

Groveland Board of Selectmen
Meeting Minutes
August 8, 2016

Present: Chair William Dunn, Selectman Ed Watson, Selectman William O'Neil, Selectman Daniel MacDonald, Selectman Michael Wood (remotely)

Absent: None

Others Present: Denise Dembkoski (Finance Director)

Recorder: Melanie Rich

The meeting was called to order at 6:31 p.m. Chair Dunn announced that Selectman Wood will be participating remotely.

RESIDENT/PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Jack Dalton (34 Washington Street) spoke about the passing of his wife and wanted to publicly thank the Police Department, Fire Department and Trinity EMS for their professionalism and how quickly the response time was (under five minutes). He said those that do have a long response time are those who live toward West Newbury or near the Georgetown line. He also thanked the wives of the firefighters; they fed them for at least a month; someone was there to make sure they were all set. He wanted to let the public know what they are getting for their money and said they all care.

APPROVAL OF WARRANTS:

Selectman Wood made a motion to approve PW#17-05 in the amount of \$179,159.98; Selectman Watson seconded; all voted in favor; warrant approved.

Selectman Wood made a motion to approve DW#17-03A in the amount of \$28,982.75; Selectman Watson seconded; all voted in favor; warrant approved.

Selectman Wood made a motion to approve BW#17-04 in the amount of \$23,884.75; Selectman Watson seconded; all voted in favor; warrant approved.

Selectman Wood made a motion to approve BW#17-05 in the amount of \$709,658.89; Selectman Watson seconded; all voted in favor; warrant approved.

APPOINTMENTS:

Selectman Watson made a motion to appoint Ashalond Daniel to fill a vacancy on the Finance Board through June 30, 2019; Selectman Wood seconded; voted 5-0-0.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE VOTE:

Anne Brodie to discuss her FY2016 Reserve Fund Transfer Request – Ms. Brodie clarified what her expense budget included. The shortage is in the election expense. There are three elections in FY16-FY17. She has a budget of \$3,375 and needs \$5,089; leaving her short \$1,714. Ms. Dembkoski said the board wanted an explanation for the request for poll workers which was short \$1,320 for FY16. Ms. Brodie said she is normally budgeted \$3,400 for poll workers; Ms. Dembkoski said the budget request was for \$950 which is what the Finance Board and Selectmen recommended for her last year. Ms. Brodie said putting in \$950 for elections is an error; that's why she is short. Ms. Dembkoski asked if her FY17 budget was going to be short. Chairman Cook said Ms. Brodie commented that the FY17 budget was going to be short. Selectman MacDonald asked how it happened. Ms. Brodie said this is the first year they are on payroll; the poll workers' wages are now coming out of payroll. Ms. Dembkoski said the IRS has determined that poll workers are salaried employees and need to be on the payroll. The Chair said we are moving forward in the right direction.

Fire Department Calls discussion with the Fire Chief and Police Chief – Police Chief Kirmelewicz explained that back in the mid-2000s the then BOS had an issue with how many calls the Fire Department was responding to other than fire calls. He was asked if he would be in charge of dispatch and limit the amount of calls they went on. He told the officers to use their discretion; respond and evaluate, unless it was a serious medical call where the Fire Department would be toned out. They operated that way for several years. Recently they had several meetings with the Fire Chief trying to revamp. The Fire Chief provided a policy and procedure basically saying they want to be toned out for every call. He thought everything had been ironed out until they were asked to come before the board. Chief Dunn asked if there was a state mandate as to what needs to take place on calls. Chief Kirmelewicz said there has to be an emergency response with trained medical personnel. The Chief said they made it clear to the Fire Department that they like having them there, but there are times they are not needed, e.g., minor motor vehicle accident with no personal injuries. He said they have been working together, and for the past few years the calls are EMD'd out which means when a medical call comes in, the dispatcher calls Trinity and starts EMDing the call. There are also a set of codes the dispatcher has to follow. They have a cruiser in route immediately always. There are times when the Fire Department gets called in. Selectman MacDonald said safety first, but if there is a minor fender bender he doesn't think the Fire Department is needed; definitely if there is a medical emergency. The Chief said even if there is an air bag deployment they want the Fire Department there to be evaluated. Trinity would also be called.

Lynn Stanton, Council on Aging Director is asking that the Fire Department not be called on every medical request because older folks (who are the primary recipients of the services provided by the Police and Fire Departments) don't want a group of 4-8 in their home as bystanders. It raises the anxiety level of those who have to make the call and don't want to. She thinks it's a wealth of assistance and not necessary. She has spoken with Deputy Chief Gillen and Chief Lay about it.

