

Groveland Board of Selectmen  
Meeting Minutes  
February 21, 2017

Present: Chair William Dunn, Selectman Ed Watson, Selectman William O'Neil, Selectman Daniel MacDonald

Absent: Selectman Michael Wood

Others Present: Denise Dembkoski (Finance Director)

Recorder: Melanie Rich

**RESIDENT/PUBLIC COMMENTS:** None

**APPROVAL OF WARRANTS:**

Selectman Watson made a motion to approve PW#17-33 in the amount of \$150,607.66; Selectman MacDonald seconded; all voted in favor: warrant approved.

Selectman Watson made a motion to approve DW#17-31A in the amount of \$27,052.82; Selectman MacDonald seconded; all voted in favor: warrant approved.

Selectman Watson made a motion to approve BW#17-33 in the amount of \$462,502.90; Selectman MacDonald seconded; all voted in favor: warrant approved.

Selectman Watson made a motion to approve BW#17-33C in the amount of \$12,000.00; Selectman MacDonald seconded; all voted in favor: warrant approved.

**PUBLIC HEARING:** On the application of Cornerstone Motor Works, LLC, Daniel Nihan, 883 Salem Street, Groveland MA, for a Class II Used Car Dealer's License under Massachusetts General Law C.140, S.58, as amended.

Selectman Watson read the notice into record. Selectman Watson made a motion to open the public hearing; Selectman MacDonald seconded; roll call vote: MacDonald-yes; Watson-yes; Dunn-yes; O'Neil-yes. Ms. Dembkoski said the hearing notice was published with a day of Monday, February 21<sup>st</sup>, the date was correct; the day of the week was incorrect. Abutters were notified several weeks ago; the ad was in the paper for over a week and no one contacted the office for clarification.

Daniel Nihan was in attendance. He runs Cornerstone Motor Works and is interested in selling Volvos (one or two at a time). He is looking to get permission to apply to the state. He has been before the Zoning Board and received approval. He has a permit to display six cars on the property; he cannot sell them. Selectman O'Neil asked what kind of traffic is expected and the hours of operation. Chair Dunn read the approval requirements set by the Zoning Board. Selectman Watson asked about advertising. Mr. Nihan said he has his own customer base; he will never have antenna flags or neon signs. Selectman Watson made a motion to grant a Class II Used Car License for two (2) used vehicles, under Massachusetts General Law C.140, S.58, as amended. No wrecks may be in front or on sides of building in view of public eye, and all vehicles must be situated in an orderly fashion within the bounds of said property; Selectman MacDonald seconded; roll call vote: O'Neil-yes; Dunn-yes; Watson-yes; MacDonald-yes. Selectman Watson made a motion to close the Public Hearing; Selectman MacDonald seconded; roll call vote: MacDonald-yes; Watson-yes; Dunn-yes; O'Neil-yes.

**DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE VOTE:**

1. Superintendent Dr. Jeffrey Mulqueen to address statements made at the February 6<sup>th</sup> Selectmen’s Meeting – The budget was an issue. Dr. Mulqueen said without himself or Greg Labrecque to discuss it, it is just speculation and difficulties arise. He said there were some misconceptions of budgeting with respect to the schools. He presented a budget history for the board from 2014. They have strategies that produce incremental slow growth in the schools without putting the town in financial hardship. They try to stay below the 2.5%. The state funding for the district pulls back every year. They have a two-step assessment process which involves the student population and the relative wealth in each town. If the state keeps pulling back on funding, it puts the burden on the town. Their costs are not only contractual, they have financial constraints around special education. One of the questions was what is the School Committee doing, how are they helping the town? Dr. Mulqueen said they address the E&D difficulty; they are using a very conservative approach with their funding. School choice with almost 200 students cost \$1 million; they brought that down (currently 90 students). Teacher’s salaries: in the past, teachers could get compensated for both an additional year in the district and for additional credits; it is not that way now; it is 2.5% maximum. The most recent health insurance negotiations were to go to the GIC which is a cost savings for the organization as well as the individual. Dr. Mulqueen said we need to identify the problem rather than the person. He presented and explained the key points of the budget to the board; it is not completed. Currently they are at a 1.9% increase. He said they will continue to work with the board.

