



Chair/James Gmeiner  
Vice Chair/Thomas Orcutt  
Clerk/Michael Bouchard

**Town of Groton Sewer Department**

173 Main Street  
Groton MA 01450

**Date:** March 24th, 2021

**Time:** 2:00 P.M.

**Location:** Virtual Meeting Using Zoom

**Members Virtually Present:** Chair/James Gmeiner  
Clerk/Michael Bouchard

**Not Virtually Present:** Vice Chair/Thomas Orcutt

**Others Virtually Present:** Ann Livezey/Water & Sewer Assistant, Lauren Crory/Business Manager and  
Judy Anderson,

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The Meeting was called to order by James Gmeiner at 2:00 P.M.

**Rate Hearing to Consider amending the wastewater rates and fees for the Center Sewer District and the Four Corners Sewer District**

*Notice of Public Hearing*

In accordance with Chapter 83 of the Massachusetts General Laws, and the Town of Groton Usage Fee Regulations, the Groton Sewer Commission will hold a Public Hearing, Wednesday, March 24th, 2021 at 2:00 P.M. via Virtual Meeting using Zoom Pursuant to the Governor's Executive Order to consider amending the wastewater rates and fees for the Center Sewer District and the Four Corners Sewer District. Please see Meeting posted at <https://www.grotonma.gov/events/> for details regarding Zoom meeting information.

Ms. Crory told the BOSC that for the Center Sewer Budget we broke out the capital charge of \$15/per qtr. for a total of \$35K and we projected \$644k rates with a 5% increase, so she feels we have to do at least a 5% increase in rates to balance the budget. For the GDRHS we projected a 15% increase in the budget and we also took out a reserve transfer of \$35K to balance the budget.

Mr. Bouchard asked if the 5% rate increase was added into the \$644K showing for rates, so the \$653K number would really be \$680K. Mr. Bouchard asked if the actuals in FY20 were higher than what was anticipated and Ms. Crory replied "yes". Ms. Crory thinks that number for FY20 was not accurate and she

has in her notes we brought in \$710K. Mr. Bouchard asked if that was Rates and Ms. Crory replied “yes” including the high school so that number would be correct that would leave us with the \$680K.

Mr. Bouchard is the \$644K what we submitted for the budget and Ms. Crory replied “yes”. Mr. Bouchard asked Mr. Gmeiner if he remembers if we added 5% increase into that. Mr. Gmeiner said he thought we had, but the numbers don’t look like he thought.

Mr. Bouchard asked if the reserve transfer from E&D for \$35,837.00 was because we thought the town was paying a portion of the new debt and they are not. Ms. Crory replied “yes” that is new debt for FY22 and the town will not be splitting until possibly FY26. Mr. Bouchard said that would mean we have 3-4 years of new debt to cover until the town possibly splits with us.

Mr. Gmeiner asked if the GDRHS \$28K was exact number for FY20 and Ms. Crory replied “yes”. Mr. Gmeiner feels we will not be bringing that amount in for FY21. Mr. Gmeiner said our budget has a 15% administrative fee built in. He said we talked about the overhead for the GDRHS percentage of flow verse the towns flow and the flows were broken out on the sheets provided by Ms. Livezey. Mr. Gmeiner also added we talked about a percentage of flow and percentage of the upgrade debt. Adding a flow ratio to our upgrade to see if we will make the 15% administrative fee we included in the budget. Pepperell Phase #1 Upgrade \$25,839.00 and Pepperell Phase#2 \$71,674. Mr. Bouchard asked about the expansion number of \$29,070.00 and Mr. Gmeiner said they paid that because we charged capacity when they connected. Mr. Gmeiner said fee percentage number would be \$2,300.00.

Mr. Gmeiner, do we want to add for the overhead for the GDRHS or a percent of the flow versus debt service and maybe a 1% or 2% administrative fee. Mr. Gmeiner asked if the 15% administrative fee was on the \$25K. Mr. Bouchard said using the flow percentage would be \$2,320.00 and what do we spend on office for billing etc. maybe \$1k. Ms. Crory replied that would be total 4% of \$25K. Mr. Bouchard asked where the 4% coming from and Ms. Crory replied that it is based on the FY20 actual bills of \$25K and that 4% of that is \$1K. Mr. Bouchard said that Part of the FY20 totals would include 4 months (March, April, May & June) Covid Pandemic and suggested we should review again in 3-months.

