

TOWN OF GROTON  
SELECT BOARD MEETING  
January 17, 2023

**In Attendance: John Rescigno, Tony Albert, Ron Madan and Sara Smith (Administrative Assistant)**

**Audience Members Present**

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

**MINUTE APPROVAL**

**John motioned to approve the Work Session Meeting minutes of January 3, 2023 as written, Tony 2nd, so voted.**

**John motioned to approve the Non-Public Work Session Meeting minutes of January 3, 2023 as written, Tony 2nd, so voted.**

**John motioned to approve the Select Board Meeting minutes of January 3, 2023 as written, Tony 2nd, so voted.**

**NEW BUSINESS:**

*Open Positions*

Candidate Night will be March 7, 2023 at the beginning of the Select Board meeting at 7:00pm. Any resident of the Town of Groton who wishes to file a declaration of candidacy for the following Town offices, may do so between January 25 and February 3 at the Town Clerk's Office during normal business hours: Monday, Wednesday, Thursday 9am-4pm, Tuesday 12P-7pm, ending February 3 at 5:00pm.

The following positions are available:

- SELECTMAN – 3 YEAR TERM
- TREASURER – 3 YEAR TERM
- PLANNING BOARD – 2 POSITIONS, 3 YEAR TERMS
- CEMETERY TRUSTEE – 2 POSITIONS, 3 YEAR TERMS
- LOCAL AUDITOR – 1 YEAR TERM
- LIBRARY TRUSTEE – 3 POSITIONS, 3 YEAR TERMS
- ZONING BOARD – 3 POSITIONS, 3 YEAR TERMS
- ZONING BOARD – 1 POSITION, 2 YEAR TERM
- TRUSTEE OF THE TRUST FUND – 3 YEAR TERM

*Local Septic Approval & Owners Certification- Map 6 Lot 1-3*

Matt Barnard dropped off a local septic approval and the owner's certification for Map 6 Lot 1-3, for the Town of Groton at the potential site for the town garage. All information is correct. **John motioned to sign the local septic approval and the owner's cert for Map 6 Lot 1-3, Tony 2nd, so voted.**

*School Funding Update*

John mentioned that petitioned warrant articles needed to be submitted by Tuesday, January 10, 2023 and there were no articles submitted to change the school funding formula. Therefore, it will stay as it has been and you will be paying per student.

John reference a handout regarding this. It also states that it is still strongly recommended that residents attend the deliberative session on Saturday, February 4<sup>th</sup> and vote on any amendments to warrant articles including the

SAU4 budget that will be on the ballot March 14. This is a huge part of our tax bill. This is our only chance to change what will be on the ballot in March.

Jim asked if Alexandria withdrew their petitioned warrant article. John said that they did not submit one this year and they are not sure why. They thought for sure that either Alexandria or Bristol would. It is possibly because they couldn't come up with an outcome but he thinks it has more to do with the fact that Hebron, Groton and Bridgewater were talking about leaving the school district and the Bridgewater Hebron School talked about leasing their school to the district if something was to happen. Sara said that Alexandria submitted one last year. Tony said they did but it was changed at the deliberative session. John said that is why it is good that people go there because at the deliberative session last year it was discussed and changed to be a study group.

#### **DEPARTMENT ITEMS:**

##### *Police Department*

Chief Bagan said Upper Valley Humane Society boarding rates have gone up about 25-30% but that only costs us if we use them.

#### **QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS:**

##### *Bill for State Legislative*

Ann asked if they are still going forward with the bill to go before the State Legislative for the towns to leave the district. John said they are. It will be going before them either this week or next week. They do not have a date yet but it will be good to have as many people from the Town there to speak to it. If that does pass, it will be the bill that becomes law so we could leave the school district. That is why it would be nice if parents could be there. He will be there.

