

Groveland Board of Selectmen
Meeting Minutes
July 11, 2016

Present: Chair William Dunn, Selectman Ed Watson, Selectman Michael Wood, Selectman William O'Neil

Absent: Selectman Daniel MacDonald

Others Present: Denise Dembkoski (Finance Director)

Recorder: Melanie Rich

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m.

RESIDENT/PUBLIC COMMENTS: None tonight

APPROVAL OF WARRANTS:

Selectman Wood made a motion to approve PW#16-55 in the amount of \$91,360.45; Selectman Watson seconded; all voted in favor; warrant approved.

Selectman Wood made a motion to approve PW#17-01 in the amount of \$76,661.21; Selectman Watson seconded; all voted in favor; warrant approved.

Selectman Wood made a motion to approve DW#17-53A in the amount of \$27,384.57; Selectman Watson seconded; all voted in favor; warrant approved.

Selectman Wood made a motion to approve BW#16-55 in the amount of \$166,537.70; Selectman Watson seconded; all voted in favor; warrant approved.

Selectman Wood made a motion to approve BW#17-00 in the amount of \$748,185.70; Selectman Watson seconded; all voted in favor; warrant approved.

Selectman Wood made a motion to approve BW#17-01 in the amount of \$100,011.96; Selectman Watson seconded; all voted in favor; warrant approved.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE VOTE:

Fire Chief (Fee Schedule & Monthly Update – Negotiations regarding the ladder truck are ongoing; the Chief hopes to have them completed within the next few weeks. He said some people opted to retire and noted that they played an important role and put in many years. Deputy Kastrinelis retired with 26 years of service, Mike Hegh retired with 28 years, Greg Morse retired with 23 years, and Andrew Kastrinelis retired with 5 years of service. He thanked them all. At the request of the Chair, Chief Lay met with every individual prior to July 1st. He said this business is about people and training. As of July 1st he has 32 firefighters (26 firefighters and 6 officers). Of the 26 firefighters, 15 are certified. Lt. York at South Station was promoted to Captain. Appointments: Courtney Panaro (South Station) and Lisa Evans (Central Station). He talked about the MA Fire Chief Credentialing Program. It is a way to recognize Chiefs and Senior Officers who have dedicated commitment over the years. The program is open to all Chiefs and certain size communities' Captains; Groveland met the criteria for the Captain to be credentialed. He and Captain Ruchala made it a personal goal to achieve it. The press release in April recognized Captain Ruchala for his achievement in being credentialed in the state of MA. He asked the board to join him in congratulating him on this significant achievement. The Chief was going to recognize Captain York tonight who will have achieved 25 years in October, but he was not available to attend. Call Responses: In June 2016 there were 57 calls; last year, same month 48 calls. Total incidents in 2016 was 582; the previous year 527. He has been reporting a 10% increase. Training: They have created a lot of opportunity for growth. Three are enrolled for the next class. EMT Training: He has several interested but needs to find the funding. The class has to be paid upfront. Training Hours: This year they had 2,963 training hours as a department; last

year they had 2,471 hours. This fall they will be in the Public Fire and Life Safety Educator Class to be able to teach fire safety and fire education in both the young and the elder markets. Fire Prevention: This year they did 232 fire inspection vs. 127 last year. They had 295 online registrations for open burning permits last year; they do not charge for permits. To run the website for the open burning permit is \$750/year which is a losing proposition. The fees need to be reviewed; the Chief submitted a revised fee schedule with increased fees. Chair Dunn asked for a comparison with a few towns; the Chief will provide that. The community service team from the Sheriff's Department did painting in both fire stations. He thanked the men and women who helped to coordinate the activity. He also thanked Ms. Dembkoski for buying the supplies. The Chair asked if the budget was sufficient for the increased training. The Chief said he might have to come back in the fall because of the training programs, but said they don't allow training that doesn't get them a return on the investment. The Chief also recognized Jeff Dalton who challenged the Firefighter 1 and 2 exams and passed on his own.

Mike Kastrinelis (to discuss his retirement) – Mr. Kastrinelis said retiring from the Fire Department at this point is the last thing he wanted to do or expected to do at this early juncture, but at this point he does not see any other viable option. In mid-June he received an email requesting that he schedule some time to discuss some organizational changes. He then received a subsequent email a day later with a new job description for his position as Deputy Fire Chief. He discovered shortly thereafter, prior to his meeting, that not only had his position been eliminated, but he was also being requested to take a two-level demotion back to the position of Lieutenant. He was blindsided by this decision and information and requested a copy of the presentation that was made to the board on June 13th which he believes was presented as a reorganization plan. He thinks that any reasonable person knows there is much more at play here than meets the eye. Mr. Kastrinelis read a prepared statement and he asked the entire statement be added to the public record.

