

Groton Water Commission
Regular Meeting of the
Board of Water Commissioners
Tuesday, January 14th, 2024
Virtual Meeting using Zoom

Minutes

Present are Chairman Jack McCaffrey, Vice Chairman Greg Fishbone, Member James Gmeiner, Superintendent Tom Orcutt, Business Manager Lauren Crory, and Ginger Villmar from the Sustainability Committee.

Mr. McCaffrey called the meeting to order at 7:32pm. He stated that we are being recorded and everyone introduced themselves.

Operational Updates

Mr. Orcutt said the water main extension work is on week two and they have starting laying pipe today and will continue laying pipe for the rest of week. They will be working from 9am-6pm. Mr. Gmeiner said water was spraying all over the place around 5:00 today. Mr. Orcutt said they were probably getting air out of the pipe. Mr. McCaffrey asked who is watching over this project and Mr. Orcutt is and he meets is and meets with them frequently. Environmental Partners has an inspector on site the whole day. Mr. McCaffrey asked if there is a call network and Mr. Orcutt said there is information on the website and contact information. We do get calls in the office.

Mr. McCaffrey asked if we are using the Groton Herald and Mr. Orcutt will wait for them to check in. He knows Mr. Haddad is updating the Selectboard. Mr. McCaffrey would like us to reach out to the Groton Herald. Mr. Gmeiner said there is a substantial information package on the town website with the work schedule and detour maps and what to expect. Mr. Fishbone said that is a great resource.

Mr. Orcutt said the SCADA system is being updated. We will be shutting down the system for two weeks to get that online. This will take place the last week of January into February.

Mr. Orcutt said they will be making changes to check valve and mixer for chemicals at the Whitney Well Treatment plant tomorrow and it will be offline until night time.

Mr. McCaffrey asked if we have any restrictions at Baddacook in terms of the E. Coli hit last year. Mr. Orcutt said we are waiting for final 4-log approval from DEP but are currently running a 7am -7pm schedule at a target range. It has been working great and no issues with the raw water.

Mr. Orcutt will send draw down and precipitation levels. Things are pretty consistent in terms of water levels during pumping and non-pumping periods.

Mr. McCaffrey asked about the longevity of the filters at Whitney. Mr. Orcutt will be working with Environmental Partners on this to get it corrected. Mr. Orcutt is most concerned with getting this problem resolved by the spring. Mr. Orcutt thinks the filter issue is more of a

manufacturer issue and the filters are on warranty. He confirmed that it is not an operational issue.

Fiscal Year 2025 Budget Discussion

Mrs. Crory explained that the collection of a \$144,000 connection fee for the Groton Farms project in this year's budget has been delayed and will need to be addressed. The Board voted to extend the deficit fee for another six months due to this construction income deficit. Any remaining deficit will need to be transferred from the reserve fund at the Spring Town Meeting. Mr. Orcutt will put a placeholder article in the warrant and we will fill in the amount at a later date.

Mrs. Crory believes that we should have no problem meeting our rate budget this year but does not forecast any large overage to offset the deficit. She said the overall expense budget looks ok but a few line items are running high and she will discuss with Mr. Orcutt. Expenses will be monitored closely throughout the remainder of the fiscal year.

Other Business

Mr. Orcutt is working on water meter testing and leak detection grant. Mr. Orcutt working with Mr. Ohl at CEI for a \$50,000 grant.

Ms. Vollmar is a sustainability committee and wanted more information on conservation efforts and decision making. Mr. Orcutt said the water usage is three times as much in summer time. Mr. McCaffrey said every year the first level of restrictions is put on every year for odd/even water days with time restrictions. Mr. Orcutt monitors the aquifers and decides if more actions need to be taken. Mr. McCaffrey said there have been worrisome times in severe droughts. Mr. McCaffrey noted that we will be adding the High School and Groton Farms to our system so will need to be even more careful but this was one reason Whitney Well III was built. Mr. Orcutt said the withdrawal permitted numbers have been the same for 20 years and the daily rate of withdrawal is fixed and we have not withdrawn more than those limits. Ms. Vollmar said one point the Sustainability Committee has discussed was that people should not be watering lawns and she asked if we try to educate people to not water their lawns since it is a precious resource. Mr. McCaffrey said it is important to schools for their sports. Mr. Orcutt added that if they turn off their spigots and put in their own well and pump to their desire, we have no control. Mr. Orcutt said some higher end properties are putting in their own irrigation wells with no control from the Water Department or Board of Health. Mr. Orcutt said they encourage some larger developments with large fields to put in irrigation wells to not draw from our aquifer. Mr. McCaffrey would not be averse to putting some educational information somewhere. Mr. Fishbone thinks its important to talk about resilience and that heavy floods and droughts are being more prevalent and it makes operations and planning very hard. Looking a year ahead we won't know if it will be much drier or much wetter. The lack of snow impacts these problems as well.

Mr. Gmeiner made a motion to approve the minutes of November 12th, 2025 as amended, Mr. Fishbone seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Gmeiner made a motion to approve the minutes of December 5th, 2025 as written, Mr. Fishbone seconded, and the Mr. McCaffrey abstained.

Next Meeting January 28th, 2025

Mr. McCaffrey made a motion to adjourn at 8:16pm, Mr. Gmeiner seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lauren Crory