



Approved March 13, 2023

BOARD OF SELECTMEN
Meeting Minutes
Monday, January 30, 2023
Groveland Town Hall
183 Main Street, Groveland, MA 01834

This meeting was in-person and also broadcast live on Groveland Public Access, Channel 9, as well as through Microsoft Teams virtual meeting software for remote access.

Present: Chair Ed Watson, Selectmen Daniel MacDonald, Mark Parenteau, Jason Naves, Kathleen Kastrinelis.
Rebecca Oldham, Town Administrator.

CALL MEETING TO ORDER – Chair Watson called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm.

PUBLIC HEARING:

6:30PM: Notice is hereby given to the Town of Groveland Residents that a public hearing is scheduled for MONDAY January 30, 2023, at 6:30pm before the Board of Selectmen on the issue of the Votes Act of 2022. To determine if the board will act on the Vote by Mail and Early in Person Voting for the Local Election, May 1, 2023. The Board of Selectmen, upon hearing a review of the Votes Act of 2022 by the Town Clerk and receipt of the proposed schedule for Early in Person Voting, voted by the Board of Registrars will decide whether to enact the local options.

Selectman Naves read the Public Hearing notice.

Beth Cunniff, Town Clerk was present and addressed the Board to explain the new law regarding vote by mail under the Votes Act of 2022.

Members of the Public were present and addressed the BOS and the Town Clerk.

Selectman MacDonald asked about time and financial burden this has on the Town Clerk office. Town Clerk Cunniff explained that it is a pretty good time burden – there is no pay for the extra work for the Clerk's Office. Associated costs are calculated for poll workers and costs associated with mailing the ballots out – this has been submitted to the State and will hopefully be reimbursed.

Selectman MacDonald asked if ballot information is kept confidential; Town Clerk Cunniff responded that there is no early calculating until election day; the number of people that have voted would be available.

1. Increase in voter turnout?
TC - We have only had early voting for one local election so far during 2020 – the turnout was relatively poor – 720 votes – 486 (68%) of which were vote by mail.
2. Diane Plantamura, 22 Mill Street – Early in person voting costs versus mail in voting costs.
TC - Hours were extensive for mail in voting. In person early voting costs are known because Election Workers are paid \$11.00 per hour. The State has reimbursed for the State Elections – not local. Reimbursement is not guaranteed.

Chair Watson invited those who wished to speak in favor of mail-in voting for the local election to come to the podium:

1. Diane Plantamura, 22 Mill Street addressed the Board representing 138 Citizens of Groveland (signatures in hand). They are in support of mail in voting for municipal elections. Signatures were given to the BOS.
2. Doreen Blades, 16 Hillview Drive, spoke in favor of offering mail in voting for municipal elections. Mail in voting is key to have the ability to vote. It is an affront to all voters if we don't offer mail in voting. Encouraged the BOS to support this.
3. Adriana Woods, 652 Salem Street, shared a few words regarding the positive correlation between mail in voting and increasing voter turnout; noted that the Town Clerk addressed concerns that Selectman MacDonald referenced at a previous BOS meeting regarding safety of mail in voting. Asked the BOS to please not opt out of vote by mail.
4. John Grohall, 15 Evergreen, vote by mail makes it more convenient for voters to vote which results in higher voter turnout – this is a good thing for democracy. There has been zero evidence of fraud in our elections – if anyone has information, please bring it forward. This makes common sense and voting should be accessible to all of the residents in Groveland. Please do not take choices away from the voters.
5. Bill O'Neil, 45 Elm Park. Besides financial implications – what is the great impetus in this discussion. Chair Watson stated this is the time for statements not questions.
6. Matthew Guillory, 18 Chestnut Street – urged the BOS to not opt of mail in voting for the local election and asked that any BOS member who wanted to vote for this to please provide a reason why. There is no evidence of widespread fraud. Opting out for some elections might cause confusion among voters.
7. Becky Beaucher, 765 Salem Street –provided statistics on vote by mail for Groveland that she found on the Secretary of States website. It appears residents relied heavily on vote by mail during state elections. Please leave the voting process as is for local elections. The process to opt out of mail in voting seems to be unnecessary and a waste of time and energy – there other more important topics that should be discussed. This decision is only for this year – hopefully we won't have to be here again next year discussing voters rights for Groveland.

