

Groton Water Commission
Regular Meeting of the
Board of Water Commissioners
Tuesday, March 15th, 2022
Virtual Meeting using Zoom

Minutes

Present are Chairman Jack McCaffrey, Vice Chairman Greg Fishbone, Member James Gmeiner, Superintendent Tom Orcutt, Business Manager Lauren Crory, Bob Rafferty from Environmental Partners and David Roman and Michael Ohl from CEI.

Mr. McCaffrey called the meeting to order at 7:30pm. He stated that we are being recorded and everyone introduced themselves.

Manganese Treatment Plant – progress update, schedule

The Town has the contracts from R.H. White which have been signed by Mr. Haddad and we are just waiting for the Town Accountant to sign them and they will be sent out. R.H. White requested a virtual meeting on Monday, March 28th at 10:30 and we are hoping for a pre-construction meeting and would like an onsite meeting a few days later. Mr. Orcutt will inform the necessary parties. Mr. McCaffrey asked if the commissioners should be there and Mr. Rafferty said they can attend and they will post it and send the information to the commissioners. Mr. Rafferty said that we will get the 60-day schedule at that time. Mr. McCaffrey asked when the Notice to Proceed will go out and Mr. Orcutt will need to send it out Thursday and the date will be filled in at the meeting. Mr. Orcutt said the dates will be figured out through completion.

Mr. McCaffrey asked how the power poles are going and Mr. Orcutt will check. Mr. Rafferty said the poles will mostly be used for Whitney Well III, except for the last pole.

Whitney Pond Well #3 – progress update, schedule

Mr. Ohl said the contracts were signed and the Notice to Proceed has been sent. He is hoping to get the pre-construction meeting scheduled for next week. Mr. Ohl said the completion date is July 7th so we will need the poles in by mid-April. Sub-bids will be opened tomorrow for the chemical feed equipment and the general bids are being opened next week so we will have the recommendations at the next meeting. Mr. Ohl said that DEP has been reviewing the pump test report and he will reach out because it is nearing the end of the review period.

Mr. Roman said on the MEPA side of things we got comments back but haven't received an official certificate and don't expect any additional comments. One comment was to look into the applicability of the Interbasin Transfer Act to track down the documents to shut the door for that. Mr. Orcutt said this is being brought up because our wells are in the Merrimack Basin and we supply Merrimack Basin and Nashua River Basin customers (Main St towards Pepperell), and some of those customers have town sewer. Once we have a sewer system that goes from the Nashua Basin out of town, it becomes an interbasin transfer. Mr. Orcutt said in 1982 they tried to treat water for the center area. They were going to send it to Ayer, but then teamed up with Pepperell. There is the interbasin transfer. They are trying to figure out if we ever got a permit for that. Mr. Orcutt has documents from 1982-1987 outlining some of this information. Mr. Orcutt does not believe there was a permit required in the 1980s.

Mr. Roman knows they were aware of this in 2012 and didn't require anything further so hopes to have the same outcome and to satisfy what they are looking for. Mr. Rafferty will look into his records also.

Mr. Roman said the second comment was from MA Wildlife and they want to a MESA submitted since the drawdown from the well could draw down water from the wetlands. Mr. Roman said its usually a quick review to show them the results from the pump testing with a 60-day maximum review period. It will be submitted soon and Mr. Roman is trying to schedule a pre-application meeting with them but will get to prepping the application to go out early next week. Mr. McCaffrey asked if we will be able to run Whitney Well III on June 30th and Mr. Ohl thinks the biggest unknown is this interbasin transfer.

CEI has a call with DEP regarding the WMA 02 application to figure out what the best path forward is (submit as a new source or amend existing). They have submitted the WMA 02 and it's going well and DEP put out a public notice and are receiving notice from public until March 18th and then will have the technical review period. They are going to try to accelerate this as much as possible and it is a 72-day review period. Mr. Ohl said it is all shaping up to be done the end of June or early July.

Mr. McCaffrey asked what day they need to tap into the Whitney Distribution line to connect Whitney Well III and Mr. Ohl would expect May. Mr. Orcutt agrees and said we will have our regular permitting issues and at the same time have our contractor physically constructing the facility. Mr. McCaffrey asked if they need to shut down Whitney to make the connection and Mr. Orcutt said yes and it will take about 6 hours.

Mr. McCaffrey asked if we have a current number for the sub bids and Mr. Ohl said not until tomorrow. Mr. Ohl thinks it should come in favorably.

Fiscal Year 2022 & 2023

Mrs. Crory will revise the Manganese Debt schedules with our final bid numbers.

Other Business

Mrs. Crory presented a water abatement request from 29 Champney St who was billed for 174 water units due to a burst pipe in January 2022. The Board discussed the situation and felt billing the water at tier 1 would be a fair solution. Mr. Gmeiner made a motion to abate 174 water units to be billed at the lowest tier, Mr. McCaffrey seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Orcutt said the GDRHS PFAS issue will help raise awareness due to the high level. There are many questions and the Selectboard will be having a meeting to discuss this. Mr. McCaffrey asked who is leading this and Mr. Orcutt said DEP but he is trying to provide support to the school.

Mr. McCaffrey asked if Mr. Orcutt's recommended professional engineer will be wanting to be paid and Mr. Orcutt said they would. Mr. McCaffrey thinks the representative from the Board of Health should be working with Mr. Orcutt more. Mr. Gmeiner doesn't want our resources to be drained on this PFAS issue. Mr. McCaffrey agrees other parties need to be helping. Mr. Gmeiner said that PFAS is a new agenda item for the Selectboard. Mr. Gmeiner reminded the Board that Mr. Fishbone put together great PFAS information on our website. Mr. Fishbone asked what the school is looking at for options to deal with this. Mr. Orcutt said initially a treatment system but there are other issues with their water quality. He is hesitant to say public water is the solution. Mr. Fishbone asked if the Selectboard will be enforcing testing of private wells and Mr. Orcutt is not sure but would encourage it to have more data.

The next meeting will be March 29th.

Mr. Gmeiner made a motion to approve the minutes March 1st as amended, Mr. Fishbone seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

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

Respectfully Submitted,

Lauren Crory