##### *Proposed Zoning Changes*

Bubba said he has comments as a citizen, not as the road agent. This has to do with the Planning Boards zoning changes that they are trying to put through. He said the Planning Board has been super receptive when people spoke up. They didn't get to have a meeting the other night but he feels there are a few things that are on there that were missed the first time. Bubba thought that the way it is written right now, it says you can't have an RV on your property. John said you can park an RV in your yard. If you own a residence, you can park an RV on your property and store it there. You cannot park it on vacant land and live in it if you are in zones A and B. Bubba said 90% of the residential part where people live is in zones A and B. Bubba said he still doesn't agree with that fully. When he first came here, they put the camper on their land with an outhouse, then they built a camp with an outhouse while they were building their house. He understands what the Planning Board is trying to stay away from but will people be grandfathered for these. He knows this isn't the Planning Board meeting and he will bring these up on January 25<sup>th</sup> at their meeting as well. John said you can park it just like you can park your car. The Select Board was talking about that and if it is too restrictive because right now it says after 180 days it needs to move in zones A and B. Sara said that if people are living in it while they build their house, it will take longer than 180 days to build a house. Bubba said will these be grandfathered. John said he asked that as well because it is written that way. He was under the assumption that when something is in place and you change it, that it would be grandfathered but apparently it needs to be written in there in order for it to be grandfathered.

Bubba said his other concern is regarding the short term and long-term rental. He doesn't know how a town can tell someone they can't rent their house. He has a problem with that and thinks this is over stepping.

John said this leads to the other problem where we don't have anyone right now to enforce all of this. Bubba said that was the next thing he was going to say. We are acting like a government, making a bunch of rules and then not enforcing them. Bubba doesn't think it should be the Board of Selectmen. John agreed unless someone

on the board was hired as a full-time code enforcer. To that point, Jim said he doesn't think that someone from this building should be searching for air b-n-bs online every day. Bubba agreed and said it would need to be a third party. John agreed and said then we need to decide if we want to pay for that. Sara said she agrees. The properties that have come up that people have complained about are on the main roads that people can see when they drive to work every day. If we are going to enforce it for these people then we need to drive all the roads looking for RV's, new buildings, etc. and enforce everyone the same way. This would take a lot of time to do. Bubba said there are a lot of people that come up and stay in RVs on the weekends. Tony said they do pay taxes on their land so we are getting tax money from it. Also, if they have a home and want to rent it out then they should be able to if they are paying their taxes on it.

Sara said that there are so many people that are talking about it at the store, posting it on their own Facebook pages or on the community Facebook page, but those people need to come to the meeting on the 25<sup>th</sup> and state their concerns to the Planning Board. That is the only way the Planning Board will know of the residents' concerns.

A concerned citizen came into the conversation late so he apologized if his concerns have already been addressed. He asked if it is the Planning Board that has the authority on the building permits such as the rhino shelters and greenhouses that come in a box. He didn't know you needed a permit for these because these are not permanent, you can pick it up and move it tomorrow. Who would be the ones to enforce this and how do they enforce it if someone doesn't get a permit. John said technically the Select Board enforces the building permits. The concerned citizen asked how they go about that. John said they approve permits and when someone complains about a building that they don't think has a permit we look into and if there is no permit, we contact the resident. Sara said the Select Board usually sends a letter stating we have been informed that there is a new structure/building on your property but no building permit was received and if it is over 100 square feet a building permit is required. There is no fine unless they do not respond. The concerned resident said that a lot of people will not get building permits so would the Chief have to enforce it or would the Towns attorney take them to court for a \$10.00 building permit. He is not trying to be dramatic but this will happen. John said that we haven't had that happen, for \$10.00 most people just fill it out when they are made aware. We address each situation as it happens. The resident said that he thinks we will find that this will happen, especially with the people who buy land and put a camper on it while they are building. He thinks if they come up and stay in a camper for 2 years or even 10 years that should be fine as long as they are not dumping their septic on the ground, which is a whole other issue. Tony said that those are State and DES rules regarding the septic. The citizen asks who enforces that. Tony said he does as the health officer. He is currently working on a few with DES. DES does all of the enforcement. Tony is the eyes and ears and he reports to them but if there is a violation DES comes up and they handle it. The concerned citizen said that is good. He said would Tony as the health officer go past the gate that is posted to look into this. Tony said he cannot but if there is an issue, he would contact DES and they could get a court order to go on the property.