Chief Lay said it was the wrong forum to discuss EMT service and delivery. If the board wants to form an EMS Committee, they should because the police and fire are trained at a different level. The Chief was upset and made reference to a comment Selectman MacDonald made about EpiPens. He said it's not a good forum. He said the board was trying to pit him against his colleagues and asked what are they trying to solve. Selectman MacDonald said not everything is money, but we have limited resources. How can we solve budgetary problems if we don't have a dialogue? He apologized for his comments about the EpiPens. We have first responders in the Police Department, why would you send the Fire Department to a 5-10 mph auto accident. Are we going to send 8 guys to every call just to be on the safe side? Is that a policy decision that you endorse? He said the Chief is the Strong Chief and he is not trying to run his department, and not trying to run the Police Department, but he did get elected and told the people he would scrutinize the budget, so he is going to ask questions. Chair Dunn said the BOS is here for checks and balances, not to run their departments; he wants everyone to work together. Chief Lay said he spent 99.95% of his budget. He eliminated a \$5,200 expense for hose testing and didn't hire a vendor. He spent \$1,200 to hire his men to do it so it became a wage item; he was over by \$800 on wages. The last night of hose testing he had 21 men come in and they gave the town 42 man hours of hose testing he didn't bill for but left the money in his expense line. He is \$1,000 over on inspections; he has no control over that. He said if he is guilty of anything, it's trying to do too much with too little. He said he has a document that will not only show he has the lowest budget in Essex county, but has the lowest per household expense for a Fire Department at \$73. The Chair said the money is there; he is not over budget; it just has to be moved. Ms. Demboski explained at the last meeting that when the Chief said he was going to be over, she said he needs to leave the same amount of money in his expense. Because it is a Municipal Budget, you can't take from expense and move to salary; he has the money left in his budget. Town meeting is the only way to move that money. It didn't happen in time for town meeting; he had to request a reserve fund transfer back to his salary line, even though he has the money in his expense line. Selectman MacDonald asked if it was a fair statement that his request didn't have an explanation on it; yes. The board asked him to come in because we couldn't

tell from the verbiage what did or didn't happen. He said we are always the bad guys when we ask questions.

Selectman Watson asked what a firefighter gets paid to do an inspection as opposed to what we get in fees. The Chief said it is a flat fee of \$20 and in return we get \$25. He said he gave the board a fee schedule to increase it to \$50 like other towns. Selectman Watson said every time he comes in here he criticizes the board and comes in with a condescending attitude and attacks the board; he thinks we've had enough of that. The Chief was asked to explain the \$2,501 for fire salary drills; he said they train a lot. Selectman O'Neil said he wants to work with him and thinks salary drills are a finite figure. He would ask that we try to make a better calculation next year. There is a need, and there is what we can provide; there has to be a balancing act between the two; a compromise.

The Chief said there are regulatory reasons why they have to go to certain types of calls. He doesn't think it's fair to the Police Department and the dispatchers for them to find a way to triage. He said the cost to send the Fire Department is not a lot. He said we need to sit down and put the EMS delivery on the table and work on it. He can't come in once a month and in a half hour tell the board what is going on in a changing environment. Selectman O'Neil asked if it was too much for the Chief handle. The Chief said the responsibilities he has assigned, according to this job description, can physically be performed by one person in 20 hours/week. Selectman O'Neil asked if he felt letting the clerk go was the right decision. The Chief said it is not the clerical work.

Selectman Wood said nobody is disputing the training or the need of the department. It is more about the use of what we have for resources and making sure that the Fire Department is there especially for the calls they need to be on. He agrees with Chairman Dunn that he came in with a chip on his shoulder but that is taken care of. He knows that the Chief is passionate about the department and wants to protect his men; it's just about being efficient.

Selectman MacDonald asked if it was fair on our end to ask what we get for our training. Chair Dunn asked if we could get a commitment from them because it is a big investment. Selectman Watson said he attended a graduation where the instructor told the graduates to use their skills and get a full time job in a full time fire department. Captain Ruchala has never heard an instructor make a comment like that; they know we are call volunteer firefighters. There is a call volunteer program and a career recruit program; he explained the difference. The Captain said we only lose people because of their jobs.

Chief Lay thinks if the board wants a deeper understanding of EMS delivery, it should be held in another setting. He had his busiest month ever, 61 calls; \$7,900. He told Ms. Stanton that he would meet with her and talk with Chief Kirmelewicz and his team and his EMS division to develop a common sense practice about how many people respond. He said he has nothing to lose; he is fighting the fight for the men and women he serves at both of the stations. There was discussion about a liaison. Ms. Demboski cautioned the board against it. She said when one member of a board is a liaison to a major department, the other board members may be missing out on information. The Chief does not like to come to the board and do this, but all the members share the same information from him at the same time. She said if the board does have a liaison, they need to be sure to have a policy to make sure it is recorded, and if the liaison is speaking on behalf of the board, you have to have the consensus and majority of the board behind you on those matters because that it can be a sticky situation. The Chief said when he does his monthly reports and there is a data set the board wants him to report on, he would love to have the report card; he is managing the entire department and getting it done, it's all good. He could give a report on it in a clear, concise manner.

