

Groton Water Commission
Regular Meeting of the
Board of Water Commissioners
Tuesday, October 25th, 2022
Virtual Meeting using Zoom

Minutes

Present are Chairman, Mr. McCaffrey, Vice Chairman Greg Fishbone, Member James Gmeiner, Superintendent Tom Orcutt, Business Manager Lauren Crory, Dave Patangia, Bob Rafferty, Alysa Longo, and Tyler Schmidt from Environmental Partners, 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

Mr. Rafferty introduced Mr. Schmidt because he is taking over for Ms. Longo. Ms. Longo gave an update and said that R.H. White poured the slab for the backwash tank and will pour the walls for the tank this week. The updated schedule shows they will not pour the top wall of the backwash tank until January. The first pour for the building is before thanksgiving, walls in December, and slab in January. The concrete procedure on cold weather is in hand and being reviewed. The building work is to begin in mid-February and the overall schedule is on track to be completed by December of next year.

Mr. Orcutt noticed that things are consolidated on the new schedule but there is no change in the completion date. Mr. Gmeiner asked about the January concrete pour and asked if there should be testing done. Ms. Longo said that all the pours will have samples that are tested and all the results have been good so far. Mr. Gmeiner asked if a cold weather pour effects the longevity and Ms. Longo said if they do it right it should not. Mr. Ohl said that in the contract through Environmental Partners there are requirements for cold weather concrete work (supplemental heat etc) during the cure. Ms. Longo said that some key electrical submittals came in and are being reviewed. There is currently a \$25,000 credit due to change orders and there should be an additional one for plywood walls in chemical feed room. They will be meeting with R.H. White tomorrow and will make sure they are still on track.

Mr. McCaffrey asked when Mr. Schmidt started cross training with Ms. Longo. Mr. Schmidt said that he has been loosely involved in the construction of the plant but will be taking over as the main point person. He is also working on similar treatment plant in Medfield. Mr. Schmidt said that his contractor last year did a winter concrete pour so he is familiar with that process. Mr. Schmidt said he is currently about 75% up to speed on construction and will get caught up tomorrow. Mr. McCaffrey asked if Ms. Longo will be replaced and Bob said they are always looking.

Mr. McCaffrey wanted to make sure that Mr. Schmidt was aware of the plan for solar panels and Mr. Schmidt said he is familiar with the design portion.

Whitney Pond Well #3

Mr. Ohl said that Dankris and their electrical sub have been out working over the past few weeks. They are nearing the point where they will be done putting in what they have over the next few weeks. They are waiting on the main distribution panel and lighting panel which we hope to be delivered within a week. The motor starter arrival could be end of year into the new year. The transfer switch is also coming in later, but Mr. Ohl knows they could wire around it if they need to. Mr. Orcutt said the soft start is hung up and Mr. Ohl said that is correct so everything else will be put in and we may have a gap for a month while we wait. Mr. Ohl said he will check the status onsite tomorrow but all the process equipment is in there and installed, plumber is waiting on electrical, and then waiting on electrical. The chemical feed piping is complete and a new ladder is coming for the vault.

Mr. Ohl said that regarding the Water Management Act permit, CEI and Mr. Orcutt contacted DEP and Mr. Roman heard back that Fish and Wildlife had no further concerns. It is now in the hands of the Water Management Act to get the drafted permit pushed out. Mr. Orcutt will check in later this week to see if there is an update.

ARPA Funds – Taylor and Main Street Replacement

Mr. Rafferty said that Mr. Schmidt has been working on the details and Mr. Rafferty would like to work on the schedule tomorrow with Mr. Orcutt.

PFAS/PFOS in Groton

Mr. Orcutt said they had a large meeting last week with representation from Dunstable, Pepperell, Worcester DEP, and Groton and discussed the best options for the High School. Mr. Orcutt explained the four options on the table.

1) Treatment at the High School has been ruled out because it is very expensive to rehabilitate and now need to treat irrigation water also. They do not have their own water operators. Also, other contaminated wells may need to be addressed.

