Spector-Morgan: Yes.

The Moderator now reads the amendment to Article 2.

Amendment to Article 2:

To see if the town will vote to raise an appropriate the sum of **one million eighty five thousand dollars (\$1,085,000)** to design and construct a new Department of Public Works building, and to authorize the issuance of up to **seven hundred eighty-five thousand dollars (\$785,000)** of bonds or notes in accordance with the provisions of the Municipal Finance Act (RSA 33); to authorize the Selectman to issue, negotiate, sell and deliver such bonds or notes and to determine the rate of interest thereon and the maturity and other terms thereof; to authorize the Selectman to apply for, obtain and except federal, state or other aid, if any, which may be available for said project and to comply with all laws acceptable to said project, and to authorize the Selectmen to take any other action or to pass any other vote relative thereto. The remaining appropriation will be funded through an anticipated **two hundred fifty-thousand dollars (\$250,000)** USDA grant, and a withdrawal of **fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000)** from the Public Works Capital Reserve Fund. Further, to raise and appropriate from taxation up to **\$120,000** for the first year's debt service payment.

Recommendations required (3/5 ballot vote required)

The Select Board Recommends this Article 3-0

Vote taken to amend Article 2

Miles Sinclair: We are really heading into an abyss of confusion with where we're going with this. If people's only goal is to vote against this project, that's fine, but the stuff that was in Article 5, the stuff we normally appropriate at any Town Meeting, since the vote was so close on Article 5, in an attempt to simplify and clarify where we're at 'cause... raise your hand if your confused already, right? I would move at this point that we table Article 2 and reconsider Article 5. There was a two-vote margin so please if there's one or two people out there, we can try to simplify this as much as possible. Let's vote on Article 5 and if you don't like the way it turns out, we can always make a motion to reconsider it.

Moderator: Hold onto that thought because we already have a motion on the floor. We need to either accept the motion to amend Article 2 or reject it and I suggest we just vote on it without further discussion.

Moderator goes over the figures in the amendment to Article 2 again to clarify the changes made.

Moderator calls for a vote. The Supervisors hand count the vote. 48 yes, 36 no. The amendment carries.

Motion now made to reconsider Article 5.

Dave Leone asks for clarification on the voting on Article 2. The Moderator declares that there will be a time of discussion and then the voting will begin and the polls will be open for one hour.

Miles asks if the time is now to ask the body to reconsider Article 5.

Miles Sinclair: I have a great deal of concern because the way this is headed it is ripe for legal challenges and if we get dragged into court, we'd spend a lot of unnecessary money on legal fees. At this point just to simplify where we are at and progress through this. At this rate we'll be here till midnight. I move to table Article 2 and reconsider article 5. It was a two-vote margin that it failed by. If you're looking to defeat the project, that's fine but we are over complicating things at this point. I think it would be simple and the right thing to do to go back to Article 5 which would normally be approved at Town Meeting any way. I think if we don't go back and reconsider that we will not be contributing to the Assessing Reval which will need to be appropriated at some point anyway and we're not contributing to the Disaster Relief Capital Reserve Fund.

Miles makes the motion and Pam Hamel seconds the motion.

Discussion on this motion.

Louis Lieto: The motion that Miles is trying to achieve is valid and as I understand it, should Article 2 fails we are still able to go back and reconsider Article 5 and fix it. We don't need to do this now, we can get on with the business of considering Article 2.

Bill Jolly: is there a way to introduce a second article or alternate article or does it have to be modified?

Laura Spector-Morgan: It has to be modified.

Bill Jolly: So, we'll have an opportunity sometime during this meeting to retain the Disaster Relief Fund and the Assessment Fund, but remove the Public Works Fund?

Laura: You can amend that line to zero, yes.

John Rescigno: Just to clarify, Article 5 is designed to capture the money through taxation like we normally do for the Disaster Relief CR Fund and the Assessing Reval CR Fund. The money in the Public Works CR Fund will help offset the cost of the building. That drops your tax rate, that's why we're doing that. These are two Capital Reserve Funds that we put money into every year to maintain the Town and then we're going to use the money for the Public Reserve Fund to help offset the taxes to get the building put up that the Town greatly needs. It's your building, it's not our building.

Moderator: We will vote to reconsider voting on Article 5.

Vote taken: Motion fails 15 yes, 37 no

Moderator: Back to Article 2 as amended. The vote on the bond issue will be a secret ballot. It's a yes/no vote. So, when we finish the discussion so that no one has anything further to say about the project; we will start the voting and we will start the clock. We will have a minimum of one hour for voting. You will go to the Supervisor's Desk at the back to pick up your ballot and put your marked ballot in the box and the box will remain open for one hour. The bond issue can be reconsidered not at this meeting. It would be a separate meeting as stated in the RSA's.

Bill Jolley: I make a motion to vote.

John Rescigno: We would like to speak to this Article first.

Bill Jolley: I would like a motion to vote.

Moderator: In the rules it states that if there is anyone who wishes to speak first once the motion is made, if you are standing to speak to the Article, you may. No one else can jump in now that Bill has made that motion.