Fire Chief Monthly Update – The Chief provide handouts. In July 2016 they went on 61 calls; last July 44. In July 2015, the 44 calls would have cost about \$600 less than that 61 calls this year; he is doing more with the same amount of money. August through July-the current call count is 599; the previous year 525, up 13%. The budget goes up 2.5%, but the call counts go up greater than the 2.5%. Inspection Fees-he

suggested increasing them to what is allowed by the state. The open burning permit is \$10/year. He has an online application to register; he pays \$750/year to maintain it which is an expense; the town gets nothing. The state allows up to a set amount; the town chooses not to collect it. Selectman MacDonald asked why don't we increase it \$5 or \$10. He asked about oil burners. Captain Ruchala said gas appliances fall under the Plumbing Inspector; oil burners fall under the Fire Department. The state has changed the way they do business from the standpoint of building codes. They can only charge for a smoke alarm inspection even though they are required to do a plan review; they can't charge extra for the plan review. Selectman O'Neil asked if the reason to raise the fees was to bring it in line with other towns. The Chief said he has instructions from the Finance Director who told him to look for ways to increase revenues. There are two ways to make money: make a sale or cut costs. The Chief said there is an opportunity; you are leaving money on the table. The money goes into the general fund. Ms. Dembkoski said one of the reasons you look at fees, which should be done every few years, is because the only way we can increase revenue in the town is through taxes or fees. Taxes can only go up by 2.5% without an override, but expenses sometimes rise over 2.5%. We need to find other ways to bring in money to balance the budget. We can't keep cutting because we are salary heavy; we don't have much expense to cut. She has asked departments to continue to look for ways to bring in additional revenue because we don't have any other way to do it. Selectman MacDonald said he listened but he thinks we need to stay within Prop 2 ½. If insurance costs go up maybe the avenue is fee sharing costs. Ms. Dembkoski said if you don't increase fees, then every taxpayer will pay more on their taxes, or you increase the fees for the people who need those services. Without increasing fees enough to cover the cost of departments, it is included in the 2.5% for every taxpayer. Selectman MacDonald said if smoke certificate inspections are \$50 and we are charging \$25 we're not losing. Selectman O'Neil said we are always looking for more sources of revenue, but are we looking at enough cost cutting measures at the same time. The matter was tabled for now.

The Chief gave the board a comparison between like and not so like communities; he referenced the Topsfield 24-7 fire report analysis that was done to see what kind fire coverage they needed. He thinks it is important for the board to review. Groveland has the lowest expenditure per household at \$73; the percent of the total tax levy for Groveland is .011. He said he has the most efficient operation; lowest budget; lowest paid fire chief, etc. Selectman Watson said the spreadsheet is great but Groveland doesn't have a big commercial tax base.

Selectman MacDonald asked the status of the new truck. The Chief said he does not have a contract yet. He is reluctant to sign a contract since FEMA has not finished awarding grants. Trucks were briefly discussed. The Chief said the town needs less fire trucks. How you get there is the question. At some point we have to get rid of the two and get one; that's what needs to be accomplished. Discussions should take place with Capital Improvements, Finance and the Selectmen to figure out the best way to manage it.

July Volunteer of the Month discussion and selection – Three citizens were nominated (Claire Walsh, Joe D'Amore and Steve Merrill). Selectman Watson made a motion to recognize Claire Walsh as the Volunteer of the Month; Selectman Wood seconded; voted 5-0-0.

VOTES OF THE BOARD:

1. Selectman Watson made a motion to approve the July 11, 2016 Minutes; Selectman O'Neil seconded; voted 4-0-1.
2. Remaining Reserve Fund Transfer Requests – Selectman Watson made a motion to approve the transfer from the reserve fund of \$1,320 for unforeseen expenses for the Town Clerk; Selectman O'Neil seconded; voted 5-0-0. Selectman Watson made a motion to approve the transfer from the reserve fund of \$1,458 for Fire Inspector Wages; Selectman O'Neil seconded; voted 5-0-0. Selectman Watson made a motion to approve the transfer from the reserve fund of \$2,501 for Fire Department Salary Drills;

Selectman O’Neil seconded; voted 5-0-0. Selectman Watson made a motion to approve the transfer from the reserve fund of \$909.03 for Firefighter Wages; Selectman O’Neil seconded; voted 5-0-0.

