

TOWN OF GROTON  
SELECT BOARD MEETING  
September 30, 2014

**In Attendance: Christina Goodwin, Robert Ferriere, Sara Moores (Administrative Assistant)  
Kyle absent**

**Audience Members Present**

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

**APPOINTMENTS**

Jeff Levesque - School Board representative for Groton

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Select Board Work Sessions at the Town House

- Tuesday, October 7, 2014 at 5:30pm
- Tuesday, October 14, 2014 at 6:00pm
- Tuesday, October 21, 2014 at 6:00pm

Planning Board meeting at the Town House

- Wednesday, October 29, 2014 at 7:00pm

Conservation Commission meeting at the Town House

- Thursday, October 9, 2014 at 7:00pm

Public Library meeting held by the Library Trustees at the Town House

- Monday, October 20, 2014 at 7:00pm

Groton Historical Society

- Program on Chinook NH state dog Sunday, October 5, 2014 at 2:00pm

Avitar Associates of NE, Inc. property inspections

- Accepting appointments starting Tuesday 9/30/14 thru Thursday 10/2/14, can call between 8:00am and 4:30pm
- Inspections will begin 10/3/14 and will continue until all properties that made inspections are complete

**MINUTE APPROVAL:**

**Bob motioned to approve the minutes of September 23, 2014 as written, Christina 2<sup>nd</sup> so voted.**

**JEFF LEVESQUE - SCHOOL BOARD REPRESENTATIVE FOR GROTON:**

Christina introduced Jeff Levesque as Groton's School Board Representative. He was asked to attend the Select Board meeting to discuss the potential withdrawal situation and also to update the Board and townspeople to any other items the School Board is considering. Jeff mentioned that he believes that now that the School Board has agreed to go to a K-6 platform

that this will be the end of the withdrawal. There was enough support to make this happen. Christina asked for more clarification for the time frames and the motion that was finally approved. He explained that some of the public is against K-6 and closing the Middle School, but at first a School Board member motioned to go K-6 with short timeline and that didn't pass. Another member motioned to go K-6 with a reasonable timeframe and it did pass. This motion is marching orders and not another study, so the Superintendent now has to form a budget for the changes to be completed in the 2016-2017 school year. He thinks this concludes the study for the withdrawal. Groton has a unique situation with three surrounding schools such as Newfound, Plymouth and Mascoma. Jeff mentioned geographically and socially Groton goes to Plymouth for everything and it would be beneficial to pursue Plymouth if it came down to it. He doesn't think we should leave the school district if the Bridgewater Hebron School stays.

Jeff reported that if Bridgewater or Hebron leaves it will hurt the School District. If Groton leaves it wouldn't hurt as much because it costs the district more for Groton to attend and this would help the bus bill go down. He believes if Groton and Danbury left, they wouldn't hit the pocket as much. The reason the district was formed is very sound and the kids have developed a plan and thoughts of where they are going to school, where their friends are, etc. It is a comfort level as well and would not be beneficial to the kids to remove them from their comfort level.

Christina asked what his take is on the scores. Jeff stated that Middle School scores will always fall regardless of the school. It is an emotional change, school is a challenge with hormones, etc. and all communities fall off in Middle School as drastically as Newfound shows. In the High School there is a problem with 11<sup>th</sup> grade math, which the new curriculum director recognizes and is working on. Stacy Buckley has been here a year and is making the right changes and has studies to back up what programs are being used, etc. What complicates this is they have changed the testing system. The testing used doesn't apply to common core curriculum so the new tests are very difficult and very pointed. Smarter Balanced Assessment is the website you can go on to get sample questions and take some quizzes to see what the kids are learning.

Christina asked how he feels about the common core curriculum. Jeff said it is widely misunderstood. It is not how you teach, it doesn't tell what curriculum is used, it only says in certain grades, 5th grade for example, you will cover certain areas of math, social studies, science, etc. It is a road map of what you will teach not how you will teach it. The standards are in place for reading and math but English and social studies are coming. The single thing that makes it good is that a 5<sup>th</sup> grade student in New Hampshire will learn the same as 5<sup>th</sup> grader in California, just not taught the same way. The idea is that no student in any state gets an education less than what another student gets in another state. Right now students that leave New England and go to Florida for example are put in grades ahead or have to go through the same curriculum again that they have already been through. Jeff also explained there is a new position as of this year which is the Curriculum Director. She is experienced and has done this down south. She has all the skills and is working out great.

Patti Bailey asked if this inhibits really good teachers from being able to teach the way they know how to teach. He said that it shouldn't. A good teacher can teach anything. He explained again they are not telling them how to teach just what they should be teaching. There is no micromanagement of the teachers. It is not a government it is a grassroots initiative to make a system where a High School graduate has skills and knowledge no matter where they come from so they can enter workforce or college right out of High School. We do not do as much

trade schooling as we used to but we need to have kids graduate knowing how to read, write, do algebra, etc.