John Rescigno: We understand you want to move the vote but I feel that everyone should have the right to speak including us (the Selectmen). We're looking to raise \$785,000 in taxes if the building passes. As you all know and can agree that the Town needs a new garage. The old building is in a flood zone and has flooded several times. It is difficult to get to that building when it does and the equipment could be destroyed. We have millions of dollars' worth of equipment in there that could just be washed out and destroyed. So far, we've been successful in getting the equipment out of there, but there's no guarantee that is going to happen.

We have the opportunity right now to obtain a \$250,000 USDA grant to help offset the cost of the building and we were going to take some of the money from the capital reserve funds to help offset the cost. If this Article passes, we're raising \$140,000 dollars less in taxes than we have in the past year, and that's with the building going up. We've taken a lot of care on the roads. We've got the Town roads in good shape. The last thing we need right now is this Town garage. We need to protect the equipment that we have. It's our assets we're protecting by moving this building. The building is in a flood zone. We need to move it and we have the opportunity right now to take advantage of a 10-year bond, the

first payment being roughly \$120,000 dollars dropping down to \$9,000 in the final year which has changed now that Article 5 has failed. This is our chance to get this building up at a reasonable cost. It's the right time.

Tony Albert: When we started the original amount was 1.4 million dollars. We've done our homework and got this \$250,000 grant and we had the \$98,000 which we have now lost. We cut the original amount in half. The building is not going to get cheaper in the future. We were only asking for \$100,000 (now \$120,000), about \$187,000 less in taxation over last year's warrant articles. We figured if every warrant article passes, the tax rate would go down \$1 next year. If the schools and county don't go up, the rate would go down by at least \$1. This the is best opportunity to get this building up at this price. I don't see it getting any cheaper and the building is a need. Every time it floods down there our insurance rates go up. We have a lot of equipment down there and it's in a flood zone and we need to do something about it. It's a need. We've done our homework and tried to present this as best we can. I don't see where we're ever going to get a lower price than this.

Ron Madan: Something I want to remind everybody of is that we're trying to protect the personnel that work in that garage too. In case no one knows it, that building is loaded with mold. That's bad for a persons' lungs

Ted Yeaton: If anyone has lived in this town for any length of time you remember when we had a hard time raising enough money to buy a sander. Now look what we're looking at. I went to visit the Town of Dorchester to see what they had there. They didn't go for the grants, having government telling what we can and can't do. We built our own garage. And that's what they did. In Rumney, a little different situation, they wouldn't raise the kind of money we're looking at trying to appropriate. Just something to think about.

John Rescigno: We had numerous building committee meetings and they came to the realization that that building can't be built for less than a million and the last time we came up with a plan someone told me personally that they could come up with better pricing than this, so later when I talked to that same person to ask if they had come up with better pricing, they said they hadn't planned on doing that. The reality is, a building that has 4 bays, not the Taj Mahal, it has 4 bays which is basically what we need. It has a salt shed and a sand shed. It's not extravagant. It's 785,000 dollars for roughly 100,000 dollars a year raised through taxation. I know it's a decent amount of money, but we need the garage in order to protect your vehicles. The vehicles need to be protected in order to protect the roads. If we don't have the vehicles, we can't protect the roads and everything goes to ****.

Moderator: We now will close the discussion. There is a motion to proceed with the vote.

Miles Sinclair: There has been a motion made to vote on the article, but there has not been a vote on that. Just one person doesn't get to decide that, the people get to decide that.

Moderator: The motion was to call for a vote. Seconded by Alan Paladino.

Vote is taken on the motion to close discussion and vote on the Article. Motion passes.

Moderator goes over the voting procedure again. Poll will be open for one hour. Moderator calls for a 15-minute break. Supervisor's ask that people not rush to the table, there is plenty of time to vote. Voting will continue to at least 11:09 am.

15 MINUTE BREAK

Moderator reads article 3.

Article 3:

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **seven hundred ninety-one thousand, eight hundred ninety-two dollars (\$791,892)** 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

Ron makes motion to except article as written; John Rescigno seconds the motion.

Moderator opens up for discussion.

John speaks to the article: This is our operating budget for the year we've had a hearing for any questions on it. It's pretty self-explanatory.

Bill Jolly: How does this compare to last year 's budget?

Sara Smith: If you open your book to page 13 on the budget it shows this last year 's approved budget and this year 's proposed budget and you can compare them next to each other.

John Rescigno: So, it's \$159,876 less, that was including the town garage, so your taxes would go down if the town garage is approved. We don't need the sarcasm and it really doesn't matter. It's your votes to vote on the Town garage, it's not us, it's you.

Steve Spafford: I would like to make a motion to amend the article 2.

Moderator: Steve has presented an amendment to Article 3.

(some discussion on the written amendment and what page number for the budget is in question)

Moderator: To public safety line 4210.3 page Police Officers wages part time to read \$1, reducing the Town of Groton 2021 proposed operating budget to read \$773,143.

Miles Sinclair seconded the motion.

Steve Spafford: Does Groton really need a full-time Police Department due to the cost we have Michael, (Chief Bagan), and he's doing a great job. And he is doing the job. This is not to hinder him from doing his job which is what some people probably think it's no matter how this vote comes out specially if it comes out what we just did on article 2. Miles gave up his perambulation budget. Do we really need another Police man for \$18,750 and also need to consider uniforms the price of fuel keep keeping up vehicles gas prices are skyrocketing? Everything that Michael has on now is very costly we need to keep the budget line but with everything coming up even what has already happened today my suggestion is,

don't close the account let's keep the line alive with \$1.00.