Chair Dunn said  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the budget goes to the schools; it is a sizeable amount of money. In the past, the numbers were accepted without question. Dr. Mulqueen said he has already met with West Newbury and Merrimack; in two weeks, they should have good information. Selectman Watson asked for an explanation of the \$39K increase in charter school expenses. Dr. Mulqueen said the more charter schools that are opened, the more burden is put on public schools to pay for them; it comes out of the Chapter 70 money. Selectman MacDonald said if there is an automatic 2.5% pay raise, how can you keep the overall budget at .24%. Dr. Mulqueen explained that the 2.5% is less than 70% of the total budget, so they can go up on the salaries by 2.5% and still keep the overall budget below because they are going under in other areas. Selectman MacDonald wondered if we were overpaying the teachers. Dr. Mulqueen said no; he completed salary evaluations and said we are in the middle of the road. As far as what we get for what we are paying, he said Pentucket has a very dedicated and committed staff; people want to know how to get children into Pentucket. Despite the comparisons, we need to look at the bigger picture. Dr. Mulqueen said he will come before the board once a month. The board thanked him for coming in.

2. Mike Dempsey to discuss:

- (1) Proposed exchange of land in Town Forest – Speaking on behalf of the Conservation Commission, he said there is a builder who wants to build two houses on the lot next to Town Forest but needs more frontage (9,000 square feet) on Wood Street. He is proposing an exchange of a 9,000-square foot triangle at the entrance to Town Forest (which owned by the town and controlled by the Conservation Commission) for 12 acres of land behind the two houses that abuts Town Forest. The Commission is interested in doing this; adding 12 acres gives them more control over the trails and it borders both the Town Forest on the Groveland side and some public property on the West Newbury side. He explained the process; it is complicated but doable. The net advantage to the town per year would be approximately \$5K.

Chair Dunn asked what the cost is to the town? Mr. Dempsey said the Commission can pay for some costs. Selectman Watson objected to getting the information tonight; he said it is unfair to the speaker as well as the board because it was just presented. Mr. Dempsey did not expect any decisions would be made tonight. He apologized for not having it ready ahead of time. The biggest

expense would be for Town Counsel. Chair Dunn doesn't believe the town should have any expense if it is allowed to go forward; he doesn't want to entertain it if it does. More discussion is needed.

- (2) Town Meeting Warrant Article to correct original assignment language for four conservation properties – He explained the map presented; it pertains to town-owned land only. There are 4 parcels of Meadow Pond Reservation. They voted money in 2013 to put parcels under the CR; they were planning to do this with the Essex County Greenbelt. The Department of Fisheries and Wildlife has a CR on the 59 acres; they were happy to roll the 6, 10, and 8 parcels into that CR; a Town Warrant Article is needed. It will cost to have Town Counsel review it, but it will save \$16K that was put aside in order to put the parcels under a separate CR. The Conservation Commission will still have care, custody and control. Bob Guptill said a CR has a list of permitted uses agreed to and understood by all parties; there are also controlled activities. It's important to have it monitored so the abutters are not abusing the property.
- (3) Acceptance of a land donation – The landowner at 19 Balch Ave wants to donate one-half acre to the town. Mr. Dempsey pointed out the lots on the map that were already conservation properties. The financial impact per year is approximately \$44.
- (4) Update on Center Street Greenway Conservation Restriction – This was discussed about a year ago. The board asked that the document that was presented be reviewed by Town Counsel regarding input. Changes were incorporated into the CR then the state agencies had to review it. To date, the DEP and Natural Heritage Endangered Species have reviewed; it is now at the Executive Office of the Energy and Environmental Affairs. They are hoping to get the document back in the spring.

There is a 10.7-acre parcel of open space land on Salem Street that abuts the backside of Veasey Park. They are interested in some or all of it. Do we really want to pursue these types of things? If a state grant pays for half and CPA funds pays for the other half, it doesn't affect the tax rate, but the parcel has been taken out of circulation. How many houses could have been built, what is the financial impact and the cost for the schools? Selectman MacDonald said if it is taken off the tax roll we lose revenue. He said the people should decide. Bob Guptill said the access back to Veasey has some value to the town for passive recreation. The Arch Diocese owns the property.

