

Groton Water Commission
Regular Meeting
Of the
Board of Water Commissioners
Monday, September 17th, 2018
2nd Floor Lunch Room

Minutes

Present are Chairman Jack McCaffrey, Vice Chairman Greg Fishbone, Member James Gmeiner, Superintendent Thomas Orcutt, Business Manager Lauren Crory, and Mr. McCaffrey called the meeting to order at 7:30pm.

Staffing of the Water Operations

Mr. Orcutt informed the board that one of the department's current water technicians, Stephen Straker, would be leaving to pursue a plumbing job. Mr. Orcutt wants to talk to the board about how to find and retain a new water technician. He explained that other towns offer better compensation packages and that two employees covering all weekends can be exhausting.

Mr. McCaffrey asked about the recent contract negotiations which provided increased rates among other details. Mr. Orcutt acknowledged that this happened but still does not think it will outweigh the need to be on call every other weekend.

Mr. Orcutt suggested they look at ways to increase base pay. One way to do this would be to change the grades of Senior Water Technician I and II to allow more room for the base rate to grow.

Mr. Gmeiner asked how they could get around the issue of being on-call every other weekend. The board brainstormed ideas such as having Mr. Orcutt fill in (with extra pay) or hiring a third technician once Mr. Brackett retires. Mr. Gmeiner also asked what other towns do for overtime and Mr. Orcutt said that some towns pay 8 hours/day for on-call weekends.

Mr. McCaffrey stated that they have already received a couple thousand dollars in increases due to the new union contracts so asked what we should do at this point. Mr. Orcutt asked the board to consider regrading the positions. Mr. McCaffrey asked if a regrade would have a domino effect to other departments or positions and Mr. Orcutt said that it could but that the water technician position is very different than others. Mr. McCaffrey asked if everyone was ok with Mr. Orcutt requesting the regrading. Mr. Fishbone agrees and sees a need for the regrade as the position has evolved over time and our needs may be different compared to many years ago when the grades were determined.

Mr. McCaffrey pointed out that there are only so many licensed water technicians in the community so that at some point, a community is going to need to train a new person to take on the position. Otherwise, communities will continue to steal from each other and be forced to compete. Mr. McCaffrey recapped that there are four issues; regrading needed, we should look at other communities to see their

rate structure and benefits; the market for water technicians has declined, and the whole DPW grading structure is inadequate.

Mr. Gmeiner asked what other benefits could be increased or added to the position and Mr. Orcutt thinks that we could offer a better stipend for technicians obtaining and maintaining licenses. We don't have time to hire an unqualified person right now. Other towns don't offer a stipend or a smaller stipend so this may be a valuable benefit.

Mr. McCaffrey asked if we can find out what surrounding towns' hourly rates are. He also asked if the re-grading will make enough of a difference and Mr. Orcutt thinks it will. Mr. Gmeiner thinks it is a good place to start.

Other Business

Mr. Orcutt told the board that the 2020 Capital Plan includes the purchase of a new truck but he would like to buy the truck in this fiscal year because our older truck is failing. He expects the truck to cost \$30K-\$35K.

Mr. McCaffrey made a motion to adjourn at 8:36pm, Mr. Gmeiner seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lauren Crory
Business Manager