“July 10, 2016

Dear Honorable Board of Selectmen,

Retiring from the Groveland Fire Department is the last thing that I wanted to do, but I do not see any other option. In mid June I received an email asking me to schedule some time to discuss organizational changes and a subsequent email detailing a new job description for my position as Deputy Chief. I discovered a week later from fellow firefighters, before my meeting, that a new appointment list had eliminated my position as Deputy Fire Chief and I would be demoted two levels to the position of Lieutenant. I was completely “blind-sided” by this information. Recently, I requested a copy of the information presented to the Board of Selectmen on June 13, 2016 as a “reorganization” plan. A reasonable person knows that there is more at play here. It is a sad day in our town when an employee's years of dedicated service are referred to as “entitlement based on seniority”. After 26 years of essentially volunteering my time to the Groveland Fire Department I take exception with this undeserved and offensive characterization.

I worked hard on this town's fire department for over 26 year, while expanding my knowledge through department and countless outside training opportunities. In fact, I was requested to develop a training curriculum and classes for our firefighters that needed to meet new department training standards. I have fulfilled my duties with both honor and integrity as Deputy Chief while ensuring the safety and well being of the firefighters under my command and the people of Groveland. This high standard of duty and commitment has extended over to our surrounding communities, where I have enjoyed a solid reputation for my experience and capabilities in fire ground operations. This is a distinction that I am rightfully proud of.

The decision to eliminate my job and demote me back two levels to Lieutenant was done behind the scenes with no advance warning or discussion. Perhaps most disturbing is that my demotion in this plan was discussed without my knowledge with another officer beforehand. Ultimately, I was formally advised of the elimination of my job and was told that the decision was final and “non-negotiable”. I believe this may

have violated my rights to a hearing under Section 42 of the Strong Chief Law. At the very least I was treated in a manner lacking any sense of professional courtesy. It is shocking to me that our Personnel Bylaw provide no protection for firefighters adversely affected in instances such as these.

It is obvious to me that my diminished leadership role within the department would be difficult and jaded under the new organizational plan. Thus, I made the difficult decision that I will not put myself through the humiliation of accepting such an undeserved and burdensome demotion. A famous politician said it best; “courage is fire, bullying is smoke.” I will not subject myself to a working environment that embraces this type of bullying approach to achieve its’ goals. Rather than penalizing the town or the people of Groveland for the fallout of this organizational shift, I must elect to retire from the department that I love and have faithfully served for over 26 years.

I thank the people of Groveland, the Board of Selectmen and the previous two Fire Chiefs for allowing me the honor and privilege to serve on the department, while rising to the position of Deputy Fire Chief. I also wish to thank my family for supporting me in this endeavor and, more recently, standing by me during these past 3 difficult years. I leave with a heavy heart, deeply saddened that I must make this decision. I wish my fellow firefighters safety and continued success.

Sincerely,
Michael A. Kastrinelis
Deputy Fire Chief (ret)”

Chair Dunn said he cannot say enough and truly thanked him for all his service. After having conversations with Town Counsel, unfortunately the Strong Chief is the Strong Chief, he runs the department the way he wants to run it. He said he was sorry for the way he feels but has no more words. Mr. Kastrinelis said he understands the position he is in. Selectman O’Neil thanked him for his years of dedication to the town. He said the Strong Chief and the Weak Chief is something the town voted on so it is difficult now to undo what has been done. He feels terrible that Mr. Kastrinelis feels he is being forced out. He wished him the best of luck. Selectman Watson said he was a little perplexed and troubled by some of the things that have been said in the past. Obviously he was well trained and qualified or he wouldn’t have been considered for the Chief’s job. He also noted that Mr. Kastrinelis was the interim Chief. He thanked him for his services to the town. Mr. Kastrinelis said he appreciated the sentiments and it makes a bitter pill a little easier to swallow. Selectman Wood thanked him for his service and said it is very sad that he had to retire early for whatever reasons he feels he was slighted; it’s sad that people who are passionate about things are forced to give them up.

School Building Committee Candidate Discussion – The committee for the High School project will consist of three Selectmen (one from each town), three town Finance Directors or Board of Finance members (one from each town), three community members with experience in architecture, engineering or construction (one from each town), three citizens (one from each town), one School Committee member from each town, one High School teacher, and four administrators from the school (Principal, Business Administrator, Director of Facilities, and the Superintendent). Of the 20-member committee, only 17 votes will be cast. The school administrators will only have one vote. It is the job of the Selectmen to identify one member of the board, one community member, one citizen and whether they would like herself or a member of the Finance Committee. A decision is needed by July 27th. They are in planning stages to determine if it will be a renovation project or if it will be a new school. Selectman Watson suggested Ken Jackson who was on the Building Committee at the Bagnall School; he has architectural, engineering, and construction experience. Chair Dunn suggested Kevin Cuniff; Selectman O’Neil suggested Bill Daley. He said Amanda Depalma also expressed interest. Letters of interest for consideration should be forwarded to Ms. Dembkoski or a member of the board before the next meeting. Selectman O’Neil would be interested in serving as the Selectman.

VOTES OF THE BOARD:

Selectman Watson made a motion to approve the June 13, 2016 Minutes; Selectman O’Neil seconded; voted 3-0-1.