3. Selectman Watson made a motion to approve the State Primary Election Warrant; Selectman O’Neil seconded; voted 5-0-0.
4. Selectman Watson made a motion to approve a One-Day Liquor License for a wedding at Veasey Park on September 10, 2016 between the hours of 3PM and 11PM, Detail Officer required; Selectman MacDonald seconded; voted 5-0-0.
5. Selectman Watson made a motion to accept the resignation of William Cook from the Finance Board; Selectman MacDonald seconded; voted 5-0-0. Mr. Cook was thanked for his nine years on the board and will be missed.
6. Selectman Watson made a motion to accept the resignation of Mark McCabe from the Zoning Board of Appeals; Selectman O’Neil seconded; voted 5-0-0.

OLD BUSINESS (Unfinished Business):

Selectman O’Neil asked for an update on term limits. Ms. Dembkoski said very few had set term limits in their bylaws; many of them reorganize on an annual basis or rotate the chair. Two so far said they have an actual term limit in their bylaw. She is still compiling information; she received at least 150 responses. She asked those that are mandatory if they have had a problem with someone not stepping up or someone not being available. They said yes, but in those instances they let it go for another year until someone was available; most said it works quite well. She will have more information for the next meeting.

CORRESPONDENCE TO BE REVIEWED:

1. Minutes from July 25, 2016.
2. Minutes from Special Meeting on July 20, 2016.
3. Minutes from Executive Session on July 26, 2016.
4. Letter from Groveland Housing Authority regarding a request for bus service from the MVRTA.
Selectman Watson said the request sounds reasonable and asked that it be put on the next agenda. He asked if a letter could be written on behalf of the BOS indicating we would be in favor, and possibly get a letter of support from the Council on Aging.

Selectmen Wood’s remote connection disconnected at 8:42 p.m.

FINANCE DIRECTOR’S TIME:

Selectman Watson asked for an update on the rubbish contract. Ms. Dembkoski said Groveland is not currently affected by any changes with the trash vendor. Hiltz has not declared bankruptcy. About a month ago they reached out to several of their municipalities, Groveland not being one of them, and said due to financial constraints on their end they need to sever several contracts. Their intention is to keep Groveland, Marblehead, Manchester by the Sea and Gloucester as their customers. She met with their financial overseer and discussed it. Town Counsel was brought into the mix to make sure we would not have any issues on our end. Shortly thereafter, Gloucester decided to terminate the contract. As of last week, there is concern whether Hiltz can sustain their services. An update was due today, but she has not heard anything. The Town Manager at Manchester by the Sea has not heard either. A conference call is scheduled for tomorrow. She has spoken with other trash contractors in the event they have to go in that direction. DEP is working with the municipalities.

SELECTMEN’S TIME:

Selectman MacDonald talked about the audit management report. There is language in it about what’s not getting done, performance issues, qualifications and experience, and may require executive session. Ms. Dembkoski suggested before having an executive session to speak with our auditor. She said that with the work that was done over the last year and some additional training, she thinks he will see that a lot of those issues are cleared up. It has been a work in progress; it was ignored for years. She said the cash is now reconciled, the journal entries are remarkably better than years past; the auditors have recognized that things have improved. She is hopeful we will see a big improvement on the material weaknesses after some training and additional time with the auditors reflecting on some of our policies and practices.

Selectman MacDonald read that the treasurers cash balances and cash balance maintained on the general ledger by the town accountant did not occur and were not provided with the final year end reconciliation of cash until well after the time of our scheduled audit field work. Ms. Dembkoski wanted to clarify that the treasurers cash is reconciled monthly; the general ledger is reconciled monthly. The two were not reconciled together. She maintains the cash accounts; they are reconciled to the penny every month, and the town accountant reconciles the general ledger; she is now reconciling the two together; that is what was missing. Selectman MacDonald would like more timely information. Ms. Dembkoski said she would not mind giving an estimate, but so many times an estimate is used to say this is what we are getting, but the DOR could make adjustments. Mike Nelligan (Powers & Sullivan) will come before the board in September to go over the report.

Selectman MacDonald asked if there would be grass at the Bagnall in the fall; probably not because we would not want them running on it if we plant it. Ms. Dembkoski said the irrigation system has to go out to bid; the trees have been ordered, the mulch is ready; the temporary fence is up, and the shed is in. She reached out to the company, they have not come out because the ideal situation is to treat it after it rains and we haven’t had enough rain. The products don’t usually take when there is such a severe drought, but he will treat it any way. Chair Dunn will ask the Fire Department if they can wet it down.

Ms. Dembkoski said the Governor is signing the Municipal Modernization Bill tomorrow which changes the procurement requirements. Currently it is \$10K for public works projects; it is going up to \$50K. They are loosening the restrictions.

The next regular meeting will be held Monday, August 22, 2016 at 6:30 p.m.

Selectman Watson made a motion to adjourn; Selectman MacDonald seconded; voted 4-0-0. The meeting was adjourned at 9:18 p.m.

*** Unanimously Approved on September 6, 2016 ***