

Groton Water Commission
Regular Meeting of the
Board of Water Commissioners
Tuesday, October 15th, 2024
Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Minutes

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

Mr. McCaffrey called the meeting to order at 7:34pm. He stated that the meeting is being recorded and everyone introduced themselves.

Operational Updates (Superintendent): Baddacook, Summer Consumption, Water Levels

Mr. Orcutt sent the precipitation graphs and they remain unchanged from a few weeks ago. Last month was our biggest September pumping month on record (since Mr. Orcutt has been here). Irrigation systems are beginning to shut down and we are seeing 200K-300K gallons per day pumpage.

Mr. Orcutt said the technicians will be taking two PFAS samples later this month, one will be optional and one required. Mr. Orcutt said DEP approves using the blended option for PFAS sampling. We are using this method to blend Whitney Well III with the other sources.

They had to replace a check valve at Whitney Treatment Plant and are getting filters back into the highest performance with the mixing pipe to avoid calcification. Mr. McCaffrey asked if Baddacook is fine now and Mr. Orcutt said they are doing the 4-log certification as required and are waiting on the final from DEP. The technicians have figured out how to monitor the start up to avoid an unacceptable chlorine residual. If the residual is below the required level, the plant will shut down. They manually start the plant in the morning and put it on a time of day use and run it for 12-14 hours. At 14 hours, it shuts down and they must manually start it the next day. They are currently doing this 6 days a week and maybe will go up to 7 days a week. Mr. Orcutt said they have not had any total coliform hits so are getting a constant flow that has been helping.

Mr. McCaffrey asked if Baddacook was out of commission during this busy summer and Mr. Orcutt said it was offline since July 1st. Mr. Orcutt said they were only using Whitney I, II and III (not using III to maximum potential). Whitney Well I and II levels maintained around 4 ft during the high pumping times and was able to rebound. Mr. McCaffrey summarized that in one of the biggest pumping summers Whitney I and II with the help of III was able to manage it without Baddacook and with limited conservation restrictions (level I). Mr. Orcutt said we never tripped the permitted pumpage even with Baddacook offline.

Capital Projects (500 Main St, GDRHS Water Main)

Mr. Orcutt said 500 Main St will be done in about 3-4 weeks and the pipes will be tested to get the water service started on Taylor St and get the water main on Main St under the rail trail running. The contractor, Five Oaks construction is doing great.

GDRHS bids were opened last week and the engineers are vetting the two low bidders under the \$10 million threshold (about \$1.5 million less than estimate). Mr. McCaffrey asked if the low bidders are anyone we have worked with and Mr. Orcutt said no but he is familiar with one.

Fiscal Year 2024 Budget Review

Mrs. Crory said the FY24 certified free cash came in as estimated at \$407,000. She is carrying about \$50,000 of this to the FY26 Manganese Fund. Mr. McCaffrey asked when the worst debt year was and Mrs. Crory confirmed it is this year FY25. Old debt will begin to fall off in FY26.

Mrs. Crory asked the Board to discuss adding extra Salary in the FY26 budget to enable Mr. Orcutt's replacement to work alongside him for a period of time. Mr. Fishbone, Mr. Gmeiner, Mr. McCaffrey and Mrs. Crory were in favor of doing this due to Mr. Orcutt's wealth of knowledge. Mr. Orcutt suggested 3 months and Mr. Gmeiner requested to start with 4 months in the budget draft.

Mrs. Crory said she and Mr. Orcutt are working on determining the excess utilities cost at the new Treatment Plant to ensure adequate budgeting in FY26. After a rough look Mrs. Crory is estimating a \$40,000 - \$50,000 increase spread out among electricity, chemicals, and propane. Mr. McCaffrey asked if the solar panels will help the electric and Mr. Orcutt said it will help the normal electric needs of the treatment plant but not the pumping itself.

Mrs. Crory said the rates budget for this year was increased by about \$90,000 and we have brought in an extra \$100,000 so far so should meet our rate budget. We may not exceed it as much as we hoped. A rate increase might be in order once we plug in the extra salary and utility costs.

Mrs. Crory can present a draft budget at the next meeting.

Other Business

Mrs. Crory said a customer asked if we will be removing the Manganese Health Advisory from our website and the board agreed it was safe to do so.

Next Meeting is October 29th, 2024.

Mr. Gmeiner made a motion to approve the minutes of August 13th as amended, Mr. Fishbone seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Gmeiner made a motion to approve the minutes of September 17th as written, Mr. Fishbone seconded, and Mr. McCaffrey abstained.

Mr. Gmeiner made a motion to adjourn at 8:04pm, Mr. Gmeiner seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lauren Crory

October 15th, 2024