There was a brief pause – the audio was not working.

8. Beth Greenhagen, 7 Seven Star Road – loves voting (in person) but if she needed to vote by mail, she would be devastated without it. All of the people in Groveland deserve the right to vote including by mail.
9. Selectman Kastrinelis read a letter submitted by Inga Burger, 5 Pinewood Lane, who is out of the country presently. Expressed strong opposition of depriving the citizens in Groveland their right to avail themselves to mail in voting for all elections. Consistency to have the same rules for all elections is important – the goal should be to make it easier to vote not more cumbersome. Please vote no to opting out of mail in voting for local elections.

Chair Watson invited those who wished to speak in favor of opting out of mail-in voting for the local election to come to the podium:

1. Dick Hodges, 35 Union Street – some of the challenges that we've been talking about – tried to look at this from a common-sense perspective. The risk of fraud is his main concern – this is vulnerable to being stolen, altered or forged. Would like to see everyone have to present ID at the polls. Encouraged the BOS to vote no on mail in voting.

BOS Discussion:

Selectman MacDonald noted if there is any possibility of fraud (more than zero) - one bad ballot is one too many. There are no safeguards in place. Believes in voter ID. Believes the violin stories if you are

sick there are absentee ballots available. Everyone who has the ability to get off the couch and vote should.

Selectman Naves noted the research that he did shows that the proven fraud was done by someone on the inside. No excuse mail in ballots will encourage people to vote. There are checks and balances in place.

Selectman Kastrinelis noted that she would like to see all the elections handled the same way otherwise it gets confusing for the voters. More people are paying attention to politics because they have voting options. Trusts the Town Clerk and the Board of Registrars to do the right thing.

Chair Watson noted this public hearing was held to hear from the residents. The Constitution is silent on the issue.

Mail-in voting:

A motion was moved by Selectman MacDonald to opt out of mail -in voting for the annual Town Election– there was not a second moved – motion failed.

In person voting:

A motion was moved by Selectman Kastrinelis and seconded by Selectman Naves to allow in person voting at the local election and approve the schedule created by the Board of Registrars and presented in the memo by the Town Clerk. Voted: 5-0.

The Board closed the Public Hearing.

PUBLIC COMMENT: *Written submissions for public comment must be made before the start of the meeting per the Board of Selectmen's Public Comment Policy amended November 13, 2017.*

- None.

APPROVE WARRANTS:

PW # 23-31 \$219,180.80

A motion was moved by Selectman Naves and seconded by Selectman Kastrinelis to approve Warrant PW # 23-31 in the amount of \$219,180.80. Voted: 5-0.

BW# 23-31 \$1,536,320.51

A motion was moved by Selectman Naves and seconded by Selectman Kastrinelis to approve BW# 23-31 \$1,536,320.51. Voted: 5-0.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES:

- None.

APPOINTMENTS OF THE BOARD:

- Review appointment of the COA Director and consider for endorsement:
Shawn Cass was present and addressed the Board. Shawn introduced himself and expressed his excitement in starting the position. The COA voted unanimously to approve Shawn.
A motion was moved by Selectman Kastrinelis and seconded by Selectman Naves to appoint Shawn Cass, COA Director effective January 31, 2023. Voted: 5-0.

DISCUSSION & POSSIBLE VOTE:

- Request for creation of Revolving Account for Town Celebration - Tracy Gilford

Tracy Gilford was present and addressed the Board. The Town will celebrate its 175th anniversary in 2025. Hopefully by starting to fundraise now there will not be a need to ask for money from the town budget. TA Oldham worked with the Town Accountant and determined that a special revenue account would be best to set up – this does not require a Town Meeting vote.

- Review Town Administrator Performance Evaluation Form – Selectman Kastrinelis: Selectman Kastrinelis had submitted paperwork for the Board to review ahead of the meeting. Selectman Kastrinelis explained that this evaluation form came from the Town of Auburn – it can be used as a template. Selectman Naves noted he reviewed the template and felt it is very comprehensive.

A motion was moved by Selectman Kastrinelis and seconded by Selectman Naves to approve the Town Administrator Performance Evaluation Form as is. Voted: 4-0-1. Chair Watson abstained.