Anne Joyce: Can he repeat what he said? I don't know what he is trying to do. Is he just trying to take out the part-time Police Officer?

Moderator: He's not taking it out. This motion is to take the PT Police Officer line and change it to \$1, changing the bottom line to \$773,143.

Anne: We need police in this Town and it's only \$18K.

Lou Lieto: What he suggesting is to retain the line item but not prevent the Select Board from filling that position should they decide to fill it. We've been looking for quite a while and there are very few applicants so that is not likely to change if you look at various roads in this town, including the one I live on, River Road, you see things that weren't here a couple of years ago. They are unpleasant with conditions that are not safe. I think we should keep looking for that officer and I think when we find them, we should hire him or her. So, I would urge you to reject this amendment.

Miles Sinclair: Just referring people to page 53 of the 2020 report first paragraph sentence in the paragraph, "all that being said Groton has received a fairly moderate volume of calls with relatively low offense numbers. This is a testament to the quality in self-reliance of the residence we have their goodwill and patience toward one another I commend all of you and ask that you keep that attitude going forward." On page 55, "The town of Groton has a lot a total of 526 cars with police dispatch center year to date for 2020 is a breakdown. Miles continues used to read through the list of calls. (See page 55 of the 2020 Town Report.)

I'm not against law-enforcement. That's how I made my living before I retired. I also believe that a police department needs to be appropriately sized for the community that it represents.

I have argued in the past, and just to give our police chief credit, the more I see from him in the more I like. He appears to really have a good sense of humor, which can go along way and deescalating situations a police officer is going to encounter, but if you do the math and divide the 526 calls by 365 days this is 1.44 incidents that a police officer deals with on a daily basis. I asked the police chief earlier at the budget hearing, whether he was able to adequately address all things happening in Groton and his response was yes that he could. Any full-time officer worth his salt can more than handle everything the Town of Groton has presented him with. So, I, like Slim, do not feel at this point that we need additional police officers as long as we have the one we do. In 2012 there was a warrant article having to do with the police department. My recollection was that either we should have a full-time police officer, or a part-time police officer, not both. In my opinion having a full-time police chief and additional part-time officers is an unnecessary given the workload presented them.

Chief Michael Bagan: I've probably met everyone here at least once. I'm Michael Bagan, Chief of Police. A correction, Mr. Sinclair, I'm a part-time position and I'm limited to 25, (29), hours a week. I don't have the capability of the full-time coverage. I'm restricted for hours and how I can use my hours. Are there any other questions or issues?

John Rescigno: So the 1.44 calls today would be covered by our Groton Police Officer if we had 24-hour per day coverage, and we do not. We have a part-time Police Officer that works up to 29 hours a week. So that greatly reduces the coverage that we have in a week to respond to the 526 calls that we have. A

part-time Police Officer would only increase the coverage and the safety of the Town.

Bill Jolly: The 24 hours of coverage, unless we had a full-time police department, not full-time officers or an array of part-time officers, we're never going to have nor could we afford a 24 hour, seven days a week department.

Going with a full-time officer is not going to dramatically increase the responses unless we had an officer on duty 24/7. There's a difference between your full-time cop and a part-time cop, full-time agency and a part-time agency. So even if we have a full-time officer in the future we're not going to have that coverage. That doesn't mean that what he's doing isn't great, it is. We just need to make sure that that's in our minds.

Lou Lieto: We don't have that many actions as Miles meticulously read us through, but rather, why not? Are we all wonderful people, or is there a presence of the police in this community? I believe it's the latter. I live on River Road which is the furthest extreme from the Town House and I see the police officers' car at least once and usually more than once a day he just drives by. It takes him a couple of minutes and at present it has a moderating affect. I'd like that presence to continue when he's not available, and he's not available a lot as you have heard. That's not because he's not willing it's because we need a little more capacity to carry on when he's not available. We probably won't be able to find somebody, we haven't been able to find somebody but we can leave the option open to continue to look. If it's one dollar line-item preservation guess how much time is going to be spent looking for that person? You got it, none.

Leave the option open, there's \$18,000 in the budget. We don't have to spend that, but Select Board has been doing a good job not spending money they don't have to spend so I would suggest let's leave the position available and continue to see what we can do. Look around as you drive on our roads, you'll see some places you didn't see 10 years ago. Let's not let that become a need before we react to it.

Sara Smith: Chief, that 526 calls, is that only what you've responded to?

Chief Bagan: No, there's a combination. Some are forwarded to State police as well. That call volume does not include all the in-house stuff that I do when people come into the office and I handle it within the office for pistol licenses and permit processing and all that other kind of non-dispatched items.

Sara: So, the motor vehicle ones, like pulling people over, are technically just you, correct?

Chief: Yes.

Sara: But that's only during the hours you're here and we only have a part-time Police Chief. So obviously that number would increase probably if we had coverage to cover more hours?

Chief: Yes. That is correct.