2) Connect to Groton Water

3) Connect to Dunstable Water

4) Connect to Pepperell Water

All of the options have pros and cons. Mr. Orcutt thinks it should be Groton Water to avoid purchasing water with PFAS in it. If Pepperell treats it then there is an upcharge. The consultant is looking at all four scenarios in terms of pros and cons and financials. At the next meeting on November 17th the results will be reviewed. DEP did review some financial help options for this. Mr. McCaffrey asked what Dunstable and Pepperell had to say and Mr. Orcutt said Dunstable desperately wants to sell water because they do not have many customers and have a lot of debt. They want to sell it to Pepperell and Pepperell wants to sell to us. Dunstable doesn't have any infrastructure right now. Mr. Orcutt guesses less than 100,000 gallons a day is used in Dunstable. He said that Interbasin Transfer comes into play and Intermunicipal Agreements, so it is a lot of work.

Mr. Gmeiner said all the contaminated wells are in Dunstable and some are in Groton (less but still present). Mr. McCaffrey asked how many wells have been contaminated and Mr. Orcutt said maybe 4 out of 10 in Groton have tested positive so would guess about 30%-40% of the tested wells seem to have it. Mr. Gmeiner thinks it is a bit higher than that. Mr. McCaffrey thinks we should know and tell DEP the data, to give a sense of the scale of the issue. Mr. McCaffrey asked about the engineer working on this and Mr. Orcutt said that Tighe and Bond will be ok doing this. Mr. McCaffrey asked who is going to make the decision on this. Mr. Orcutt and Mr. Haddad, Mr. Rafferty, a Water Commissioner, a Selectboard Member and a Finance Committee Member will probably end up reviewing the results. Mr. Orcutt said they are assisting the school with the decision and Mr. McCaffrey thinks they should have a say. Mr. McCaffrey thinks whenever a solution is put on the table that the commissioners have a responsibility of the water in this town and need to have final approval. Mr. Gmeiner agrees. Mr. McCaffrey said they will let other people decide but then the commissioners should have final approval that the quality is acceptable. Mr. Orcutt said that if it is Pepperell water, there will be an IMA with Pepperell so quality is an important aspect. Mr. Gmeiner said that DEP was citing the new EPA regulations and he expects the EPA to come out with new regulations that are very low to the point where you may not even be able to measure it. Mr. McCaffrey does not want real detectible levels in the water.

Mr. Rafferty does not think we are being too conservative especially if EPA is heading towards a non-detect limit.

Mr. Fishbone asked about irrigation and Mr. Gmeiner said the DEP wants it treated because don't like the idea that you are spreading PFAS to a larger location. They are more concerned about runoff then inhalation or absorption at the fields etc.

Mr. McCaffrey asked about the town suing 3M and Dupont that caused the PFAS contamination. Mr. Orcutt sent a firm to town council to review and will present it to the Selectboard if approved. Mr. Gmeiner is not sure yet and Mr. Fishbone has not reviewed closely enough yet. Mr. Orcutt said we do have time.

Superintendent Operations Overview: Thomas Orcutt

Mr. Orcutt said they are almost done with hydrant flushing and will be done Monday at the latest. Fire flow tests are being done Monday morning.

Mr. McCaffrey asked if we are keeping the water ban on and Mr. Orcutt said the well levels have not changed but no one is really irrigating. Mr. Gmeiner asked if we will need to put it back on first thing in the spring. Mr. Orcutt said we vote it in every year anyways so it will depend on if the aquifer has recovered but will assume we will start as the normal odd/even conservation program.

Mr. Orcutt made a motion for the rescinding of the complete water ban effective October 26th, 2022, Mr. Fishbone seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

Business Manager's Financial Overview: Lauren Crory

Mrs. Crory reported that income looks good so far for FY2023. Mr. Orcutt said new connection fees are coming in. Mr. McCaffrey would like to see a forecast with those new connections. Mrs. Crory said that expenses look ok but a few areas are running high.

Other Business

Expense Warrant #9 approved.

Mr. Gmeiner made a motion to approve the minutes of August 30th as amended, Mr. Fishbone abstained, Mr. McCaffrey approved.

Mr. Gmeiner made a motion to approve the minutes of September 27th as amended, Mr. Fishbone seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

The next Meeting November 7th.

Mr. McCaffrey made a motion to adjourn at 8:39pm, Mr. Gmeiner seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lauren Crory