

Groton Water Commission
Regular Meeting
Of the
Board of Water Commissioners
Tuesday, November 28th, 2017
2nd Floor Lunch Room

Minutes

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

Mr. McCaffrey called the meeting to order at 7:30pm.

Water Conservation Program – Well Levels & Pumping Levels

Mr. Orcutt said not much has changed and that November had average or above average precipitation. Mr. McCaffrey asked when we should inquire about expanding the new Whitney Well electric rate program to other locations. Mr. Orcutt said March would be the best time to ask once Whitney 1 and 2 are running simultaneously.

Badacock Pond Update

Mr. McCaffrey said Year 1 is completed and was good. Solitude will provide a report for Year 1 in December. The Badacock pond committee will meet to look into any possible better cost alternatives for years 2 and 3. Mr. Harper, the head of Groton Lakes Association, or Mr. Orcutt will lead the meeting and will get input from other lake residents. Mr. McCaffrey said that Mr. Luening has given the CPC the application for the upcoming year but the name on the application should be changed to read GPAC.

Whitney Pond Well Construction

Mr. Orcutt said there is a progress meeting next week with all parties to discuss what has been ordered, what materials should be coming, what can be prepared etc. Mr. Fishbone asked what the current bottlenecks in the schedule could be. Mr. Orcutt replied that electrical and motor control panels need to be completed. Mr. Fishbone asked if the parts we need are custom or off the shelf and Mr. Orcutt said it is a combination of both.

Capital Projects

There was nothing new to report.

On-Call Policy

Mr. Orcutt proposed an overtime call-back policy which would require technicians to respond to overtime calls within 30 minutes. This would mean that the on-call person must be able to get to the jobsite within 30 minutes after receiving a call from dispatch. Mr. McCaffrey asked if the town of Groton offers any relocation cost benefit if a candidate lived too far away to abide by this policy. Mr. Orcutt does not think the town offers this. Mr. McCaffrey agrees with the policy, but also wants to keep an open mind if the right candidate applies to this position and lives more than 30 minutes away by possibly offering an incentive to move closer to Groton.

Mr. McCaffrey made a motion to approve the overtime call-back policy, Mr. Gmeiner seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Orcutt said the technician job opening has been submitted to the Lowell Sun, Groton Herald, and Mass Waterworks. Mr. McCaffrey asked if the board will have a say in choosing the new employee for the technician position and Mr. Orcutt confirmed that the board will be involved in the selection process.

Connection Fees

Mr. Orcutt wanted to discuss the current fees in the code. Mr. Orcutt also thinks we should review the rates and fees every December and the commissioners agreed. Mr. Fishbone asked when the code would be updated if we make any changes and Mr. Orcutt believes changes are made in the spring. Mr. Fishbone asked if there is something in the code that says the fees may not be up to date. Mr. Gmeiner stated his opinion that the code is not required by Massachusetts law and is used more as an informational outline of the department.

While reviewing fees, Mr. Gmeiner asked if backflow testing is required and Mr. Orcutt said it is required and Stephen Knox performs these tests. Mr. Fishbone asked the purpose and Mr. Orcutt explained that the sprinkler system is tested to make sure it won't back up into the building. Mr. Gmeiner asked how long a backflow test takes and Mr. Orcutt said it takes 10-15 minutes. Mr. McCaffrey suggested doing activity based costing to determine if the \$100 fee covers the cost of the test and administrative cost.

Mr. Orcutt may suggest we add an after-hours or overtime rate to some of the fees such as on/off or meter freeze-up fees. Mr. Gmeiner asked who is turning their water on/off and Mr. Orcutt explained that people who go down south for winters ask us to turn their water off while they are gone.

The commissioners reviewed the current connection fees and Mr. McCaffrey asked if connection fees include any labor or materials. Mr. Orcutt said it does not and explained that the connection fee is essentially a fee to enter the system which will contribute to cost of maintaining and improving the system in the future or paying off debt and does not offset operating costs.

In regards to increasing the 1" Connection Fee, Mr. McCaffrey asked if the increased income would outweigh the chance of people being discouraged to connect to town water. Mr. Gmeiner said that a \$500 increase would add up to provide a useful income, especially with larger developments. Mr. Gmeiner thought we would possibly need to have another hearing to amend any of the regulations. Mr. Orcutt will check with our lawyer. Mr. McCaffrey asked if any other departments use a financial hardship policy and Mr. Orcutt thinks GELD may and could inquire with other water departments.

Mr. Orcutt discussed the need for a 1¼" connection for homes that are more than 500 feet off the road since a 1" pipe may not provide adequate flow.

Mr. Orcutt said we haven't changed hydrant charges and currently take in about \$50,000 for private hydrants and sprinklers fees. Mr. Orcutt said he has AWWA principles and formulas to calculate these fees and he will review.

Other Business

Mr. McCaffrey made a motion to approve the minutes of November 14th as amended, Mr. Fishbone seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

Invoices for Expense Warrant 12 were signed.

Mr. McCaffrey made a motion to adjourn at 9:15pm, Mr. Gmeiner seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lauren Crory
Business Manager