

Groton Water Commission  
Regular Meeting  
Of the  
Board of Water Commissioners  
Tuesday, December 11th, 2018  
2<sup>nd</sup> 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 7:03pm.

Water Conservation Program – Well Levels & Pumping Levels

Mr. Orcutt presented well levels and precipitation charts and noted that there was lots of rain in November. Mr. McCaffrey wants to look at current energy use with the new upgrades to see if the wells are more efficient now.

Baddacook Pond Update

Mr. Orcutt went to a meeting with the majority of Baddacook Pond residents. Some residents feel the funds are not being distributed equally among the pond. The residents voted to use funds on the entire pond rather than shores only, which may need to be self-funded. There were concerns that if Mr. Luening does not continue to be part of the sub-committee, new volunteers would be needed.

Budget – FY Budget 2020 continuation

Mr. Orcutt told the board that he recently opted out of health insurance through the Town of Groton which will have financial implications on our budget. He spoke with Mr. Haddad and will keep our fiscal year 2020 budget the same, just in case he decided to join the insurance program again.

Water, Rates, and Fees Hearing – December 11, 2018

Mr. Gmeiner read the notice of Public Hearing; In accordance with Chapter 40, section 42-A to 42-I of the Massachusetts General Laws and the Town of Groton Usage Fee Regulations, the Board of Groton Water commissioners will hold a Public Hearing, Tuesday, December 11<sup>th</sup>, 2018 at 7:30pm in the first floor meeting room of the Town Hall, 173 Main St., Groton, MA in order to review and adjust accordingly the water rates, fees, and miscellaneous charges per the Town of Groton Water regulations.

Mrs. Crory prepared data from Fiscal Year 2016 which would be considered an average year for water pumping. Mr. McCaffrey noticed that pumpage appeared to be higher many years ago and Mr. Orcutt believes one reason could be that many playing fields have their own wells now. This means that the pumpage does not proportionally reflect a growing customer base. Mr. Fishbone noted that people may be more conservative in recent years also.

The board reviewed the 20 year analysis of pumping. Mr. McCaffrey said that 160 million gallons looked like a good pumping year and about 135 million gallons looked like a bad pumping year. Mr. McCaffrey also noted that in most bad years we have broken even and in a good year we have exceeded our revenue budget. Our current budget is set at pumping about 153 million gallons which we would assume would bring in revenue of about \$966,000.

Mr. Orcutt explained to the board that we have some additional expenses in the works for the next few years including our new truck, our meter program, buying out Mr. Brackett's unused vacation time, and more which may need to come out of our reserve fund. He also noted that construction income has been very good for a few years but there are no more large scale projects on the horizon. Mr. Orcutt also mentioned that our \$400,000 annual debt payments will be finished in 5-6 years.

The board reviewed the data from Fiscal Year 2016 and looked at what the extra income would have been if the rates were 5% and 10% more.

After the discussion, Mr. McCaffrey decided that he would like to leave the rates alone this year. Mr. Orcutt would be in favor of a 5% increase across the board or leaving tier 1 alone and increasing the others by 5%. Mr. Fishbone would like to leave the rates alone this year. Mr. Gmeiner would like to leave the rates alone this year but thinks we will need to increase them in an upcoming year.

Mr. Fishbone asked how much longer we will be inquiring the meter replacement expense and Mr. Orcutt believes we are about 1/3 done and estimates the rest will take another couple of years.

Mr. Orcutt asked the board if they would like to create a manual meter read fee for customers that require us to make a special stop at their house to take a visual read. Some of these meters are in pits and cannot transmit reads any other way without big projects to move the meter. Other customers do not want a meter that transmits information due to medical reasons. The board discussed the customers that have meters in pits and came to the conclusion that it would take up the water department's time to help move the meters in pits so we are not enforcing it and therefore do not want to punish these customers. They decided that if people request a manual read for personal or medical reasons in the future, we will charge them a service fee of \$25 per quarter.

No public was present.

Mr. Gmeiner made a motion to close the public hearing.

Mr. Gmeiner made a motion to keep rates and fees the same except for charging any new manual reads a service charge of \$25 per quarter, Mr. McCaffrey seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

#### Engineering Qualification Statements

Mr. Orcutt will be inviting in the three engineering firms on January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2018 at 6:00pm. Mr. Orcutt distributed some questions that the board can ask the firms.

