

Groton Water Commission
Regular Meeting
Of the
Board of Water Commissioners
Tuesday, December 8th, 2020
Virtual Meeting using Zoom

Minutes

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

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

Manganese – Concept Plan, Finances, Consent Order, Milestones -#2, Select Board overview, OPM reviews

Tom – we need to start to move forward on the OPM- should decide this month or January – can't do a whole lot because we have to get the money at the Spring meeting.

Greg- looked at file, would be helpful to go over proposed criteria, what is important and why it is important

Jim- had trouble fitting things in to what Tom sent

Jim - Put it on screen

Tom – there was criteria on the RFQ that went out (page 3) – spelled out how we would rank the firms (past projects, key staff, cost estimating, scheduling, management information systems, specific on what BOWC and Town manager would want them to submit. Project approach should be in each RFQ ... and other items. Very specific criteria. Can change point system if we want to. Discretionary points were added to Tom's spreadsheet.

Jim – is it easier to go through them based on relevant experience rather than all of the detailed criteria

Tom – yes, we can do it any way we want but should have a document

Greg – rating as 1,2,3 better than how we would apportion 15 points

Tom – lets do 1,3,5 point system, can revise and send out to work on for next week.

Jack – best 1, middle 3, and worst 5

Greg – multiple can have the same score

Jack – so not ranking one to another just overall – wants to make sure we all don't do it differently

Jim- Greg's way will give headache.

Jack – will rank as 1,3,5 but if Jim doesn't like can do 1,3,5 for each one. Ranking rather than merit score. Tom wants 1,3,5 to create space

Jim – Weston & Sampson Kristin Berger – does she work for them or is she consultant?

Tom – sub consultant with Weston & Sampson - used to be with CEI

Jack – worried about digging all of these items out of what they have sent to us – will be 50% of overall grade. Likes 2 & 4. Suggest 3 be 30 and add 10 to 2 & 4. 2&4 25 and #3 will be 30.

Tom – it doesn't need to be next week – by first meeting in January – next week rate hearing

Tom – took manganese samples today and will update website when we get the results back

Whitney Well – Expansion and Capacity Update

Tom - No updates – Mike is working to get the well driller out there – Sullivan Drilling

Jack – should we have any communication on why the drillers are out there?

Tom – we can put something on the website

Longley Road Project Update

Jack – there is a letter from Michael

Tom - Michael took data from hydrant flow test – plugged data into our hydraulic model – checked field data to hydraulic model – and came out very similar. Min req of 100 gal per min at 20 psi is borderline of questionable. Talking about replacing a pipe on Hollis St – 1000 ft – probably \$75,000. BOWC would need to discuss. Engineer sent over letter with 7-8 bullets they want Michael to provide a response on / how he made calculations etc. 20 PSI minimum operating level.

Jack – so we are on the edge of that spec – the question is if that 20 PSI is good enough. Who is standing in the way of this project?

Tom – Developer received letter – wrote back asking how we arrived at our response. If this is too costly, they will look into an onsite well instead. Jack – what's feeling on that – Tom – would love to get the infrastructure on that section of town, customers, improved fire protection. We get there by looking at cost negotiations / offsite improvements – room to negotiate on cost share.

Jack – how much does the new \$75,000 pipe help us?

Tom – no we already have a line – would improve it – but not much to show for it –

Jim – Potential raw land development would be Nod Rd area

Jack – could BOWC shut this down if we choose?

Tom – couldn't shut down – but if we can't supply safely with water, we have the right to say no – if that 20 PSI isn't enough.

Jim – Mike's letter says less than 20 PSI

Tom – lets get answers from Michael back to engineer and see what they say

Jack – sounds like it is in our interest to move forward

Jim – doesn't see benefit to rate payers – they are paying Mike so let's see how his response plays out – wetlands are mapped out on Longley

Jack – can Jim and Tom keep this thing moving along. Tom yes intends to do that.

Greg – Mike's letter is straight forward – will see what they come back with- ball in their court we can't make a decision right now

FY 2022 Budget – Review 2nd Draft

No third employee budget in FY22 budget. Cover letter to Town Manager does mention our need for the third operator. Finance Committee wants us to hire a licensed staff person to save time – they will know what they are doing when the new well comes online. Wants us to wait until FY23. Can start to discuss over the summer / could put in fall town meeting if we need to. Won't include this spring.

Jim – the whole team seemed pretty adamant that we wait at least FY22 to hire third operator. Bad experiences hiring police and fire to train and then leaving.

Greg – depends on if we will be able to get someone licensed and ready to go

Jack – yes much more police fire... water is limited commodity – less interested in fin com and more interested in technician opinion who want licensed operator. Can leave alone for FY22.

Water Rates and Fees Discussion – Public Hearing Preparation

Jim would like to look at rate income this year so far. He would also like to see what NEBS brought in when they were at normal usage (prior to COVID-19).

Jack would like to see a breakdown of customers – based on what tiers they hit.

Greg asked if we will be looking at fees and Mr. Orcutt said we thoroughly went through them in recent years so may not need to.

Jack said that a negative impact on our budget and rates will be adding a third operator but positive will be more usage and income once the Whitney Well Expansion is completed. Mr. Orcutt agreed that it will be ideal if the extra water sales from the Whitney Well expansion will cover most of the debt payment.

Superintendent's Report: Water Levels and Pumping, Water Conservation Program

Water Level report – things have stabilized. Using a lot of water from Baddacook. Reduced Whitney – seeing leveling off in graphics – slight increase in non-pumping period. Water consumption – right on mark for water sales at the same time last year. LC income should reflect that.

Jack – asked if water ban is done?

Tom - voted for end on Sept 30th end date for the ban. Could vote something new to start May 1st if we need to

Jack – suggests we take the ban off

Jack – motion to remove the water ban for the moment, Greg second, all in favor

Greg – can we update website to reflect that?

Jack – running pumps lower these days?

Tom – yes cut back on Whitney significantly. Baddacook doing very well maintaining and filling tank overnight. Whitney may not run for days at a time.

Jack – how did flushing go?

Tom – went well – they did an excellent job – sections needed it and sections didn't need it. Hope to do a full system flush in the spring. No complaints.

Jack – do we need Westford water?

Tom – when we clean Whitney wells in March.

Jack – COVID-19 vaccine – any info about essential workers?

Tom – we have curtailed home visits currently

Manganese Open Forum: continuation of discussion

Tom – Jim sent around town schedule with Jane – she is busy until Mid- January but will try to get on.

Other Business: Bills, Minutes, etc.

Mr. McCaffrey made a motion to approve the minutes of November 9th as amended, Mr. Fishbone seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. McCaffrey made a motion to approve the minutes of November 17th as amended, Mr. Fishbone seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. McCaffrey made a motion to adjourn at 8:47pm, Mr. Gmeiner seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

December 8th, 2020

Lauren Crory