David Jacques: I would like to say we should keep the dollars in the budget and continue to look to see if we can't get another part-time officer. Especially with the conditions with the roads we have now with the improvement of Sculptured Rocks, N. Groton Road. Being right on the road I see what's happening with this road and we need to have visibility by our Police Department to hinder people from getting out of control. Is it going to take one tragedy in this town? Is that worth \$18,000? Because, I can see it coming; it's going to happen. In the seven years I've been here it's progressively gotten worse on this

road. I've had people going by my house at 60 miles an hour before the road was fixed, so, I can't imagine what's going to be happening this summer. So, I believe we do need to continue to look so we can get more exposure by our own Police Department.

Slim: The sign that you pass coming in that flashes at you, Mike has two of them in town I thought that was great, I'm glad you did that because I hope that did help out for those who are experiencing speeders. Also, I'm going to take a little bit of an exception here to what Lou said, how bad things are in his part of the town. Yes, there are problems around town that he's referring to. I take exception to that in that this last Saturday was our clean-up day. I'm chairman of the Conservation Commission and I started the business of getting the roads cleaned up twice a year, we do it in the fall after Labor Day. And we just did it this last Saturday. It would be great if everyone else would help us out. Only had six people do the whole town. We thought we did pretty darn good job. That includes a state highway not just our Town road. Thank you those who are here that participated. (Slim deviated a little from the topic so the Moderator stopped him).

Dave Leone: Correct me if I'm wrong, whether we leave the dollar or whether we leave that amount right there, the Select Board still has the authority to use that money where they see fit in the budget? So, if the money is in the budget someplace whether they use it for a part-time Officer or whether they use it for something else, it's up to the board? Is that correct?

John Rescigno: That is correct, but we usually use the money that people allocate for certain funds, for those specific funds. We don't shift money around unless there is a crisis that we have to, like when we had the flood. Otherwise, we use that money where you anticipate it to go.

Moderator calls for any further discussion. Seeing there is none he called for a vote on the amendment. This motion is to take the PT Police Officer line and change it to \$1, changing the bottom line to \$773,143.

Amendment fails.

Moderator calls for discussion on Article 3 as written.

Dave Leone: Question for Bubba, they Highway Department budget has increased this year. It increased last year. As of last year, from my calculations, we're spending about \$26,000 per mile to maintain the roads. Can you tell me what the extra money is in there will be used for? I've maintained roads on my life, when I see a street sign that's falling down in the bottom of the snowbank and I go by several times and it hasn't been picked up, or I see debris in the ditch line that can cause water to come out and wash out the road I've got a wonder where the \$50,000 increase that we gave you last year went and now you're asking for more money this year and I think \$26,000+ dollars a mile to maintain the roads is an awful lot.

Bubba: I'm a little lost as to where you see the \$50,000 increase over last year?

Dave: Maybe I'm wrong but last year's budget was it not \$50,000 higher than the year before?

Sara: It's not even \$30,000, it's more like \$28,000 and \$25,000 of that used to be a warrant article for Groton paved roads. There was an article for that and the town had put the request through to add that to the budget. So, the Groton paved roads repair and maintenance line 4312.15 for \$25,000 was once an

article that was done every year so the articles are \$25,000 less because that amount was moved to his budget. So that's the majority of his \$30,000 increase.

Dave: So we'll be going from \$76,000 last year to \$106,000 this year?

Sara: What we spent was \$76,000. We budgeted \$80,301, so it's a \$26,000 difference. \$25,000 of that is from what once was a Warrant Article for Groton Paved Roads.

John: Are we looking to tear the town down? That's my question. We're trying to nickel and dime to take it down. I moved up here six years ago, back then I was working at Sherman Williams and I had a painter ask me where I lived, and when I told him, he said, "I know your Town, you have the worst roads in the state", it was an embarrassment. You're asking where the money's going, look at the roads, part of this was from grant money but look at the roads.

Dave: I am speaking about the operating budget. Most of that was from Warrant articles and I'm asking about the operating budget.

John: It's a part of the operating budget. It's maybe why there's some extra money in it.

Dave: All the repairs that were done on the roads are all over and above. I'm asking about the operating budget. My question was to ask why we're spending \$26,000 a mile on the roads; it sounds like a lot of money to me.

Moderator: I see there's no further discussion, we will vote on Article 3 as written.

Moderator reads Article 3 again.

Article passes.

Moving to Article 4:

Article 4:

To see if the Town will vote to discontinue the following CAPITAL RESERVE AND/OR EXPENDABLE TRUST FUNDS. Said funds and accumulated interest to date of withdrawal are to be transferred to the municipalities general fund. (majority vote required)

- . Fire and Equipment Capital Reserve Fund (December 31, 2020 balance: \$64,650.96)
- . Perambulation Non-Capital Reserve Fund (December 31, 2020 balance: \$34247.08)

The Select Board Recommends This Article 3-0

John moves the article as written, Ron seconded.

Bill Jolly: This is a question. We are required by law to do a perambulation periodically is that correct? We're not required to have buyer and equipment capital reserve fund is that correct?

Laura Spector-Morgan: You're not required to have any Capital Reserve Fund.

Bill Jolly: Miles, you were involved with this last time, what was the cost for the perambulation last time? What I'm leaning to, we're not going to have a Fire Department, so why don't we amend to make that zero and then make the other stay so we can afford that if it's a large expense.

Miles Sinclair: I'm willing to speak to the need for more perambulation.