- (5) Community Preservation Committee Articles – The CPC voted to recommend the following 6 projects:
  - 1) Automate the records of the cemetery and protect the paper copies; \$18,500 for computer & software; one-time funding.
  - 2) Restoration of the old burial ground section of the Riverview Cemetery; \$48K; Phase 1 of 3.
  - 3) Restoration of all Veterans' markers in the entire cemetery; \$8,950.
  - 4) Johnson's Pond – This year the focus is on planning and measurement. 20% will be for water quality measurements and the development of a management plan for Johnson's Pond; removal of water lilies by hydro-raking; \$60,500-Open Space. The board recommended \$12,000 for the study first.
  - 5) Johnson's Creek Watershed Management Plan – In 2014 there was a study on the Johnson's Creek Watershed focusing on the culverts and flow control. Phase II is to develop a Management Plan to look at things along the watershed, flow control, sedimentation, etc. \$85K-Open Space.

- 6) Veto Museum Phase II (windows, display cases, Veto and Fire Department-related items to be put in the museum); evaluation and plan to restore the Veto hand tub; \$55K-Historical.

If all articles are approved at \$275,950, there will be \$1.7 million left in unallocated CPA funds. There was brief discussion about the possibility of hiring a Town Planner per diem and building the cost into the projects. Ms. Dembkoski said Merrimack Valley Planning would have resources if the board chooses to move in that direction.

Unfinished CPA projects: The Pines, Washington Park, Library, and Conservation Restrictions.

3. Discussion of Conducting a Study of Town Hall for Storage and Office Space – Selectman Watson said with the pending Water Dept. move, we need someone to look at what space is needed by the departments and suggested Kermit Cross was the perfect person for the job. Selectman MacDonald does not know the needs, but thinks it is a waste of money to have corner offices filled with banker's boxes. Ms. Dembkoski said most of what we do is permanent records. We need permission from the state to dispose of items. The vaults are filled to capacity; there is no closet or basement storage. The items need to be stored in a controlled climate. There is some space on the outside for storage if added to the vault. Selectman O'Neil said we could make the investment for scanning; it would be a one-time cost. Ms. Dembkoski said the only issue is that nothing is standard; they are all different sizes. She will ask other communities what they do. Selectman Watson asked if there were funds available through the Community Compact. Ms. Dembkoski said because we were awarded a grant in FY17, we cannot apply in FY18. We could use CPA funds. Chair Dunn asked for a consensus to appoint Kermit Cross to go through the building. Selectman O'Neil was concerned about him being impartial. How do we get an objective answer? Ms. Dembkoski said he has already been around in certain offices; he would need to go to each office and sit with every department. Selectman MacDonald said we need an impartial evaluation. Selectman Watson made a motion that we appoint Kermit Cross to look at office space needs and storage, talk to all departments to see what their needs are and report back; Selectman MacDonald seconded; voted 4-0-0.

Selectman MacDonald asked if it was possible to move out of this space. Ms. Dembkoski said the Council on Aging uses this room five days a week. In addition, this is the only room that has the cameras and technology.

At 8:36 PM the board took a five-minute recess.

The meeting resumed at 8:41PM

4. Fiscal 2018 Budget Discussion – To bring all employees up to minimum wage, the cost would be \$7,500 (the Library is between \$1,400-\$1,800 year). The board needs to keep in mind that the Library Assistants are making \$11.42/hour; the Pages are currently \$2.00 less than that. If the Pages are increased to \$11.00, the Library Assistants may also have to be adjusted. The Cemetery is between \$700-\$1,000 depending on the number of hours used for summer employment. Summer Recreation is approximately \$5,000. Free cash has been certified at \$576,589. Last year \$300K was put in stabilization; \$85K in OPEB and \$75K in capital stabilization. She would recommend a portion of that should go into reserves. She would not recommend using it to close any budget gaps. Vehicles were discussed. Selectman Watson would like a list from departments as to how many vehicles they have, how much mileage is on them, and what condition they are in. Ms. Dembkoski has the vehicle list, but not mileage or condition. The Articles Capital has put forward from four departments is \$412K (Council on Aging, Highway Department, Fire Department and Police Department). If the board plans to do something with reserves, there will not be enough money to cover all of that. Selectman MacDonald thinks at least half of the free cash should go to stabilization. The Water Department and Assessors Office provided written explanations per the board's request for more information. Selectman O'Neil

asked about contract negotiations. Ms. Dembkoski has reached out on multiple occasions to all three unions; only dispatch has scheduled a date. Selectman MacDonald is against automatic pay raises from the unions; there is no incentive as far as merit.

