



**OFFICE OF THE
Advisory Board
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March 11, 2021

Present: Jim Frey, Jake Lewon, Harold Simmons, Leo Tometich; Town Administrator Brian Palaia; Select Board member Kieran Meehan; GDRSC members Marlena Gilbert (Chair), Rafael Glod, Lacey McCabe.

AB virtual meeting called to order at 6:04 p.m. via Zoom Meeting ID: 829 2530 0295

Recommend candidate for the open Advisory Board position

1. Advisory Board consensus to recommend Michelle Bobkov for Select Board appointment to the AB.
2. Brian will notify the candidates.
3. Next steps are to ask the Select Board to appoint Michelle at their next meeting.

Set FY2022 (July 1, 2021 to June 30th, 2022) budget public hearing date

Given that the annual town meeting date has been set for Saturday May 15th, 2021, the AB needs to hold a public hearing to present the FY22 budget.

1. The AB FY22 budget public hearing will be held at 6:15 PM on Thursday April 29th.

Preliminary FY22 budget review

1. Continued discussion about how to close the gap between revenue and expenses for FY22, and options for future years.
2. Marlena noted that the overall district school budget is staying below their five year projections, and that the current GDRSD budget is needed to maintain student services and thus student achievement. The GDRSC has allocated a significant portion of their E&D balance toward this FY22 school budget, and it will be very difficult to get the school committee to agree to additional budget cuts that they and the school administration think will significantly reduce student achievement.
3. Some discussion about the municipal and school district growth rates, and property tax rate comparison for Groton and Dunstable.
 - 3.1. Inflation, budget growth and Proposition 2½ constraints have often resulted in a Proposition 2½ override to maintain services. A Proposition 2½ override needs consideration, but not likely part of this FY22 budget, so we decided to move on through the FY22 budget proposal from Brian.
4. The Groton annual town meeting is scheduled for Saturday May 1st.
5. It would be best to have the final FY22 budget finalized when the ATM publication goes to be printed rather than having budget change handouts at the annual town meeting. Final FY22 budget numbers in the ATM publication, at the AB FY22 budget public hearing, and at the annual town meeting, will provide a consistent message and facilitate a more informed discussion.
6. **Backing up from our May 15th ATM date results in a March 31st deadline for ATM warrant articles.**
7. Excluded debt that were paid off in FY21 (retired).
 - 7.1. A loan for renovations at the Town Hall.
 - 7.2. The loan for the purchase of the property at 91 River Street.
 - 7.3. The approximately \$415,000 expense reduction between FY21 and FY22 by paying off this excluded debt could be used for new capital expenses without increasing the town property tax rate. Exclusive of the 2½ percent annual increase.
8. This debt exclusion discussion is relevant because there are two relatively urgent medium sized capital expenses that will otherwise likely to be squeezed out of the FY22 budget.
 - 8.1. Highway department end loader - primarily used for loading snow & ice treatment into dispensing trucks and snow clean up on our roadways. As you may imagine with equipment that handles road

treatment sand and salt, there is a significant rust problem on this end loader. Especially around the base of the operator cab. From what we understand, repair costs would be more than the current value of the end loader. End loader replacement cost with trade-in: Approximately \$155,000

- 8.2. Fire Rescue truck replacement - this is the “workhorse” of the fire department as it is typically the first truck to go out and goes out on almost every call. It is smaller than the main fire engine or tanker truck, thus easier to drive and can respond with fewer firefighters. It contains a variety of rescue equipment like the “jaws of life”, wedge blocks, etc. The existing rescue truck used to have a water tank on it that was replaced by the current tool and equipment boxes. There is some rusting of these storage compartments. The new rescue truck is planned to have an extended cab with room for four firefighters instead of two. One important aspect of this is to provide more climate controlled space while out on calls. Additional functionality of the new rescue truck will include a portable air tank filling system so firefighter air tanks can be filled at the scene, plus improved organization and storage of first responder and firefighting equipment. Fire rescue truck cost: Approximately \$190,000

8.3. If passed, likely finance with 3 - 5 year loans.

8.4. Should these be two separate debt exclusion articles or combined into one? Answer: Discuss later with the Select Board.

9. Jim made a motion to propose FY22 debt exclusion ATM warrant articles for the end loader and fire rescue truck. 2nd - Jake.

9.1. Vote: For: Harold, Jake, Jim, Leo Against:

9.2. Motion passed.

10. If these debt exclusions pass there might be a little free-cash available for some smaller capital expenditures.

10.1. Fire department AED replacement. Estimated cost: \$20,000

10.2. Parking lot paving. Estimated cost: \$65,000

10.3. Some discussion about Library roof repairs, but no current need assessment or cost estimate.

Motion to adjourn - Jim, 2nd - Jake. Vote: Unanimous to adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 8:06 p.m.