I first got on the board of selectmen in 2008 and became aware shortly after that under the law you are required to perform a perambulation at least once every seven years forever is the wording of the statute. The reality is very few communities do this and they are not penalized in any way for failing to comply with this statute. We, being the board at the time try to get professional surveyors to do that and we got an estimate for Groton/Rumney line \$50,000 just to do that one seven-mile line. And we did get a bid to

(alarm went off for the 1-hour mark on voting on Article 2)

do the Groton/Alexandria line that was performed by Allen Barnard. Don't want to get too deep into my opinion, we did not get what we paid for they were supposed to have done an actual survey they did not they were supposed to have installed granite markers at reach each road crossing he did not he was supposed to do blazes to the extent that they could be blazed on the trees in that area he did not walk that line myself and 70 to 80% of that could have been done. Because it cost to have surveyors or do it was exorbitant and even the people that submitted the bid made mention they weren't even looking for that work anyways I decided to step up and offer my services and as a result of that we have done every single line we've obtained GPS coordinates we've obtained photographs of all the monuments we refreshed blazes where possible I did not do any new blazes I didn't take a hatchet and chop away at a tree bark to be able to paint it in the future. When we did the Groton/Orange line I did it with Scott Sanbourne who is a representative from the Town of Orange and he is a licensed surveyor so he did take, on occasion, he brought a machete and he would create new blazes so it made it more readily available where the line is. I did not do any of that myself.

The amount that I charged the town worked out \$400 per line. I wanted something for it because it is can be pretty difficult to walk some of these areas along the line. Right now, we've complied with the law, we've submitted the information as required to the State and we're in a position now where everything is known that needs to be known and we have pictures to document where the monuments lie. So, if they need to be found, great. In a perfect world would it be optimal to have somebody else continue to do this, yes. Is it realistic that we're going to find someone willing to do that that's as crazy as me? Probably not. Clearly, it's an issue for the town to consider. The primary reason this article was constructed as is, was to use that money instead for something more important and the belief at that time was that the more important thing was for the highway garage to be constructed. So, what the towns people choose to do with it at this point is obviously up to them. Unless anybody has any further questions that's my spiel.

Moderator: any other discussion on the article?

Bill Jolly: Can we amend this article to keep some money in the perambulation and eliminate the other?

Laura Spector-Morgan: You can amend to not include perambulation. You can't change the amount. You can't take money out of it. Once money is in a Capital Reserve Fund, you can't take a part of it out for something else you either discontinued the fund and everything comes out or you stop putting money in and you spend it down but you can't at some point decide there's too much money there we're going to take half out that's not a thing.

Moderator: Any other discussion on the article?

Moderator calls for a vote on Article 4. He reads the article as written.

The article passes

One hour is up for voting on the bond article.

15-minute break.

Of a total of 96 votes on Article 2 there were 58 no, 38 yes; the Article 2 Failed.

Lou Lieto: I make a motion to reconsider Article 5; Marilyn Lieto seconded.

Moderator: read the article 5 again (see above).

Article 5 is open for discussion again.

Dave Leoni: I'm confused did we already reconsider article 5? Can we do that more than one time?

Sara Smith: Yes, the attorney said before she left we could.

Bill Jolly: Can we make a motion to amend it now?

Pam Hamel: I would say that we should reconsider this because we do need to put money into that disaster relief and we do need to put money in assessing reval., so we should reconsider it, offer an amendment to zero out public works, and keep those other ones as they are because we do need this money.

Lou Lieto: Point of order. The amendment is only relevant when the reconsideration passes.

Moderator calls the vote on the reconsideration of Amendment 5

Vote taken to reconsider Article 5 passes.

Now discussing Article 5 as it is written.

Motion made to amend Article 5 presented by Pam Hamel. To raise and appropriate the sum of \$57,000 to be added to the previously established CR funds. Disaster Relief, \$50,000, Assessing Reval. \$7000. Public Works \$0.

Ann Joyce seconded.

Moderator: We are now are considering the amendment presented to article 5.

No discussion, so Moderator reads the amendment to Article 5 again.

To add \$57,000 to the capital reserve fund \$50,000 into disaster relief fund and \$7000 into assessing Reval capital reserve fund.

Vote taken on the amendment to Article 5.

The amendment passes.

Moderator goes on to Article 6. No vote taken on the amended Article 5.

Article 5 fails due to not going back and voting on the amended Article.

Moderator reads Article 6.

Article 6:

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **one hundred ten thousand dollars (\$110,000)** for repair/construction of the River Road project.

(submitted by the highway department and road committee)

Select Board Recommends This Article 3-0

Tony Albert motions to except the article as written; Ron Madan seconded

Moderator opens the Article for discussion.

Tony Albert: This is the last paved road we have work to do on. This is the price that we got when we got an estimate for a shim coat. It's not going to be a grind and pave, just a shim coat.

Pam Hamel: I don't really know the condition of River Road except for I've heard that it's awful. So, I'm wondering, is really enough money to do what needs to be done. Do they need culverts? Is this really just for shimming? How long is it that going to last? Those are my questions.

Tony Albert: The \$110,000 is for paving and Bubba had planned on using the \$25,000 to replace to replace a few culverts and upgrade the rest of the road so that was going to be taken out of his budget to do the upgrades that need to be done before we pave it.