Bob said what he read on common core disagrees with what Jeff is saying. Bob said common core could be a way of dumbing down to the lowest common denominator. When he was in school the students didn't take algebra until high school unless you were advanced. Jeff explained that common core is a minimum standard so this is the lowest that would need to be taught but the advanced students can still learn more. He suggested going to common core website and seeing what is there and it answers questions.

Patti Bailey asked how this will affect the different areas; the west coast needs to learn different things than the east coast. He said these things will still continue. We would still teach NH history and other states would not. Common Core is just a framework.

Christina asked him to come to meetings once a quarter with updates of what is happening and to keep us in the loop. He said he doesn't mind coming up and he doesn't want to interrupt our meetings. He said he is very busy and as long he knows ahead of time he will try to make it work.

Christina asked if there are any other issues we should know about. He said that there are teacher contract negotiations, budgets, etc. Our teachers are seriously underpaid and our goal is to bring them up. He said they want to get the best and keep the best and offer average salary plus a little more. He would like to see community support for the contract. Christina doesn't agree with the same raise across the board so she wants to know if this is considered. Christina said there are some teachers who are not doing what they are supposed to so they shouldn't get what a good teacher is getting. He said the teachers are paid on a grid and percentage for step after that. Teachers are on a union which hurts them. Normally you don't keep people that are not performing but it is difficult with teachers in a union. There is a component in teacher evaluations based on performance that can be attached to their pay which will be coming in the near future. In two years there will also be a change in health insurance due to the Affordable Care Act so teachers will get less insurance. He said they have been seriously under paying the teachers and have lost some really good teachers due to pay and it has hurt the school. He also mentioned that once you hit 15 years your step doesn't increase unless you go back for a Masters Degree.

Jo O'Connor mentioned that teachers have a lot of time off and do not work year round. Jeff mentioned teachers work 288 days which is about 7 weeks of vacation. Jo said that is more than the average person gets. Christina and Jeff explained they are paid salary for certain amount of days so it is not that they get paid for the entire 7 weeks of vacation. Joe Koslow asked percentage wise how many teachers have a Masters or PHD? Jeff was unable to answer this off the top of his head but he would say that almost half have a Masters Degree.

Christina explained there is another RSA 195 committee meeting on October 15<sup>th</sup> at 6pm at the High School.

Christina asked how Jeff feels about Stacy and the job she is doing. He feels that Stacy has spent the first year peeling layers back and finding issues and has been handling them and getting us

in line as to where we need to be. Her evaluation is favorable. He said some of what she has done in the last year is remarkable.

Christina asked him to set the record straight about the \$10,000.00 bonuses. He said that they voted in favor of the bonuses. Christina mentioned one person has left that received the bonus. Jeff said that they knew about this. The people who got the bonuses saved the School District a  $\frac{1}{4}$  million dollars and probably kept us out of court and allowed us to keep after school program so they feel these people deserved the bonuses. He said they will be losing some grants. The grants for the afterschool programs are designed to get you started and wean you off the money so they need to replace as much of that money as they can. Jeff also reported that the School District had a surplus of approximately 1.4 million dollars this year and the reason for this is due to revenue and contingency money. It will go to reducing taxes.

Christina thanked Jeff for coming out.

## **UPDATES**

### *Patti Bailey*

Christina talked to New Hampshire Municipal Association (NHMA), which is our free legal advisory for the Town. One of the things that they had said is that we don't know how long the pipe has been there, but there is an express or implied easement for the pipe to exist under the road. NHMA also said that there is no obligation to the Town to dig up the road. They said the resident would need a permit to open the street. Ron Madan mentioned this would be Dig Safe. Glen's concern about the road being dug up by anyone but the Highway Department is to make sure it goes back the way it was. They do not recommend the Town do it without a fee as it is for an individual. They did also recommend to formalize an easement with Patti moving forward.

Christina mentioned that the best thing to do right now is to get estimates and take the cost of digging up the road, replacing the piece and repairing the road to the cost of putting in a new well. Christina mentioned she can get the estimate for the price if the town goes out to do it but the time needs to be coordinated with whomever is doing the repair work. Patti reported that there is a culvert that is causing problems too that would need to be replaced.

Christina said we cannot tell her not to dig up the road but the best thing to do is to put numbers together. Sara will contact Glen and get the numbers from him for the Highway Department and equipment to dig this up and will contact Patti with these numbers.

Patti wanted to confirm that the Board is saying that they are not responsible to pay for any of this. Christina confirmed this is correct. She said that if it is another problem that is causing this then we would revisit. If a mutual problem exists that needs to be fixed and Glen is recommending that it be fixed, then Christina is okay with it being done together. Ron is not aware of any culvert issue but Sara will check with Glen. Patti asked what the right of way is on the road. Christina said every road is different. Christina and Bob said that they have no problem with her digging up to the road as long as the road is not dug up. Christina asked that Patti keep the Board informed.