The last thing that the concerned citizen wanted to talk about was campers. He is not sure if this was already discussed but wanted to know if you need a building permit for campers. Sara mentioned that we did talk about this earlier. John said that if it is your camper and you use it for camping you can store it there but living in it is a different situation. The concerned resident asks what if they are using it as storage, how is that different than the rhino shelters or greenhouses. Sara said as far as the camper, they look at if it is registered. However, if it is registered but still on a pad, in the same spot all of the time then they may look at it differently for assessing purposes. Tony said that the big difference is if it is registered. He said they took a body of their one-ton truck and put it on the ground and they got taxed the next year because it was off the truck and on the ground and was considered a structure. Bubba said he doesn't even care about getting taxed on it as much as he cares about being able to have it on his property if he wants it. He thinks it is crazy to have to have a permit for the rhino shelter but since it is required he paid the \$10.00 for the permit so he can have it. John said he thinks that is odd as well because you can move it. The concerned citizen agreed and said it comes in a box and he has watched

his neighbor move his around many times. John said in New Jersey above ground pools are not taxed because you can move them. Inground pools are taxed.

The concerned citizen said he doesn't think that a lot of these things were thought of when this was created. There weren't rhino shelters that lasted for 5-15 years that you can pick up with four guys and move the entire thing. He has a metal shelter at the bottom of his driveway that four guys can walk to a different spot. Avitar says it is a permanent structure but he respectfully disagrees. He bought it so if he moves it is going with him. John said to him permanent is that it is attached to a foundation. The concerned citizen said that is why he thinks people don't think they need a permit for these.

John agrees that we need to look at the zoning ordinance closer. Sara said she does understand why they want some zoning to protect the town from people from coming in and buying a bunch of land to subdivide and put in complexes, apartment buildings, etc. However, she feels some of the restrictions are way too much, like the RV's, not being able to have sheds without a house on the land, etc. We live where we live for a reason. John agreed and said it is a delicate line. Bubba also agreed and said he is not trying to say anything bad about the Planning Board because people do not come to the meetings to tell them how they feel. They have been very receptive to anything Bubba has said. John said they want to preserve the Town as it is and also protect the Town so it doesn't become something we do not want. Jim mentioned in the Lakes Region there are issues with short term rentals because people have to live right next door to party houses and every weekend there are parties. He feels for them and doesn't know what the answer is for that. Bubba said he saw in the proposed zoning that you can have campfires but no firearm usage, noise or parties. He agreed with what Jim is saying but he also feels that is taking it too far. John said that is why it is beneficial for people to come because they are thinking about it one way and maybe not thinking of the other possibilities until people bring them up. Bubba said he hopes more people come on the 25<sup>th</sup>. Sara mentioned that the Planning Board is having a public hearing on the proposed changes on January 25<sup>th</sup> at their Planning Board meeting at 7:00pm. Ann said the posting for the public hearing is at 7:30pm since they are having their meeting first.

Bubba mentioned that he is shocked that Ann is the only one from the Zoning Board that attends. They are changing the zoning ordinance so he would think more zoning board members would be there. Ann said but the zoning board has no authority, it is all the Planning Board. Bubba said they are the zoning board. The zoning board hasn't had to do a lot yet because there hasn't been zoning but now that there is zoning it will be different. The zoning board will become more important. Tony said that is why it is good to have residents on these boards. Bubba said people don't attend and then it passes and then they can get hostile when it affects them. Sara mentioned that consistency and enforcement will be key if it does pass.

Ann asked about Audrey, who is the junkyard inspector, and asked if she could be the code enforcer. Sara explained we have looked into options for her to be a deputy health officer to assist Tony but haven't looked into a code/building enforcer but we could if we get to that point. She has been great to work with as the junkyard inspector. Tony said it would benefit to have her for the health inspections because she has more knowledge in the regulations.

#### *Backhoe*

The backhoe could be in on Friday but he is not sure yet. They would still need it for a week or so to add on everything.

**Having no other business to conduct, John motioned to adjourn at 7:31pm, Tony 2<sup>nd</sup>, so voted.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Sara Smith  
Administrative Assistant