Bubba: I think there's five culverts that need to be replaced because Dave Leone and the road crew replaced 4 or 5 a couple years ago before the last flood then we had to stop working on some of the roads for a while.

Steve Marston: How many feet of road are involved in that?

Sara: 6500 linear feet

Steve Marston: So, it's a little over a mile?

Bubba: A mile and a quarter Roughly.

Moderator: Any more questions? Seeing there are no more questions we will vote on Article 6.

Moderator reads the article again and vote is taken.

The article passes.

Moderator reads article 7

Article 7:

To see if the town will vote to raise an appropriate the sum of **one hundred thirty-five thousand five hundred ninety-three dollars (\$135,593)** to repair damages received due to a severe storm in July 2019 with **one hundred one thousand six hundred ninety-five dollars (\$101,695)** to come from FEMA and the remaining **thirty-three thousand eight hundred ninety-eight dollars (\$33,898)**, the Town's 25% portion of the cost, to come from general taxation.

The Select Board Recommends This Article 3-0

1:02:02

Tony Albert motions to except article as written; Ron Madan seconded.

Moderator: The article has been moved and seconded is there any discussion, any questions?

Since there are no questions will go forward to voting.

Article passes.

Moderator reads article 8.

Article 8:

To see if the town will vote to raise an appropriate the sum of **four thousand nine hundred seventy-five dollars (\$4975)** for the repair of the bridge that leads to the Town Conservation Pond.

The Select Board Recommends This Article 3-0

Ron Madan makes a motion to except the article as written; John Rescigno seconded.

Moderator asked for any discussion.

John Rescigno: This is the bridge over by the Town pond that leads to the Conservation area where we always use the fishing derby. That bridge rotted out and it needs to be replaced and this is the estimate for replacing that bridge deck.

Bubba: Lumber has gone up about 200% in the last few months. We were hoping to replace it with pressure treated lumber but after speaking to a few carpenters, pressure-treated will probably rot out in a year or two. It's not really as pressure treated as it used to be. We're going to try to go back to

Hemlock and I think we can still hold this price. It seems like a lot of money but the fishing derby is a big deal in Town. We're going to try to fix it up enough so that people can walk over at this year. We won't be able to drive over it and there's not enough time between now and the fishing Derby to actually replace the whole bridge but we're going to try to get it done this summer.

Dave Leone: What is the width of the bridge?

Miles Sinclair: One of the criticisms is that this bridge wasn't done right the first time and that's why it has to be replaced already.

John Rescigno: I don't think I said it wasn't done right the first time.

Miles: I thought as far as the decking using Hemlock as opposed to pressure-treated.

John Rescigno: I don't know what was used on the deck the first time all I know is that the deck rotted out so there's no criticism on my part it needs to be replaced and we're looking at the price to replace the deck.

Miles: I've been significantly involved with the Hardy Country Snowmobile Club for a number of years and built a lot of bridges both new and re-decked, and it's my experience that pressure treated lumber definitely last longer than Hemlock. I would urge the board if you can find the money somehow somewhere in the budget to re-deck that with pressure-treated I think the town would benefit from that as opposed to using Hemlock again.

Bubba: If you want to go with the pressure-treated, I do know that it will be at least \$2500 higher than what that price is now.

Ted Yeaton: I've been involved with building Logging bridges with rough sawn Hemlock. It's definitely a thicker material than pressure treated and if you run heavy loads over it, I think the Hemlock will take the weight better than pressure treated.

Bubba: The Hemlock will actually be stained prior to putting it down.

Miles: And just to be clear when I was speaking of the re-decking of bridges, new bridges, we were using 4 x 6" pressure-treated so it wasn't just 2 inches. This carries the load of the groomers.

Dave Leone: I don't know how it will affect the Warrant Article, but if you want to do it in Hemlock I'll saw out and donate the Hemlock to the town. (Applause)

Steve Marston: When you were putting this together did anyone look at prestressed concrete to compare prices? Might be a good idea.

Moderator calls for a vote on the article.

Article passes.

Moderator reads article 9.

Article 9:

To see if the town will vote to raise an appropriate the sum of **three thousand two hundred dollars (\$3200)** for excavation services to prepare for the construction of the concrete slabs at the transfer station. (submitted by the transfer station supervisor)

Select Board recommends this article 3-0

John Rescigno moves to except the article as written; Tony Albert seconded.

Norm Willey: When we started on the slab project two years ago, we thought we might be able to get away with just rearranging where the dumpsters are now. After having two or three contractors look at it, they said that wasn't going to work. So, what this money is for is for the dirt work prior to pouring the slab so they don't break up like the partial ones we have there now. We have no idea what it's underneath there no one in town remembers exactly what was done and to support the slab with rebar in it and for it to last with dumpsters banging back-and-forth on it when they get emptied and put back in that's what this article is for. Originally, we thought maintenance budget at the transfer station for mowing and maintenance on the landfill painting staining that type of thing, that we might have enough money in that line item to pay for the minimal amount of dirt work that would be necessary, but unfortunately that wasn't the case and so we had to put forth this Warrant Article.

Moderator: Seeing there are no comments or questions will vote on this article.

Article passes.

