

Town of Groton
Select Board Work Session Minutes
May 6, 2025

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

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

Tax Bill Concern

The Select Board invited Ruth to come over and discuss the tax bill concern. Terry Murphy called and emailed. He explained that there was an issue with setting the local school tax rate so it may be even higher than we were expecting. John mentioned that Terry said the Town may want to look into a loan and also recommended holding off running the warrant and sending the tax bills. John said everything was sent in January to DRA. Then DRA said we missed the deadline. Terry said that it was sent in January. At this time the DRA does support the bill that is explained below.

The most recent email from Terry that was sent 5/4/25 stated the following:

“Senator Innis recently met with the NHDRA and they crafted a bill to allow the 3 Towns to modify the 1st half tax bill to reflect the budget approved by the voters of SAU108 rather than SAU4. That bill will be amended to HB 718 which is currently in the Senate. (HB 718 is a bill sponsored by Chairman Ladd of the House Education Committee.) That process will start this week or early next week. If the amendment is approved by the Senate, it will return to the House for approval. Then, hopefully, it will be moved to the consent calendar for final approval. Then to the Governor. The whole purpose is, not only to be technically accurate, but to split the expected increase over the 1st and 2nd tax bill easing the impact to the taxpayer. It may take until mid-June to complete the process. Each community should delay their tax billing process until that time. (Updating changes in address or valuations can continue. Just print the tax bill.” He said he will find the NHRA appeal form and forward to our Boards. He also expected the DRA auditors will contact us when it's appropriate.

Ruth was in attendance and had created a letter to the Select Board regarding this. She feels that we have very little information to proceed with. She has contacted the past president of the NH Tax Collectors Association, Michelle Clark at the DRA and has talked with Terry. She has not received clear direction from anyone. She said that RSA 76:15-a is clear in its direction. She proposes that we obey the law which states that she should receive the warrant by May 15th and she runs the bills which are to be due by July 1st. She also feels that we should include a letter in with the tax bills that explains the situation. Everyone keeps saying that it is in the works to allow us to change the amount or the due date but nothing has been approved yet so what if it is not approved and we missed the deadlines. She said that not obeying the law on our end will not correct the situation and is concerned that if this doesn't pass what will happen then. She thinks we should just do it as we would always do.

Sara agreed with Ruth and went over the following concerns or ideas:

- If we are required to get the tax warrant to the Tax Collector by 5/15/25, this means that Sara will usually be running the warrant the end of this week or the beginning of next week to meet this deadline.
- The first tax bill is always half of last year so this will not affect the first tax bill, but could cause a higher second tax bill.
- We had reached out to NHMA in 2022 to see if we could change the amount of the first tax bill and were informed then that *“RSA 76:15-a provides that the town must use ½ the previous year's tax rate. This is a statutorily required amount and cannot be changed, not even to allow people to pay more than half.”*

- After we put \$175,000.00 from the Unassigned Fund Balance towards the 2024 tax rate, we had \$535,497 left in there. We could use as much money from the Unassigned Fund balance as possible to offset the taxes and try to make it so the tax payers are not hit so hard with a substantial increase when we set the tax rate in October/November. She ran some scenarios but it is hard because we do not know what the other tax portions will be for the county, state education, etc.
- The amount people pay in 2025 for taxes will be the same no matter what. She understands they are trying to change it so it is spread out more evenly over the two tax bills but it has always been that the first tax bill is half the previous year and then the second tax bill is adjusted accordingly. This is a chance we take every year.
- Terry was not able to give any amounts so it is hard to know how much it will increase. Therefore, it is hard to know how much we will need to raise. Terry mentioned that the towns may have to look into a loan but without knowing the amounts, that makes it hard to know if we even need a loan.
- Sara drafted a letter stating that due to the school, we are anticipating a significant increase for the second tax bill of the year to allow people to try to save and prepare for that. If the Select Board approve this, it can be sent with the tax bills. The Select Board will look it over and send any changes to Sara.

Therefore, Sara agrees with Ruth that maybe we should not delay sending out the first tax bill since we cannot change it anyway. She understands the intent is to balance out the tax bills so that they first one is not significantly lower.

Tony stated that he was going to mention that he thinks we have enough in the unreserved fund balance. We kept a lot in there on purpose knowing that the new school would raise the taxes.

Sara again stated that she doesn't have the warrant ready now because she wanted to wait for this conversation but it will be done either the end of this week or the beginning of next week if it agreed to move forward with doing the tax warrant as we normally do. Then the Select Board can sign it when they come in to sign checks so Ruth will have it by the 15th.

The Select Board agreed that we should continue with the tax warrant as we normally do and print it so Ruth has it by May 15th with the bills due July 1st. **John motioned to move forward with the tax warrant as we normally would, to come in and sign the tax warrant when it is ready and also to send a tax rate explanation letter in with the tax bill, Tony 2nd, so voted.**

Building concern on Sculptured Rocks Road

Sara explained that the resident called her regarding the building concern on Sculptured Rocks Road. He said it is a trailer with a building on it. It is on wheels and is like a camper/trailer. He did not think that building permits are needed for campers/trailers. Sara explained they do not usually need permits but may still be assessed and taxed depending on the unit. He said it has been there for a little while but the roof was just replaced which is why he thinks the attention is brought to it now. He is willing to meet with the Select Board on this if they want to see it, he would just like a heads up so he can make sure he is there to answer any questions. The Select Board agree that we wouldn't need a permit and they do not need to meet with him at this time.

