

Groton Water Commission
Regular Meeting of the
Board of Water Commissioners
Tuesday, December 5th, 2024
Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Minutes

Present are Vice Chairman Greg Fishbone, Member James Gmeiner, Superintendent Tom Orcutt, Business Manager Lauren Crory.

Mr. Fishbone called the meeting to order at 10:03am. He stated that the meeting is being recorded and everyone introduced themselves.

FY 2026 Budget Discussion

Mrs. Crory reviewed the revised budget documents which removed the water rate increase and reduced the new hire to a 3-months overlap (this brought salaries down about \$9,000). Per the Department Head's budget kickoff meeting, Mrs. Crory was advised to remove COLA from the budget due. Since this year is contract negotiations it will be handled later through transfer using the capital fund line. Mrs. Crory estimated that this will be about \$16,000 for salary and wages. The Town Accountant gave us the actual Intergovernmental number which was about \$20,000 less than the estimate. Overall expenses went down about \$30,000. Mr. Gmeiner asked if the capital fund is budgeted to put into reserves. Mrs. Crory said it is put in the budget to ideally build up reserves if it is not used elsewhere. Mrs. Crory recalled that there was an issue with the capital fund name last year and she will check on it.

Mrs. Crory said that the Whitney Well upgrades debt for FY26 was increased by about \$10,000 to avoid a payment in the following year. Mr. Fishbone asked if it would have been \$39,000 in the following year and Mrs. Crory said it would be if we did not accept the increase this year. Mr. Gmeiner asked if all the money for the treatment plant and the new well have been bonded and Mrs. Crory said the final piece will be bonded in June for the engineering funds.

Mrs. Crory said the revenue spreadsheet was the same except the transfer line item was adjusted down by about \$20,000 due to the decrease in overall expenses. Mr. Orcutt asked to explain the transfer line item. Mrs. Crory said this is basically for the new Superintendent overlap which is a one-time issue. Mr. Orcutt noted that he will be given a vacation buyout when he retires and Mr. Gmeiner asked if you would put it on the salary spreadsheet. Mr. Orcutt said it can be transferred at the spring town meeting and do not put it in the budget since we are not sure of exact timing and amounts.

Mrs. Crory reviewed the Enterprise Fund which is at about \$272,000 after this year's fall town meeting transfer of \$50,000 for the new truck. There will need to be a spring town meeting transfer which could be up to \$144,000 since we are not getting the first Groton Farms payment as previously planned. Mr. Orcutt asked about the \$150,000 Construction Income number in FY26. Mrs. Crory said that was the connection fee and parts and labor that was given in the original draft but she will go back and look at the notes to see what it was made up of. The \$150,000 Construction Income is not including the Groton Farms project. This needs to be discussed more at the rate hearing as reserve funds could potentially get very low.

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Mr. Fishbone stated he would not be available for the rate hearing the following week because he would be traveling. The public hearing was already posted so Mr. Orcutt asked if he could call into the hearing so that they could open and close it and extend the following week.

Mrs. Crory presented a paperless billing option from our software company. Mrs. Crory said 85% of the billing software's users are utilizing this. Customers will be able to pay through this module also. The cost would be \$825 as a onetime fee and \$560 annually. She said we send about 8000 bills a year which is about \$5500 in postage so the \$560 annual will probably we saved on printing postage expenses. Mr. Fishbone asked if it would modernize the system and Mrs. Crory thinks I would. Mr. Gmeiner is not sure it will pay for itself but offers convenience. Mr. Gmeiner believes there is not a fee to use this module and Mrs. Crory believes that is correct. Mr. Orcutt agrees it provides convenience for customers. Mr. Gmeiner made a motion to approve the paperless billing module, Mr. Fishbone seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

Other Business

Next Meeting is the public hearing on December 10th, 2024

Mr. Fishbone made a motion to adjourn at 10:36am, Mr. Gmeiner seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lauren Crory