### **VOTES OF THE BOARD**

Selectman Watson made a motion to approve the January 9, 2017 Meeting Minutes; Chair Dunn seconded; voted 4-0-0.

Selectman Watson made a motion to approve the January 23, 2017 Meeting Minutes; Selectman MacDonald seconded; voted 4-0-0.

Selectman Watson made a motion to approve the January 23, 2017 Executive Session Meeting Minutes at 5:45PM; Selectman O’Neil seconded; voted 4-0-0.

Selectman Watson made a motion to approve the January 23, 2017 Executive Session Meeting Minutes at 8:30PM; Selectman O’Neil seconded; voted 4-0-0.

Two Fire Department Reserve Fund Transfer Requests – \$20K/year is put into a reserve account that the Finance Committee controls for unforeseen expenditures; the request is approximately \$13K. This board has to approve it before going to the Finance Committee. Chair Dunn made a motion to table it to the next meeting; Selectman MacDonald seconded; voted 4-0-0.

Road Commissioner’s request dated 2/15/17 to deficit spend the FY17 Snow & Ice line item by \$50,000 – In the past the BOS and the Finance Committee had to approve the request. The Municipal Modernization Act changed that; now only the BOS must approve the request. We have exceeded the \$165K Snow & Ice budget. The \$50K will cover the expenses incurred. Selectman Watson made a motion to grant the Road Commissioner to deficit spend the Snow & Ice budget line item by \$50K. Selectman MacDonald wants more detail. He would like to know how much we outsource and is it cheaper to do it in-house or outsource it. Chair Dunn would also like a better explanation. Selectman Watson said he does not think it is unreasonable and they go a good job; the roads are in great shape compared to other towns. The Road Commissioner will be asked to attend the next meeting with an explanation.

### **OLD BUSINESS (Unfinished Business):**

Selectman MacDonald asked if an executive session had been scheduled for the Bagnall security. A meeting was not scheduled because availability was only received from Selectmen MacDonald and O’Neil. The board scheduled it for 6:30PM on Monday, February 27<sup>th</sup>.

Selectman MacDonald will follow up with Representative Mirra regarding the proposed relief request for Center Street.

Chair Dunn asked about the status of scheduling negotiations with the Finance Director. Ms. Dembkoski replied that in her opinion, it would be up to the Board to schedule those negotiations. The Board would like to schedule the Executive Session for Monday, March 6, 2017 at 6pm.

### **CORRESPONDENCE:**

1. February 6, 2017 Meeting Minutes.
2. Letter from Mike Dempsey regarding the office space needs of the Conservation Commission.

3. Letter from Mass Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance. Ms. Dembkoski said the state is seeking RFPs to build up to four 5-bedroom group homes; we are one of the communities they are putting out an RFP to. She will research it further.

**FINANCE DIRECTOR'S TIME:**

The revised RFP regarding Salem Street was sent to the members. It will be discussed in the executive session meeting scheduled for February 27<sup>th</sup>.

**SELECTMEN'S TIME:**

Selectman MacDonald wanted the public to know that he is very opinionated and doesn't think the other board members should take the heat because of his opinions; they are his own. If anyone has any issues they should take them up with him; don't blame any of the other board members for anything he says and does. The members appreciated that.

The next regular meeting will be held **Monday, March 6, 2017** at 6:30 p.m.

Chair Dunn made a motion to adjourn; Selectman MacDonald seconded; voted 4-0-0. The meeting was adjourned at 10:07 p.m.

\*\*\* Approved on March 20, 2017 with a vote of 3-0-1, with Selectman Wood abstaining. \*\*\*