#### Other Business

Mr. Orcutt explained that we have \$58,000 remaining from our Whitney Well Project debt. We can only use \$50,000 to pay down the note, so he hopes to spend another \$8,000. Mr. Orcutt presented a sketch of Baddacook Well and showed the board where he would like to put new the new storage boxes. They are

currently in the well and he would like to get them farther away from the well head and will need storage space for a new gate box vacuum we will be purchasing.

Mr. Orcutt, along with some neighboring town's water departments and Massachusetts Waterworks Association, will be having a meeting with Nashoba Technical School to discuss an education program for future water operators.

Mr. Orcutt told the board that we received software through our rate study grant that will help us track our electricity costs. Water and Sewer Department Assistant, Mrs. Livezey, will keep this information updated.

Mr. Gmeiner asked if we can see how many people view our Groton Water Department website and Mrs. Crory will look into it.

Mr. Fishbone made a motion to approve the minutes of November 27<sup>th</sup>, 2018, as amended, Mr. Gmeiner seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

Invoices for Expense Warrant 13 were signed.

Next Meetings: December 18<sup>th</sup>

Mr. Orcutt and Ms. Crory left the meeting at 8:40pm

Per Mr. McCaffrey, he made a motion to adjourn at 9:00pm, Mr. Gmeiner seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lauren Crory  
Business Manager

\*\* SEE SUPPLEMENTAL MINUTES

Jim Gmeiner's notes of meetings 11/28 – 12/5

During the budget meeting Mark asked about how we would be handling the 'on-call' once we go from three techs to two. Tom tossed that off to me. I just said we were looking at that. After the meeting I asked Tom about that, which led to our discussions on his pay. I told him the re-grading of his position to grade 15 looked like it; that is, roughly 3% with no other bumps/side agree as per my last discussion with Melisa.

Tom believes that increasing his grade re-opens the Union contract and at that time we could make a request to do a license incentive, like we had done for the water techs. Tom said he is looking for the same deal the techs got which was \$1,500.00 for the grade 3 water distribution or water treatment license, and \$2,500.00 for a Grade 4 water distribution or water treatment license.

We then discussed the "On Call issue" which Tom had brought up to us before. He has been receiving feedback from the two water techs about going back to the every other week On Call from the techs once George leaves. Tom might be willing to do On Call once a month and would expect to receive the same pay for that as the two techs get (roughly \$600.00/per weekend). We would not incur any new expense only a shifting of expense (although there might be some long-range implications for Tom's retirement).

So: 1. Tom is going to speak with the water techs to see just how serious they are about getting some relief from the every other week On Call duty. 2. I will speak with Mark to see if our options are doable, that is re-grade, license incentive, and on call pay for Water Superintendent.

I met with Mark Haddad 11/30. He thinks he misunderstood Melisa's question; yes we could elect to give a stipend if he had licenses above and beyond job requirements and Mark doesn't think that would require a re-opening of the union agreement. And Mark said we can do the re-grading without re-opening the Union Agreement. The on-call issue would require a re-opening of the union agreement and Mark wasn't too sure that the Union would like a supervisor doing Union work, but if the two techs were OK with it, it might fly.

On 12/5 Tom reported that Steve had spoken with his union regarding the "On Call" issue. The water Techs would like some relief from the every other weekend requirement. And the union indicated they would be OK with the Water Super performing the 'on call' duties once a month.

Jim Gmeiner

## Supplemental Minutes

Minutes December 11, 2018

Mr. Orcutt and Ms. Crory left the meeting.

Remaining: Mr. McCaffrey, Mr. Fishbone, Mr. Gmeiner

After Mr. Orcutt and Ms. Crory left the meeting the commissioners reviewed Mr. Gmeiner's notes of conversations with the Town Manager, the Human Resources Director and Mr. Orcutt. The Commissioners also reviewed a Salary Survey and summary prepared by Mr. Orcutt. After a brief discussion it was moved by Mr. McCaffrey, that the Commission adopt the new Job Description for the Water Superintendent and ask that the Water Superintendent position be re-graded to Grade 15 with a resulting salary increase of 3% above that of the current Grade 14 salary; that the Water Superintendent be eligible to receive a yearly stipend of \$1,500.00 for possessing either a Grade 3 Water Distribution License or Grade 3 Water Treatment License, and upon obtaining either a Grade 4 Water Distribution License or Grade 4 Water Treatment License, the yearly stipend be increased to \$2,500.00; and that the Water Superintendent be eligible to fill a once a month weekend "On Call" shift to be compensated for such shift at the same compensation as is paid to a Senior Water Technician II. Motion was seconded by Mr. Fishbone and was passed unanimously.