OLD BUSINESS (Unfinished Business):

Dan Stewart (Groveland Recreation/Groveland Softball Director) said he has been working at the Pines for nine years. He wanted to thank those involved in getting the fields mowed. He also said the 7th and 8th grade Groveland girls won the Essex County Women’s Softball League championship this year.

He said the irrigation well is broken and the outfielders have dried out and wanted to know when will the water be back on? Ms. Dembkoski said they are waiting for the company to come back and service the well. The irrigation system is fine. A new filter was ordered and is in place, but they have to lower the well again. She has notified Mike Houghton to let him know what was going on.

Mr. Stewart said the utility field and softball fields were supposed to be finished but nobody seems to know when that will be done. The best time to plant grass is at the end of August and September. The Chair said the well has been out to bid several times; the bid came back at a cost more than what they had. Mr. Stewart suggested taking the new softball field, the current utility field and the current softball field and drag from the river off of that corner like they do at the high school. Ms. Dembkoski said Mike Houghton provided her with a quote of \$86K to do that. He asked how much money is left. Ms. Dembkoski said no money had been spent from their portion of CPA funds that were granted other than advertising.

Selectman Watson asked Mr. Stewart what groups use the fields. Mr. Stewart said when the dig out was happening, the softball field was used by Groveland Youth Football, Pentucket Regional High School and Pentucket and Groveland during the summertime for summer ball. Pentucket High School, Pentucket Babe Ruth, Groveland Babe Ruth, and some out-of-town people from Lawrence are using the Babe Ruth Field. They now have Groveland Lacrosse, Pentucket Lacrosse, Groveland Youth Soccer and Football. It is a great facility and well used. Chair Dunn said we had set aside \$200K for maintenance, but that won’t last forever. We need to come up with ideas to raise revenue. Ms. Dembkoski said she has not received any field use permits from anyone other than a Groveland group; if anyone is there regularly that is not a town-affiliated group, please let her know because they have not provided any insurance or documents. Selectman Watson asked if we were charging Pentucket a fee. Mr. Stewart thought they were paying and believes they should pay a fee. He said they do their own grooming and lining of the softball and baseball fields but Ms. Dembkoski said we paid \$4,500 to have the baseball fields taken care of. Mr. Stewart will attend the Recreation Committee meeting and discuss the fees and planting of grass. He will also work more closely with Mr. Houghton.

CORRESPONDENCE TO BE REVIEWED:

1. Minutes from June 27, 2016.
2. Division of Fisheries and Wildlife decision on Firing/Training Range.

FINANCE DIRECTOR’S TIME:

Ms. Dembkoski said there are several bids out. The historic property survey is due August 12th; four highway bids are due on July 20th; the sale of land of Salem and Uptack Streets will be published in the Central Register on Wednesday. Full proposals are due August 22nd.

She received revisions from Doug Mund for the Veto room. He toned it back from the original proposal given the funds that are available. He is recommending minor changes to the room. She spoke with Lt. Credit today because there are still specifications for a fire alarm system. The original specs are out of date because they replaced the fire panel. He will provide new specs and they should be able to start working on the minor renovations. None of the construction that was originally proposed is in the new proposal.

She congratulated Patricia Rogers from the Water Department. June 16th was her 30th anniversary working for the town. The Selectmen personally thanked her for her service to the town.

SELECTMEN'S TIME:

The Chair questioned if we should invite the committees/departments the board previously met with back for project updates. Ms. Dembkoski had updates. The Cemetery has awarded the contract for the arch and stone repair work. They hired an engineer who is collecting the bonds, signed contracts and insurance information and expects to have it on Wednesday; they will then begin the project. They are taking a different approach to the doors and windows at Veasey Park. Mike Dempsey is going to replace some windows because the bids came in significantly higher; they will regroup and see what the next phase is. She received a quote for the Town Clerk documents; the project should be moving forward soon. She has had no communication regarding the library historical archiving; Selectman Watson said the Library Trustees have had discussion on the project. The Washington Park project is winding down. There is a small amount of money left (\$19K); they are waiting on billing one of the invoices they have a problem with. The Chair requested a project report from the Recreation Committee.

Ms. Dembkoski emailed the Chair of the School Committee and made her aware that the board would like to start meeting with them on a more regular basis for updates.

Selectman O'Neil talked about volunteerism and ways to get more people involved. He suggested the board recognize one outstanding citizen per month that goes above and beyond in the area of volunteerism. At the end of the twelve months we could recognize a volunteer of the year. Ms. Dembkoski said the board does have citizen recognitions when they come up. Tracy Gilford previously suggested an employee recognition group. Chair Dunn suggested having coffee and donuts on a Saturday for the volunteers. Volunteer work is much appreciated and a thank you goes a long way. Ms. Dembkoski will work on it.

The next regular meeting will be held Monday, July 25, 2016 at 6:30 p.m.

Selectman Wood made a motion to adjourn; Selectman O'Neil seconded; voted 4-0-0. The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

*** Unanimously Approved on August 8, 2016 ***