Article 10:

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **three thousand dollars (\$3000)** for the purpose of grave mapping layout of the Jenny Dacosta Annex at River Road Cemetery; perform research in soil, water, elevation or restrictions in grave layout; establish burial rights for each grave and procedure for internment; establish policy and procedure for memorial placement; establish and study the cost of land development to help set fees for future grave sales; review Perpetual Care funds currently established and future needs from grave sales. (submitted by the Cemetery Trustees)

Select Board Recommends This Article 3-0

Tony Albert motions to accept the article as written; Ron Madden seconded.

James Gaffey Speaks as Cemetery Trustee: This article pertains to a .7-acre parcel of land that was purchased in 2011 for the expansion of the River Road cemetery. In the 10 years since the parcel was purchased it has been cleared but not properly mapped for use as a cemetery. In the past year we have received inquiries from residents particularly in North Groton concerning the sale of plots since the original part of the cemetery is full and not available for any future burials, the time is right. You probably know about the cemetery or the addition to the cemetery. It quickly became clear to us that as cemetery volunteers/trustees that the process of mapping the cemetery was far beyond our ability. There's a great deal involved with the establishment of a new cemetery or the expansion of an old cemetery. The state of New Hampshire has several requirements that must be met in order to open the

cemetery for burials. At the recommendation of the New Hampshire Old Graveyard Association, we were put in contact with a cemetery consulting firm in Massachusetts. They came out and did an evaluation of the site and made a proposal for the proper mapping of the cemetery. It's not an easy process at all which we thought it might be. There are many requirements in addition to what the state requires where the aisles will be placed for example, ample turning radius for hearses and funeral corteges and digging equipment all must be properly laid out. The aisles and the roads are actually far more involved than we thought and for that reason we're asking for this Warrant Article of \$3000. The site also slopes rather steeply on one side and we need to lay the cemetery out so that there's no erosion that would undermine the headstones and prevent problems down the road. In addition to the actual mapping of the cemetery and laying it out, the consultant has agreed to, as part of the expenditure, review our documents regarding the sale of plots, how many people can be buried there in a particular plot. He's reviewed the documents that we have now regarding sale and purchase of burial sites. They do need some updating and that will be included in part of the process. So, our hope is that the Town will approve this expenditure it's a one-time expense. Once the cemetery is properly mapped out it should take care of the Town's burial needs well into the future.

No discussion so the Moderator reads the article again, and calls for a vote.

Article passes.

Article 11:

To see if the Town will vote to raise an appropriate the sum of **two hundred forty-six dollars (\$246)** for deposit in the conservation fund. Fund to be offset by **two hundred forty-six dollars (\$246)** from unassigned fund balance. This sum represents 3% of the timber tax revenue for 2020 (submitted by the Conservation Commission) (Majority vote required)

The Select Board Recommends This Article 3-0

John Rescigno excepts Article 11 as written; Tony Albert seconded.

No discussion or comments, so Moderator reads the Article again and calls for a vote.

Article 11 passes.

Article 12:

To see if the Town will vote to enter into a contract with Hebron Public Library pursuant to our RSA 202-A:4-b Contract for Services for a period of one (1) year to provide library services to Groton residents. (submitted by the library trustees)

Select Board Does Not Recommend This Article 0-3.

Ruth Millett accepts the Article as written; Steve Spafford seconded.

Ruth Gaffey: I've been a library trustee for years but no longer and one. And I have come to you each year to ask you to pass this article, but this year I think we should not, so I am in agreement with the

Select Board, but I do feel as though I should give you some information. The Hebron library has had a hard Time. They have not been able to hire or retain a director for the last three or four years. They are open and people can use them. For the last three years we tried hard to build enthusiasm in use for the library but I don't really feel like that's happened. There are not enough Groton residents that really use the library to make it worth \$2000 a year to join into that. I want you to know that you can use the Plymouth library and pay for a library card you can use the Minot-Sleeper Library And not pay for a library card. And those libraries are open for more often than the Hebron library. It's not to speak ill of the Hebron library, it's just the fact of the matter. There's a little over \$10,000 remaining in that account. I talked to the State Librarian for about an hour one day, and he informed me that that money should not go back into the general fund because of the way the money came about. I was not here at the time. It was his opinion that that money should go for library purposes for the Town of Groton. His recommendation was that that money be kept in the fund and if anyone in the Town of Groton wants to get a library card anywhere, they should come to the town with a receipt and that would be paid for. So, you could go to the Plymouth library for example and pay \$40 for a library card, If you're over 60 it's only \$10. Then you can bring your receipt to the Town, or to the Library Trustees and they would reimburse you for that money. Obviously, that would last well into the Town of Grotons' future. That's all I wanted to let you know is what I know of the situation.

Moderator asks for any discussion questions.

Moderator reads the article again and calls for a vote.

Article fails.

Article 13:

To see if the town will vote to change all voting times for state, federal, newfound area school district, and 10 elections to take place from 11 AM to 7 PM on all election days. These are the current polling hours for town elections all other elections her pulling hours of 8 AM to 7 PM.

The Select Board Recommends This Article 3 -0.

John Rescigno motions to accept the article as written; Ron Madden seconded.

Moderator opens for discussion.

