

Groton Water Commission
Regular Meeting
Of the
Board of Water Commissioners
Tuesday, October 22nd, 2019
Assessor's Meeting Room – 1st Floor
Minutes

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

Mr. McCaffrey called the meeting to order at 7:32pm.

Open Public Discussion – Manganese

Mr. McCaffrey said the meeting with the Selectboard was not long enough to adequately explain our manganese treatment planning process. He wants to make sure we have a solid plan in place as well as a financial plan before our next discussion with them.

Mr. Gmeiner thinks we should discuss our financial plans with the Finance Committee. Mr. Orcutt said that we will want to prepare to ask for approval of a \$2.5 Million loan at spring town meeting. This would allow us to work on the accelerated plan and begin getting piping from Whitney Pond to Baddacook Well which will allow us to treat a large amount of the water from Baddacook.

The board discussed adding a \$20.00 quarterly capital charge to all non-irrigation accounts. Mr. Fishbone thinks it would be easier for customers to accept the charge if there was an endpoint. Mr. Gmeiner said that we couldn't promise a date that it will be reduced because plans are always changing and ongoing issues may arise. Mr. Fishbone also doesn't fully support that smaller users will be having the same quarterly charge as larger users. Mr. Orcutt explained that schools are one of our biggest users and they have many different meters and accounts so will get charged multiple fees. Mr. Orcutt also explained the capital charge fee is the best route because you know you will get it. With rate increases, it depends on a wet or dry year and you could come in short and not make your debt payment. Mr. Orcutt did say that if the capital charge becomes excessive and is building up in our reserve fund, we could discuss at a rate hearing and reduce or remove the fee. Mr. Gmeiner agrees that the capital fee should be solely for the debt paydown and we should not get comfortable with that income or spend it other places.

Mr. Orcutt presented an excel spreadsheet with forecasted debt payments and forecasted budgets. Mr. Orcutt estimated five years of wages, salaries and expenses, along with one scenario of new debt payments. Mr. Orcutt explained that expenses will increase next year because we need to set aside more funds for cleaning the cistern. Mr. Fishbone asked why it is necessary and Mr. Orcutt said that it is for acid treatment and iron and manganese build up. Mr. McCaffrey said that our

\$75,000 expense for meters should not last forever and Mr. Orcutt agreed it will go down but there will always be meter costs. He also added that some meter purchases are then billed out to customers but come back in as income, so its only always a true expense.

Mr. McCaffrey put together a summary regarding the manganese treatment efforts and Mr. Fishbone will review and finalize before we post to the website.

Water Conservation Program – Well Levels & Pumping Levels

Mr. Orcutt said they were finishing up intensive water main flushing. Levels have remained good and even appear slightly increased although we are flushing. Mr. Fishbone would like the water main flushing schedule to be posted on the Groton Water Facebook page.

Whitney Pond – Manganese Planning

See previous agenda item Open Public Discussion – Manganese.

Water Rates and Fees

Mr. McCaffrey said if expenses are slowly going up and income is not, we could be in trouble. Mr. Gmeiner prefers to increase rates gradually each year rather than larger increases every few years. Mr. Orcutt said we can look at just adjusting irrigation rates. Mr. Gmeiner would like to look at domestic rates also. Mr. Fishbone would like to look at keeping tier 1 rates level. Mrs. Crory will prepare this information for the rate hearing.

Mr. McCaffrey does not think we should institute the capital charge until we have the consent order from DEP.

Mr. McCaffrey and Mr. Gmeiner asked Mrs. Crory to bring in 4-5 years of cash reserves (Enterprise Fund) history.

Other Business

Mr. Orcutt will submit our rate hearing information to the Groton Herald.

PFAS testing will be done on October 28th and we should receive the results a few weeks later. Mr. McCaffrey asked what DEP will do if the results are above the advised limit. Mr. Orcutt said they would schedule another meeting at their office to discuss. Mr. Fishbone said we would also want to take immediate action to treat the PFAS if needed.

Mr. Orcutt said that Quinten Shea of DPW or a local plumber will be installing a manganese filtration system on the kitchen sink at town hall. We will then notify families with children under the age of 1, and daycare centers, that they are welcome to come fill up containers of filtered water to use for formula.

Mr. Orcutt will revise our manganese sampling spreadsheet and submit to DEP for approval to put on our website. Mr. Fishbone asked how the testing is being done and Mr. Orcutt said that it is benchtop testing which is typically a bit higher than a lab.

Invoices for Expense Warrant 10 were signed.

Next Meetings: November 12th and November 19th (Rate Hearing)

Mr. Gmeiner made a motion to approve the minutes of October 10th, 2019, as amended, Mr. Fishbone seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. McCaffrey made a motion to approve the minutes of September 24th, 2019, as amended, Mr. Fishbone seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. McCaffrey made a motion to adjourn at 9:01pm, Mr. Gmeiner seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lauren Crory
Business Manager