

Groton Water Commission
Regular Meeting
Of the
Board of Water Commissioners
Tuesday, July 9th, 2019
2nd Floor Lunch Room

Minutes

Present are Chairman Jack McCaffrey, Vice Chairman Greg Fishbone, Member James Gmeiner, Superintendent Thomas Orcutt, Business Manager Lauren Crory, Michael Ohl and Dave Roman of Comprehensive Environmental.

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

Whitney Well – Mike Ohl

Mr. Ohl presented additional options to treat the manganese level.

The first additional option was to send the water from Whitney Well to Baddacook for treatment. The cost would range from \$2.6 million up to \$10 million depending on having a water main only, a water treatment plant, or both. Mr. McCaffrey asked why it would cost so much and Mr. Ohl said there is not enough room in Baddacook Well currently, so it would need to be expanded or be a separate structure. Mr. McCaffrey asked if this option would be quicker than building a treatment plant at Whitney Wells and Mr. Ohl and Mr. Orcutt think it could be. Mr. Ohl also added that it is not ideal to expand Baddacook because of the geography there.

Mr. Ohl went on to explain the next option which would be getting water supply from West Groton. This would have a high O&M cost because we would be essentially buying the water from them at a pre-determined rate. Mr. Ohl said pumping at a high rate in West Groton could cause issues in their water supply such as higher manganese levels.

An alternative to this option would be building our own separate piping in West Groton. This would be a higher up-front cost but lower annual O&M charges as we would not be using their entire system.

Mr. McCaffrey asked if we would be allowed to use West Groton's water supply and Mr. Gmeiner said the issue would be that we would also be using the Nashua Basin. Mr. Orcutt said there will be many questionable things by choosing this route. Mr. Gmeiner thinks it is worth asking West Groton their thoughts. Mr. Fishbone agrees, only if we would seriously consider this option. Mr. McCaffrey asked the board to list their top three choices. Mr. Orcutt liked the treatment plant at Whitney Well or getting water from West Groton – through their pipes. Mr. Fishbone asked if we would be taking Whitney offline if we used West Groton and the board said yes. Mr. McCaffrey along with others would not like to see all of the past work at Whitney Well go to waste and wondered if it's even worth asking West Groton. Mr. Ohl added that the West Groton option would cause permitting obstacles also. Mr. Gmeiner likes the new treatment option or sending the Whitney Well water to Baddacook. He hopes the actual

costs would be lower than what was estimated. Mr. Fishbone also liked those options. Mr. McCaffrey is in favor of sending Whitney Well Water to Baddacook as a first choice and the new treatment plan at Whitney well as a second choice. He sees benefits of having all treatment under one roof. Mr. Orcutt agreed that operationally, it would be nice to have it all under one roof. Mr. Ohl noted that Mass DEP may require a third operator if there was another treatment plant at Whitney Well. The next meeting will be July 23rd and Mr. McCaffrey would like to discuss the capital costs, rough delivery schedule, operational considerations, effects on capacity. Mr. Ohl said that at the next meeting we will try to make a decision so that he will have adequate time to get a draft to Mass DEP.

Mr. McCaffrey asked if irrigation could be serviced by separate wells and Mr. Ohl and Mr. Orcutt said no it would be too difficult to change everything now. Mr. Orcutt asked if Mass DEP would ever lower manganese required levels and Mr. Ohl does not think they would.

Mr. Fishbone asked if we could have filters available to customers who are concerned about the manganese levels in the meantime. Mr. Orcutt said it wouldn't be a good idea because some people would not change them or handle them correctly leading to more problems. Mrs. Crory suggested putting together some information for any concerned customers such as what filters they could buy etc. Mr. Orcutt asked Mr. Ohl to provide a map of manganese levels in other towns. Mr. Gmeiner asked if other states have the same limit and Mr. Ohl said it is a health advisory in other state but Massachusetts is taking it more seriously. Mr. McCaffrey thinks that most customers in Groton will agree this is an important issue to address and will hopefully support a rate change to fund this treatment.

Water Conservation Program – Well Levels & Pumping

Mr. Orcutt presented the graphs for June and said we were pumping around 14 hours per day. Mr. McCaffrey asked what our best pumping is usually at and Mr. Orcutt said 18 hours per day. Mr. McCaffrey asked how much pumping it would take to be worrisome and Mr. Orcutt thinks over 20 million gallons in a month would be tough but doesn't expect that to happen. Mr. McCaffrey said we have pumped 25 million gallons in July before and asked if we would be capable. Mr. Orcutt said it would be tough and the aquifer may not have the output. Mr. Fishbone asked if this was due to past droughts and Mr. Orcutt said it can take a few years to bounce back from a drought. Mr. Orcutt explained that by pumping 14-18 hours per day consistently, there is less time to refill, which is where we could run into a problem.

Whitney Pond Access

Mr. Orcutt spoke with Mr. Delaney regarding using the land on Valley Rd to create a ramp for the weed harvester. Mr. Delaney said it is not a good idea because opens up the opportunity for other people, boats, etc to use the ramp. Mr. Gmeiner recapped the two problems which are trying to use area 400ft beyond the wellhead at Whitney Well, which Mr. Fishbone added that we don't have authorization to allow, and secondly Mr. Orcutt said that putting the ramp on public land comes with other issues.

4th Quarter Financials

Mrs. Crory briefly went over end of year financials and told the board we should be putting back about \$50,000 from our budget to our Enterprise Fund. In addition to this, we will be putting back about \$90,000 which is made up of leftover energy grant and leftover Whitney Well project funds. This would

total about \$140,000 and we had transferred out \$150,000 so the Enterprise fund balance shouldn't change much. Mrs. Crory will wait for the town accountant to close out the year to bring a final financial review.

Other Business

Mr. Orcutt told the board the he plans to hire recent retiree, Mr. Brackett, for inspection work. Mr. McCaffrey asked how this will work and Mr. Orcutt said that we will pay him \$36.00 / hour and bill out at \$65.00 / hour, as needed, for various projects. Mr. McCaffrey asked how this will affect the budget and Mr. Orcutt said it will be handled as an expense not on payroll.

Mr. Orcutt also explained that Townsend Water Department has asked him to help out temporarily while their superintendent is on leave. Mr. Gmeiner asked how long this would last and Mr. Orcutt is estimating about 12 weeks and said he can cap it. Mr. McCaffrey agrees to this as long as it does not exceed 12 weeks. Mr. Orcutt said we could review in 8 weeks. Mr. Fishbone and Mr. Gmeiner are in agreement and would like to review in 8 weeks.

Invoices for Expense Warrant 2 were signed.

Next Meetings: July 23rd, 2019, August 13th, 2019

Mr. McCaffrey made a motion to adjourn at 9:20pm, Mr. Fishbone seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lauren Crory
Business Manager