Tony Albert: Towns around us, Hebron, and others, they do this 11-7. They have a bigger population than us and they seem to get by. 8am-7pm it's a long day and we seem to get by. It's hard to find people for that period of time. Ballot Clerks now once it gets to 7 pm they're gone. We don't seem to have a lot of volunteers to count. State law says that the Town's people can decide to change that time.

Pam Hamel: I've been involved in elections for years so it seems that the last couple of presidential elections the last three actually we've been slammed. And I'm concerned just for that elections would be fine but presidential elections starting in 2008, The last four that we've had, we've been slammed. Most people coming in before 11:00am. I don't know how it would work for them to come just from 11 AM on. That's my concern.

Ruth Millett: My only concern about this, like Pam said, is during Presidential elections especially. With all the talk about disenfranchised voters I think it's very important that we allow enough time for those who work, especially, to be able to come in and vote before they work. Usually when we have elections, we have a bunch of people that come early and then a large group of people that come later in the day. In the middle of the day everyone's working so we don't have as many throughout the day. It does seem like a long day but I think it's very important especially these days to get out those who want to vote.

Sherry Nelson: Couldn't the three supervisors of the checkless take turns just so there is one there sometime all day long between eight and seven but not all three of you need to be there all day?

Pan Hamel: It doesn't work that way.

Moderator closes discussion, reads the Article again and calls for a vote.

Article fails.

Article 14:

To see if the town will vote pursuant to RSA 80:80 to authorizing the Selectman to dispose of property acquired by tax deed as justice may require, in addition to disposing it by public auction and advertised sealed bids. This authority shall continue indefinitely and remain in effect until rescinded by vote of the Municipal Town Meeting.

Select Board Recommends This Article 3-0

Ron Madden motions to accept the Article as written; Tony Albert seconded.

John Rescigno: So, this is an Article that we passed a couple years ago. The main change in this is that we changed the wording, as many other towns have, to include "as justice may require", and that enables us to open up other possibilities of selling the land such as realtors etc.

Pam Hamel:

The next article is about specific pieces of property so my question is if we pass article 14 in the future can they just dispose of properties without coming to the town such as what Article 15 looks like, saying, we want to dispose of this particular piece?

John Rescigno: It just pertains to the way we dispose of it. That's it. We will still go through the same process.

The Moderator, since there is no more discussion, reads the Article again, and calls for a vote.

Article passes.

Article 15:

To see if the Town will vote to authorize Selectman to dispose of the following tax deeded properties by listing them with a realtor for sale, or otherwise as justice may require and allowing the Selectman to

negotiate the terms of sale, including but not limited to the sale price.

Map 1 Lot 91
Map 2 Lot 26
Map 7 Lot 36
Map 10 Lot 12
Map 10 Lot 22
Map 10 Lot 29
Map 10 Lot 40

Select Board Recommends This Article 3-0.

Ron Madden motions to accepts the Article as written; John Rescigno seconded.

John Rescigno: Page 52 in the book has the locations of these parcels. These are all tax deeded properties that the town has had for quite some time and we are looking to dispose of those properties.

Steve Spafford: A word of caution is what I want to say. What is the liability of the Select Board when they put them up for sale when there's no clear title? There's one of these that has no clear title. So, what liability does the town in incur, unless you have done your homework and got that changed.

John Rescigno: Normally the buyer does the title search.

Steve Spafford: It's up to them? Buyer beware?

Dave Darlington: I'd like to amend the article to remove the two lots on old Rumney Road. Map 2, lot 26 and map 10, lot 22. I would like to remove them for this year at least and challenge the conservation commission to come up with a plan to make it a town property for a forest or whatever we can use it for. It seems to me we have the opportunity to expand the conservation of the land. These are adjacent lots. The valuation is about \$80,000 so that's not a lot of deferred taxes for the town it would only be like \$300 a year that would go to the town if they paid their taxes. No, I'd like to see it removed from this year 's warrant article for those two lots. If we can't come up with a way to preserve it for conservation land even just to hold it. If I sold it to a developer, they put houses on there, overall adding to the school population. I don't think it would be enough to cover the extra cost comparing one house to the cost of the school. Primarily it's a conservation article I'd like for us to take a year and figure out how we could use this property. So, I would like to amend the article to remove lots 10,26 and 10,22. Moderator receives written amendment to article 15.

Bill Jolley makes a motion to accept amendment to Article 15. (Someone from the audience seconded the amendment)

Moderator calls for discussion on the Amendment. There is none, so Moderator calls a vote on the Amendment.

Amendment passes.

Moderator reads the amended article 15.

Amended article 15:

To see if the town will go to authorize Selectman to dispose of the following tax dead properties by listing them with a realtor for sale, or otherwise as justice require allowing the selectmen to negotiate the terms of sale, including but not limited to the sale price.

Map one lot 91

Map seven Lot 36

Map 10 Lot 12

Map 10 Lot 40

Note: this modification is intended to change only the removal of lot map 2 lot 26, and map 10 lot 22, from approved list of properties authorized to be disposed of in 2021.

No discussion on the amended article.

Vote taken.

The amended article passes.

Article 16:

To see if the town will vote to allow the Selectman transact any other business that may legally become before the town.

No discussion on this article.

John Rescigno motions to accept this article as written; Ron madden seconds

Don't take them

Article passes.

Moderator adjourns the meeting.

Respectfully submitted.

Ruth Millett, Town Clerk/Tax Collector