Patti mentioned that she has paths on the side of the road for her horse trailers so there is room for people to go around as a detour. Sara will run this by Glen to see if we can reroute them should it be necessary. Glen will have to be on site.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

*MVSB change form*

**Christina motioned to table until next week when Kyle is here, Bob 2<sup>nd</sup>, so voted.**

*Heating Oil Contract*

Christina went over the clarifications from Dead River. The Board is comfortable with moving forward without the down size protection. Sara will send the contract to Dead River. **Bob motioned to sign heating oil contract with Dead River, Christina 2<sup>nd</sup>, so voted.**

*Report of Cut - Morrison Logging and Excavation*

Christina mentioned that she looked this over and everything looks good. **Bob motioned to sign the report of cut for Morrison Logging and Excavation, Christina 2<sup>nd</sup>, so voted.**

*MHF Building and Remodeling*

Sara explained that MHF did clarify that it would be the lower price of the \$1,190.00. This will be tabled until next week when Kyle is here.

Sara also mentioned that the emergency lighting is not working. Matt Fysh's brother is an electrician and he was here and had to turn off the power. When this was done the emergency lighting did not work. He said he can fix it and it would only be \$150.00. Kyle talked to him and was okay with this price and asked Sara to mention it to the Board. Bob and Christina agreed that this was a good price. Sara will talk to Matt and have his brother fix it as soon as possible. **Christina motioned to approve the \$150.00 to fix the emergency lights, Bob 2<sup>nd</sup>, so voted.**

*Coutu Junkyard inspection*

Christina explained that she would like to have the Coutu address on the watch list and check this again next year to make sure it is not in violation. She also mentioned that the Board met with the "Junkyard Dog", Ken Knowlton and felt better about his inspection process.

Christina also said it was nice to meet with him and discuss the items of concern, so she recommends that we also meet with the Health Officer. This could be done at the same time as the Board is discussing the budget. Sara will contact Chuck to schedule a work session for October 14 at 6pm.

*Outdoor lighting replacement*

The New Hampshire Electric Cooperative (NHEC) has approved the incentive for the outdoor lighting replacement. The next step is to have the lighting installed. Sara will contact Gary Eason and have him complete by 10/24/14. Sara will also go over all agreements on the contract with Gary. If any changes in price the Board would need to know as soon as possible. The Board approved a change in price of no more than \$50. If more than that, Sara will come back to Board for them to consider. Once installed NHEC will do a post inspection.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

*Blye Disposal agreement*

The address for the Blye Disposal agreement is 11 Ocean View Blvd. The Board has no issues with this disposal agreement. **Christina motioned to sign the Blye Disposal agreement, Bob 2<sup>nd</sup>, so voted.**

*Septic Plan - 422 North Groton Rd*

The Board asked if the map and lot number is correct on the septic plan. Sara confirmed it is correct. The Board seeing no concerns was okay with signing, but reminded Sara that the owners would be required to have a building permit to put the trailer on the property. **Christina motioned to sign the septic plan for 422 North Groton Rd, Bob 2<sup>nd</sup>, so voted.**

*Invite for the Town of Groton to join SPA (Spectacle Pond Association)*

Christina explained she would like to table this because we emailed some more questions and have not head back yet and would like to wait until budget time. It is \$40 a year. Sara will put in with budget files. **Christina motioned to table this until budget, Bob 2<sup>nd</sup>, so voted.**

*Memo requesting time off*

Sara presented a time off request. She will be working Veterans Day so would like to use Float Holidays for 11/28 and 12/26 which she only works 4 hours anyway. Also, on the request was on Thursday Nov 13<sup>th</sup> to close the office at 1:30pm. Sara will post these closings. **Christina motioned to approve and sign the time off request, Bob 2<sup>nd</sup>, so voted.**

*Letters from the Chief*

The first letter is requesting to advertise for a part time officer. We have chief, a full time officer and 2 part time officers. Andy is Mon-Fri full time somewhere else and he works a weekend day here. Bob said if there is a need for it then we should do it. The Chief came in and explained the need for it. Christina said she is fine with advertising for this and Bob is too. The Chief is coming in 10/21 at 6pm to go over his budget. **Christina motioned to approve the advertisement for the part time officer, Bob 2<sup>nd</sup>, so voted.**

The second letter is regarding the dispatch number not working. We advertise the dispatch number as 787-2552 but the Chief found out last week that this doesn't work. Fairpoint states this is not a Groton number. This issue will continue to be worked on in order to resolve. In the meantime, Jo O'Connor will put the new number for dispatch of 787-6911 in her column.

*Request to meet with Select Board*

The Select Board received an email with a request for a meeting on October 21 from candidates for the two districts representing Groton. Christina wants to leave these types of requests up to Sara's discretion in the future and Sara can decide whether or not to add them to the agenda. Bob was okay with this. Sara will add this current request to the agenda for October 21, 2014 and will email them tomorrow to let them know.

**QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS:**

The Chief gave Jo O'Connor a write up to put in her column requesting residents that are leaving vacant houses to let the Police know so the Police can check on the houses.

Jo O'Connor asked what the big meeting room is called. Christina explained that as far as she knows, it is called the Town Meeting Room. The room the Select Board meeting is held in is known as the Library but it technically is the select board's space.

**Bob motioned to adjourn at 9:03pm, Christina 2<sup>nd</sup>, so voted.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Sara Moores  
Administrative Assistant