



# Town of Griswold

Board of Finance  
Special Meeting  
February 23, 2021  
7:00 PM

Griswold Middle School Gym/Via Teleconference  
MINUTES



**1. Roll Call/Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM**

**Board of Finance Members Present:**

Scott Davis – Chairman  
Alex Grzelak– Vice Chairman  
Steve Mikutel  
Valerie Grills  
Amanda Brycki  
Gail Rooke-Norman  
Dan Webster

**Also Present:**

Erik Christensen, Finance Director  
Jeannette Bell, Recording Secretary  
Rob Parrette, Chairman Senior Building Committee  
Dave Fritz, PAC Group  
Todd Babbitt, First Selectman  
Rich Grabowski, Second Selectman  
Tina Falck, Senior Center Director  
Heather Somers, State Senator via Zoom

26 Other People

**2. New Business**

**a. Discussion and possible action on potential cost overruns for the new senior center construction project.**

S. Davis began the meeting by stating there is a deficit of approximately \$975,000 in order to finish the senior center project. He stated it was troubling to hear this as the Board of Finance was not informed of this until recently and was actually assured we wouldn't be in bad shape as far as cost overruns. In November 2018 the Board of Finance was told the project would not exceed \$7.2 million. In January 2019 they were told approximate cost would be \$7.5 million with grant money possible and will be pursued on all levels. In April 2019 they were approved bonding and in May 2019 the Selectmen sent it to referendum. The taxpayers then approved it at \$7.5 million. Additionally, the contract with the engineers was signed based on 60% drawings which S. Davis stated the true cost was hidden from the public and he is angry as a board member and a taxpayer. His question was how much in grants was applied for as well as how much was received.

R. Parette stated the bidding went out with 60% of the contract drawings to which PAC Group was awarded the contract at \$7.5 million. The drawings were completed a year later

with a GMP estimate of \$8.3 million. That is when the cost overrun was noticed, and the building committee started looking for additional funding money before asking the town for more money. D. Fritz stated the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Finance approved the contracted price.

Senator Somers stated that the project is 7/8 completed and it would be tragic if the facility is not able to be used. She stated she is looking at all available funding however not much is being passed and the COVID situation has hindered some possibilities. She stated there was the possibility of receiving \$1 million in grant money however that money would have to be put to use by the end of May. She stated she will be doing everything in her power to try and help the town and secure some funding.

D. Webster stated he would have never pushed the project forward had the Board of Finance known it was only 60% completed drawings. He was concerned as well with the cost savings that was proposed by PAC Group of \$555,000 in order to reduce the cost overruns but were rejected and not taken advantage of. All the proposed cost saving items were rejected, and he wanted to know by whom and why. He is concerned the taxpayers voted yes on a new senior center at a cost of \$7.5 million which is now over \$9 million. He also wanted to make sure this issue would not impact other bonding projects due to the shortfall with the senior center and feels this needs to go before the taxpayers. S. Mikutel stated he is very disappointed with the entire project as the board was presented with a cost of \$7.5 million. A. Grzelak stated he feels the Board of Finance and the taxpayers were lied to and is disappointed with the project as well and wants to know why the cost savings were not taken advantage and feels we built the Taj Mahal for the senior center.

S. Davis also voiced his concern at not being able to go the referendum for the taxpayers to have their say. E. Christensen stated that according to the Town Attorney, the Governors orders are still in place therefore this cannot go to taxpayers until that order is lifted. He did note a few options available:

1. Do an additional appropriation.
2. Go through the bonding process to add the shortfall which will most likely cost us more in fees.
3. Include the shortfall in the budget process for next year which would increase the mil rate.
4. Vote to appropriate and pay back the unassigned fund balance over the next five years which would have to go through the ordinance process.

There was the question of whether we can do a mail in referendum so the voice of the taxpayers could be heard. There were suggestions to realign the deferred cost list in order to reduce the cost overruns. The Board decided to revisit this matter at the next Special Meeting scheduled for Thursday, March 4, 2021 at 7:00PM.

### 3. Adjournment

**MOTION:** D. Webster made a **motion** that was seconded by V. Grills to adjourn the meeting at 9:13PM. All in favor; **motion carried.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Jeannette Bell  
Recording Secretary