

Groton Water Commission
Regular Meeting
Of the
Board of Water Commissioners
Tuesday, November 27th, 2018
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 7:32pm.

Water Conservation Program – Well Levels & Pumping Levels

Mr. Orcutt reported that the well levels are good and we will be switching to Whitney Well II and Baddacook Well this winter. We will clean the wells in March. The water levels at the ponds and lakes are up from all of the rain we have had. Mr. Fishbone asked if there is a lag between high water levels and our well levels and Mr. Orcutt said it takes about 90 days to see the effects in our wells.

Baddacook Pond Update

Mr. Orcutt has a meeting with Mr. Strickland, Mr. Luening and other Baddacook Pond neighbors next week to discuss the plans for future weed harvesting and hydro raking. Mr. Gmeiner asked when the CPC funds will be available and Mr. Orcutt believes they already are.

Budget – FY Budget 2020 continuation

Mr. Orcutt said that he sent the town manager, Mr. Haddad, our FY2020 Budget along with a 1-5 year capital plan and a 6-10 year capital plan per his request.

Mr. McCaffrey asked about the extra funds from the Whitney Well project (which is around \$30,000) and Mr. Orcutt said we could pay down the note or could repurpose the funds at the next town meeting. Mr. Orcutt also said we will be receiving an \$80,000 grant this year that we can use for anything. He recommends paying down the note and Mr. Gmeiner and Mr. Fishbone agreed.

Mr. Gmeiner made a motion to use the remaining balance of the \$400,000.00 borrowed for the Whitney Well project to pay down the short term note, Mr. Fishbone seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Orcutt will ask the town accountant how we will access the \$80,000.00 grant. He is not sure if we will have to vote it out of the enterprise fund at town meeting or if it will be held in a separate account.

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

Mr. Orcutt explained our current situation regarding our rates and fees. In fiscal year 2017 we increased irrigation rates and added a 4th tier to water and irrigation rates. The service fee was also increased from \$10.00 to \$13.00 per quarter. The increase in processing fees has produced about a \$25,000 increase in rates revenue. It is challenging to see the effects of the irrigation rate increase since we have not had a dry summer with a lot of pumping.

Ms. Crory used fiscal year 2018 data to show how the revenue would have been impacted, if rates were 5% higher or 10% higher. For domestic water rates, a 5% increase in rates would have resulted in approximately \$36,000 additional revenue. A 10% increase in rates would have resulted in about \$72,000 additional revenue.

Irrigation usage is much lower than domestic usage so the effects are much smaller. If irrigation rates were up 5% in fiscal year 2018 the revenue would have increased \$5,000 and if the rates were up 10%, the revenue would have increased \$10,000. Irrigation usage can also fluctuate more depending on the type of year so it is difficult to gage the impact of rate changes.

The impact on an average family would have been about \$12-\$24 per year on the domestic bill and about \$5-\$28 per year on the irrigation bill with the 5%-10% rate increase in fiscal year 2018.

Since fiscal year 2018 did not show high irrigation pumpage, the board would like to see the same rate study done for fiscal year 2016 which had higher irrigation pumpage. Ms. Crory will prepare this for the next meeting.

Engineering Qualification Statements

Mr. Orcutt had given the commissioners submissions from three engineering firms to review prior to the meeting.

Mr. McCaffrey spoke about the Rhode Island based company, BETA. He was concerned that there was no information regarding a full well replacement on their past projects. He also mentioned that some of the project leaders appeared to be part-time which was concerning. He did feel they had great mechanical skills and mechanical projects completed in the past. He did not see much in terms of water quality or chemistry. Mr. Orcutt said they use a sub-consultant for well replacements.

Mr. McCaffrey said that Comprehensive Environmental Inc. appears to have more experience with water quality and chemicals but less with mechanical projects. Mr. Orcutt said that Comprehensive Environmental is more familiar with our system and has worked on our rate study and toured our facilities.

Mr. Orcutt asked if we want to pursue interviewing our current engineering firm, Wright Pierce. The board agreed that although attention from them has declined, they would interview them again.

The board will interview all three firms in January and will ask various questions regarding experience with well replacement projects etc.

Other Business

Mr. Gmeiner made a motion to approve the minutes of November 13th, 2018, as amended, Mr. McCaffrey seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Fishbone made a motion to approve the minutes of October 23rd, as amended, Mr. Gmeiner seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Invoices for Expense Warrant 12 were signed.

Next Meetings: December 11th and December 18th

Mr. Orcutt and Ms. Crory left the meeting at 8:50pm

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