Quote for Roof

Sara explained that the other contractor was able to come out and provided a quote for the roof. His quote is \$28,500 whether we are stripping shingles and replacing them with GAF architectural shingles or installing Everlast imperial rib metal roof over existing shingles. The other quote we received was

\$29,000 for the asphalt shingles or \$60,000 plus for the metal roof. The Select Board agreed to hold off on this for now but to hold on to the quotes. It was also agreed that due to the way the snow would slide off of a metal roof, that asphalt shingles would be the better way to go when we decide to move forward.

Update on .gov

Sara and Dave Switaj met with SNS and the Overwatch Foundation on 4/22/25 for the assessment report and the next steps. We are waiting on the next meeting to move forward. Sara added this to the Select Board meeting so we can announce that this will be changing in the next few months.

Items from Planning Board Meeting

Sara explained that she has done the following that came up at the Planning Board Meeting last week:

- She reached out to the towns that allow full time RV living with the questions we had. She is waiting to hear back.
- She created a draft RV/Camper permit in case it is agreed upon to make these changes to the Zoning Ordinance.
- Other items that she thought of after:
 - When we update the building permit and guidelines, should we update the costs?
 - Should we add a fee to the permit and guidelines for those that build without submitting a permit first?
 - If we move forward with the code enforcer, would it be a good idea to have him come out once a year for current building permits and RV/Camper permits when we have them and then also come out if there are any issues?
 - If we move forward with the RV/Camper permit, once it is in place, should we send out the permit to all who currently have campers on their properties (maybe waive the cost for those grandfathered) so that we have current information on all campers in town including water, septic, etc.?

The Select Board agreed that we can look into these further as the zoning moves forward.

Set up meeting to discuss updating town ordinance

Sara provided copies of the current town ordinance that was signed in 1993. There have been some discussions about noise ordinances, quiet times, etc. Sara asked the Select Board if we should set up a meeting to discuss updating this ordinance and if so, who should we have attend. The Select Board agreed that we should schedule this for the next meeting, May 20th, and see if Chief Bagan can attend.

Town of Wentworth Request

The Town of Wentworth contacted Sara to see if she would be willing to assist with a welfare case. The Town denied assistance and the resident is filing an appeal which will now lead to a Fair Hearing. The Selectmen contacted Sara because they were given her name from some Towns that said she would be good due to her experience to assist with this. They would like her to hear the case and provide feedback. Sara told them that the Select Board are her bosses so she would like to discuss it with them. They need to have the hearing soon due to the deadlines so they asked if we can let them know tomorrow. Sara asked the Select Board for their thoughts. John said he has never heard of this. Sara explained she has heard of fair hearings but has never had to have one so she did not know that it was other town welfare officers who attend. Tony mentioned he would want to make sure that the Town couldn't be sued and that Sara would not be held liable for anything. John suggested that Sara reach out to our attorney to see what she recommends. If she says there is no liability for the Town or Sara and Sara is okay with doing it, then the Select Board are okay with her doing this.

Meeting with Bubba

Bubba met with the Select Board to discuss the following items:

- Highway Attendant Position:
 - Sara put the advertisement on NHMA and NHES and of course it is still online and on the bulletin boards.
 - We received two applications for others who are interested in the full-time job. Also, we received two resumes but no town applications so Sara is waiting on those. Another person with a CDL called today and asked how they can apply. We are still currently collecting them so it was agreed to wait until first week in June to review all applications and start interviews then.
 - The Select Board agreed that since so many applications and resumes are still coming in that we should hold off until the first meeting in June, June 3rd, to look at the applications and decide on when to set up interviews at that time.
- Simula driveway: Rick Simula sold his house on River Road and will be building an ADU on his son's property to live in. They currently have a driveway on River Road. In order to have two driveways, they are just short of the recommended footage. Bubba looked and thought it was fine for site but he wanted to get the Select Board decision. If it was the first driveway on the property then it would be approved because they would need a driveway. There is good distance between the driveway and you can see. He would also like to require a 24ft culvert. The Select Board agreed that Bubba is okay to approve this driveway permit.
- 1296 North Groton Road: This is the property that the Select Board waived the set-back so they can put the double wide ADU there. It was only off by 2 to 4 feet into the 25 ft set-back on roads. This was approved and all was good but the issue now is where they are parking which is too close to the road. We had given a driveway permit and they are not parking there. The other concern is the mailbox is very close to the road. Also, we believe they are living there and we do not believe the septic has been installed. Sara will look into the Septic to see what we can find out. The Select Board agreed we should write a letter explaining where they should be parking and to move the mailbox. **John motioned to come in and sign the letter once it is ready, Tony 2nd, so voted.**
- There are a few spots on North Groton Road that he would like to fix the asphalt before the chip sealing is done. The Select Board agreed.
- He is trying to get a timeframe from Morrisons as to when they will be out for the annual gravel road maintenance.
- They cleaned town hall last week and cleaned up the fence. It had been broken before and they put cement on it and the railings back on.
- They are hoping to do the mowing before Memorial Day.
- Bids: Sara reminded everyone that tonight we are opening the bids for the engineering for the North Groton Road Culvert and the chip sealing.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Sara Smith
Town Administrator