Mr. Bouchard told the BOSC that he feels the rate usage is consistent, but the budget issue is the new debt we will be incurring. Mr. Gmeiner replied that is why we incorporated the capital charge and Mr. Gmeiner’s concerns is the decrease in our reserve funds due to the pandemic. He stated that we have been pulling money out to make ends meet and we can do that for a short time, but would rather not and feels our reserve fund needs to be built up. Mr. Gmeiner asked Ms. Crory if we budgeted anything to build up the Enterprise Fund and she replied “no”.

Ms. Crory told the BOSC she ran some rate increases and if we did a 5% increase it would generate \$30K in rates. Based on a user at 20 units per qtr. and a bill of \$215.00 it would increase to \$221.00, the higher users’ schools/restaurants would feel it more. Mr. Bouchard said we have an increase in debt of \$72K and in four years the town may pick up ½ of that and in four years we reduce by \$50K and we need to refund the E&D account. Mr. Gmeiner replied we do have the capital charges in place to offset the \$72K, but we are looking to make up the \$36K and in four years we can adjust the capital charge. Mr. Bouchard said that if we were to increase the capital charge to \$25, that would be the \$30k increase and that is what we are looking for. Mr. Bouchard asked if we would anticipate an increase in both rates and capital charge and Mr. Gmeiner replied he feels a 5% increase in rates and increase the capital charge would do it.

Mr. Gmeiner asked if there was fee's we needed to go over and Mr. Bouchard said there was discrepancies in the districts with what we charge between them. Mr. Bouchard said he sent an email on March 5<sup>th</sup> and noticed we do not charge a minimum usage fee, capital charge and asked if we need a final read fee for Four Corners. Mr. Gmeiner said we would need to add to the regulations for the charges in Four Corners. Mr. Bouchard said the Final Read fee not a sewer fee and Mr. Gmeiner suggested we eliminate that. Mr. Gmeiner suggested that we establish fees for engineering reviews for connections. He said we should adopt a pass thru fee for engineering and change our application and add what we want to do for inspections.

**Four Corners:**

Mr. Gmeiner asked how we are doing on rates and flows. Ms. Crory said that the FY22 budget jumped up and we have a \$26k transfer and \$21K is to offset, so that would leave \$5K from the transfer. Ms. Crory feels that when Ixtapia connects that could be another \$5K in rates and feels we may not need a rate increase. Mr. Gmeiner feels that the FY22 rates and treatment costs are close and feels that we should increase the connection fees \$600.00 for all new connections that were not part of the original plan.

Mr. Gmeiner asked what is the amount we pay to Ayer and what we charge in rates. Ms. Crory told the BOSC we are currently paying a minimum charge to Ayer and once all the connections are made or if we go over the minimum charge, the rates are structured to be more. Mr. Bouchard asked if when Ixtapa connects that will push us over and Ms. Crory replied "yes". Mr. Bouchard asked if we should wait to see and then consider adjusting rates. Mr. Gmeiner asked Ms. Crory to have the numbers for the next meeting and we can continue discussing.

**Mr. Gmeiner made a motion to continue discussing the Rate Hearing on March 31<sup>st</sup>, Mr. Bouchard seconded and the motion passed unanimously. Roll Call: Gmeiner Aye and Bouchard Aye**

**Florence Roche School – Capacity**

No updates at this time

**Prescott – Capacity Charges**

No updates at this time

**108 Pleasant Street – Sewer Connection**

No updates at this time

**227 Boston Road – Lindemer Sewer Connection Update**

No updates at this time

**1-3 Forge Village – Sewer Connection**

No updates at this time

**Shaw's – Sewer Connection**

No updates at this time

**436 Main Street**

No updates at this time

**Discuss Developing a Policy Regarding Abatements**

No updates at this time

**GDRHS Administrative Fee**

No updates at this time

**Discussion of Proposed Sewer Commission Web Site**

Mr. Bouchard is working with Mr. Chiasson and will have an update soon

**FY21 & FY22 Budget**

No updates at this time

**Next Meeting** – March 31st, 2021

**BILLS SIGNED** - No bills were signed at this meeting

**MINUTES**: - No minutes were approved

**ADJOURN** – *Mr. Bouchard made a motion to adjourn at 3:50 PM. Mr. Gmeiner seconded the motion. Roll Call Gmeiner – Aye*

Respectfully submitted,  
Ann Livezey  
Water & Sewer Assistant