- Additional information request for Pentucket Regional School District – Selectman MacDonald
 - Teachers' compensation:
 - Spending on secondary education vs primary education: Selectman MacDonald noted there was a meeting last week with the Superintendent and the School Committees from the three towns. Superintendent Bartholomew provided a presentation. Selectman MacDonald wants full disclosure and transparency and would like the BOS to send a formal request for numbers for each classroom for grades 7-12 so the voters have all the information; how many students in each class, including electives and how much the teachers are paid to teach those classes. There is talk of cutting elementary school teachers and Selectman MacDonald feels primary education is more important than secondary education; you learn to read and then read to learn.

Selectman Kastrinelis noted that the discussion at the meeting was that if there were cuts to be made, the cuts would be made at the secondary level.

Business Manager, Gregory LaBreque was present and addressed the Board. There are a lot of variables when it comes to teachers pay – teachers are required to teach five classes a day and it varies how many students are in each classroom. Selectman MacDonald feels there is money in the school district that is wasted. Greg noted that he has been called a lot of things but being accused of wasting money is not one of them. Even if nothing is changed or added, there will not be enough money. Greg will request the data tomorrow.

Selectman Kastrinelis provided some information that Dr. Bartholomew noted at the meeting. She understood from the meeting that there cannot be any further cuts at the elementary level. Also, noted that the Town budget is really tight as well.

- Official Town Seal vs. Logo - Selectman Watson: Chair Watson would like to see the Town Seal used on all official town business instead of the picture of the gazebo that is being used. TA Oldham noted that the Town Seal is used for all legal documents, minutes, etc. Town Clerk Cuniff noted that some Boards & Committees are using the gazebo on their minutes and agendas but could not confirm which Boards & Committees when questioned.

A motion was moved by Selectman MacDonald and seconded by Selectman Watson to use the Official Seal on all official documents including public notices, minutes, agendas, etc. Voted: 3-0-2. Selectmen Kastrinelis and Naves abstained.

VOTES OF THE BOARD:

- None.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S TIME:

TA Oldham noted the detailed budget book is in the packet and provided an overview - numbers are estimates right now. Phone updates are nearing completion. The Wage & Classification study should be completed on Tuesday. A grant was received from the Massachusetts Office of Disability – will be used to install automatic doors at Town Hall and the Police Station. Field and property use permit is online.

SELECTMEN'S TIME & REPORTS *Time to be used to make statements, propose future agenda items, or congratulate residents/teams on accomplishments; this time should not be used to initiate a discussion.*

Selectman Parenteau: there are screws sticking out of the gazebo where the Christmas decorations were and asked TA Oldham to have the Highway Department remove them.

Selectman Kastrinelis: would like to draft a letter to the State Representative and State Senator regarding the Pentucket Circuit Breaker, Regional Transportation and the 14% increase to the out of district cost.

Selectman Naves: addressed derogatory terms in regards to the political sense can be very divisive and urged caution when speaking especially if we are looking to our state officials for assistance.

OLD OR UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

- None.

OTHER ITEMS NOT REASONABLY ANTICIPATED AT TIME OF POSTING

- Newly elected State Representative Adrienne Ramos was present and addressed the Board to introduce herself.

CORRESPONDENCE

- Board of Selectmen Meeting Minutes December 19, 2022
- Invitation to the Memorial Service for the Four Chaplains from the American Legion

ADJOURNMENT:

A motion was moved by Selectman MacDonald and seconded by Selectman Kastrinelis to adjourn the meeting. Voted: 5-0.

The next regularly scheduled meeting of the Board of Selectmen will be Monday, February 13, 2023, at 6:30PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Katherine T. Ingram

23-31 BILLS WARRANT BREAKDOWN:

Town:	\$	76,596.69
W/S:	\$	19,052.28
Payroll Withholding:	\$	38,899.17

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<i>Health Insurance:</i>	\$
<i>Light Bills:</i>	\$ 335,535.75
<i>Grants & Revolving:</i>	\$ 33,596.70
<i>Chapter 90:</i>	\$
<i>Pentucket Assessment:</i>	\$ 1,032,639.92
<i>Essex Tech Assessment:</i>	\$
<i>Whittier Assessment:</i>	\$
<i>Capital:</i>	\$