

Town of Groton
Select Board Work Session Minutes
December 17, 2024

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

John called the meeting to order at 6:00pm.

MS-434R

The DRA worked with Sara and made some changes to our MS-434. There were only a few other minor changes. The report is all set now. The Select Board reviewed and are good with it.

Tax Rate

The Town finally received the preliminary tax rate so the Select Board wanted to review it and look at all options for the Town. Sara explained she worked hard with the DRA to make sure all information is accurate and it is. The Town and the local education went up from last year and the state education and county went down a little. With no money applied from the fund balance, the following is the preliminary tax rate that was set by DRA, which is with \$0 applied from the unreserved fund balance and \$5,000 overlay:

- Town: \$2.88 (increase from last year of \$2.53)
 - County: \$2.01 (decrease from last year of \$0.21)
 - Local Education: \$4.85 (decrease from last year of \$1.14)
 - State Education: \$1.40 (decrease from last year of \$0.04)
- Total Tax Rate: \$11.14 (total increase from last year of \$1.14)**

We have money in the unassigned fund balance and right now we are at 31.63%. They recommend that we keep 5%-17% in there with 17% being the maximum recommended. As general guidance, unassigned fund balance in the general fund should be no less than one month of operating revenues or operating expenditures. The Select Board can agree to be higher than the 17%. Sara said that since they know we have money going towards the building they can feel okay if they leave this a little higher than 17%. You want to keep money in the fund balance a positive fund balance serves three important functions:

- Eliminates the need for short term borrowing – cash flow
- Used to lower taxes to smooth out major changes
- Unanticipated emergencies or opportunities.

Sara also mentioned that when she first started here, we always did a \$20,000 overlay. The past few years we have done \$5,000 overlay and that is why the preliminary rate has \$5,000 for the overlay. We can do up to \$53,782 this year. The overlay is used to cover abatements that may be granted.

Sara provided the Select Board with many options. The Select Board agreed to apply \$175,000 from unassigned fund balance with \$20,000 overlay it would bring the Town rate to \$1.43 and the total tax rate to \$9.69.

- This would leave \$535,497 in the fund balance which would still be over the 5% minimum they recommend at 23.84%.
- This would be an increase in the Town rate from last year of \$1.08
- However, this would be a decrease in the total tax rate from last year of \$0.31

John motioned use the overlay of \$20,000.00 and to apply \$175,000.00 from the unassigned fund balance to the tax rate, to approve the submission of the final tax rate to the DRA, and to come in and sign the tax warrant when it is ready, Tony 2nd, so voted.

Budget Items

Since the last meeting the following budget items have come up:

- Bettina from Credere provided an updated budget of \$18,965 for landfill costs. Sara emailed her for more information because these costs was initially supposed to be \$4,200 and then went up to \$8,700 and is now \$18,965. Bettina said this budget is conservatively high as we do not know what NHDES is going to approve going forward and after we get the Type II permit MOD submitted. NHDES will have 30 days to review and approve the Type II permit MOD once submitted so we should know before the budget hearing. Bettina also said that she budgeted based on two things:
 - the original requirements of the 2002 OMM Plan by Provan and Lorber which she said have NOT been followed and have not been previously modified
 - her recent discussions with NHDES which confirmed what is required by regulation.

Sara asked the Select Board what number they would like her to put on the budget. The Select Board agreed to put \$10,000 in there for now and they can decrease or increase it if needed before the public hearing.

- Tony said that he should have Hebron's Fire numbers by the next meeting.

Junkyard Violation

Our attorney had sent the junkyard violation letter which gave the owner until November 21, 2024 to remedy the junk conditions on the property. After that date Sara had asked Audrey to do an inspection to see if it was still in violation. Audrey went out on December 14, 2024 and the property is in violation. The Select Board agreed to send this to the attorney for review and for the next steps.

MIT Paperwork

At the last meeting, the Select Board met with Kevin Dennis from MIT. Since that meeting, he sent a follow up email which did the following:

- Acknowledges the concerns from the Select Board
- Addresses that the bunkhouse is on hold for now and that they will reach out to the Select Board when they are ready for the building permit
- Attached the variance from the State Fire Marshalls office for the 13S sprinkler system which has been approved by the Rumney Fire Department but will also need approval from the Hebron Fire Chief
- Attached the most recent construction document drawings and specifications

Clean Basement and Meeting Room

We need to schedule a time to clean the basement and the meeting room. We will look at this again at the next meeting and will maybe try for the second meeting in February.

Sara's vacation time

Sara reminded everyone that she is here next Monday and the Monday after but is on vacation the rest of the time through the Holidays.

Meet with Bubba

Bubba met with the Select Board to go over the following:

- Public Works Building Progress: The foundation was poured yesterday, December 16, 2024. Casey said he planned to start backfilling on Wednesday. Doug said they do not need a site visit until after the new year but asked Casey to send pictures of the foundation and any other work he does.
- Dorchester Salt/Sand Sheds Information: Bubba received some pictures on the salt/sand shed in Dorchester. Sara shared these with everyone.

- State Roads during weather conditions: There have been multiple times now that the State has not been out when they should have been. It has been very dangerous and we have had to help people or have received calls from the residents. John thinks we need to reach out to the DOT and our Senator about this. It was agreed that Sara will draft a letter and the Select Board will come in and sign it when it is ready. **John motioned to come in and sign the letter once it is ready, Tony 2nd so voted.**
- We should reach out to Senator Prentiss to come out to the Town to meet us and bring up to date on what is going on in Town and help us out with future projects.
- He got tires for the one ton.
- He has been very busy; it seems like it has been nonstop.

Having no other business to conduct, John motioned to adjourn at 6:59pm, Tony 2nd, so voted.

Respectfully submitted,

Sara Smith
Town Administrator