

Groton Water Commission  
Regular Meeting of the  
Board of Water Commissioners  
Tuesday, July 11<sup>th</sup>, 2023  
First Floor Meeting Room

**Minutes**

Present are Chairman Vice Chairman Greg Fishbone, Member James Gmeiner, Superintendent Tom Orcutt, Business Manager Lauren Crory.

Mr. Fishbone called the meeting to order at 7:49pm.

Mr. Gmeiner read the public hearing notice which states “In accordance with Chapter 40, section 42-A to 42-I, of the Massachusetts General Laws and the Town of Groton Usage Fee Regulations, the Board of Groton Water Commissioners will hold a Public Hearing, in the 1<sup>st</sup> Floor Meeting Room of the Town Hall on **Tuesday, July 11, 2023 at 7:30 P.M.** in order to consider the System Development Fees associated with Groton Farms, Chapter 407-10, subparagraph D – “Unusual Circumstances” associated with this project.”

**Public Hearing – System Development Fees – 500 Main St**

Mr. Orcutt explained that for a waiver of fees, the project needs to show substantial improvements to the Groton Water Department and rate payers. The developer is going to loop the water main and make improvements on Taylor St with the help of a Massworks Grant and ARPA funds, will be increasing the pipe to 8”, and it will significantly help fire protection in that area. An irrigation well will be installed on site which will help conservation efforts of town water in the summer months.

Mr. Gmeiner added that Taylor St is getting rid of the asbestos pipe that is having frequent leaks.

Mr. Orcutt has negotiated that every dwelling unit will have a meter and therefor will get charged minimum charges and help boost rate income.

Given all these factors, the Board can consider waiving a portion of the connection fees. The original water connection fee was calculated to be \$1,074,080 million and there is a proposal to reduce the fee down by \$350,000 to \$724,080 over 5 equal payments of \$144,816 every year. Mr. Orcutt added that all meter invoices for the project will be passed off to the developer so it will not affect our budget.

Mr. Orcutt applied for the Massworks grant and said the developer already deposited \$12,000 into a capital project account to be used to pay for the hydraulic analyst. The next piece will be \$40,000 to engineer the plans for bidding process.

Mr. Fishbone asked if there is a connection fee and system upgrade fee and Mr. Orcutt said it is the same thing and it would have been \$1,074,080 and gave discount of about \$350,000.

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Mr. Fishbone asked how the Massworks grant works. Mr. Orcutt said that if they get this grant for about \$1 million, Mr. Amaral will essentially not have to pay for much of the construction costs. Mr. Gmeiner asked if the Massworks grant is not approved, will they still be paying these fees and Mr. Orcutt said they will. Mr. Gmeiner also asked if the grant is not made will they still pay for the loop and Mr. Orcutt said Mr. Amaral knows that if we do not get the grant, he still needs to put the pipe in.

Mr. Gmeiner asked why the paperwork says the builder is “considering” these items. Mr. Orcutt will change the wording after the public hearing is closed. Mr. Gmeiner said we have to have a vote when the public hearing closed.

Mr. Gmeiner asked about a municipal lien, if they are paying over 5 years. Mr. Gmeiner said for sewer he is paying by bedroom count when he pulls building permits. Mr. Gmeiner wants a lien on the property in case the project defaults. He thinks we should talk to the Town Treasurer about this. Mr. Fishbone agrees.

Mr. Gmeiner made a motion to continue the public hearing at 7:45 on July 18<sup>th</sup>, 2023 on the first-floor meeting room, Mr. Fishbone seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

### **PFAS Discussion – Town Manager**

Mr. Orcutt said that option1 is bringing Groton town water to the high school. The other option is to extend Pepperell water to the high school and surrounding properties. They could truck in a temporary PFAS system for the high school but it is expensive. Piping from Pepperell is one thing but piping and treating Pepperell is another cost. Mr. Gmeiner thinks especially for younger people, it is important to deliver clean water. Mr. Gmeiner asked if the cost for treatment increased proportionately to how much PFAS was removed. Mr. Fishbone assumes if you are renting a system, it will probably be a fixed cost.

Mr. Orcutt said Mr. Haddad is meeting the town administrators from Dunstable and Pepperell next week and meeting with Mr. McCaffrey and Mr. Orcutt on the 18<sup>th</sup>. On the 31<sup>st</sup> of this month, the decision he will be presented to the Board of Selectmen. Mr. Orcutt will post a meeting and hopes the Board can be present. Mr. Fishbone asked about final cost numbers and Mr. Orcutt said they are still being worked on. They are also looking at the time to complete the options, interbasin transfer issues, and then cost. The Groton connection cost about \$12.5 million and Pepperell’s cost is around \$4-5 million, but then more cost if treated, and then Groton might be on the hook for the final treatment plant in Pepperell when it is built. Mr. Orcutt thinks at some point Groton will have its own issues and need to treat our own water and we do not want to be paying for other town’s treatment. Mr. Fishbone thinks we will need a plant in Groton at some point anyways. Mr. Gmeiner agrees we will need to get our own plant at some point. Mr. Orcutt said other perks to the town are more fire protection and more customers/rate payers. Mr. Fishbone said we will give our recommendation. Mr. Orcutt said we will need a recommendation for Mr. Haddad on the 18<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Orcutt said they will have better numbers next week.

### **Manganese Treatment Plant**

Mr. Orcutt said the Treatment Plant looks great with the lighting and screens, dehumidifiers, bulk tanks, storage units, electrical, and more. Mr. Gmeiner asked if they fixed the tanks yet and Mr. Orcutt said the round tanks were put on the pedestals and the legs do not sit squarely and the legs have bolts that do not fit properly. They need to add onto the pedestals so they can drill the bolts in.

### **Whitney Well III**

Mr. Orcutt said we are waiting on the final approval letter from MA DEP.

### **FY23 Budget**

Mrs. Crory presented the full FY23 final budget. The Board reviewed the various line items and discussed some of the areas where expenses ran over budget. There were reasons for most of these increases that we do not expect to carry forward into future years. Mrs. Crory will review these final numbers against the FY24 budget prior to town meeting and FY25 preparation to see what kind of changes may be needed this year or year due to rising costs.

Mrs. Gmeiner asked about Contracted Services and System Parts and Equipment overage. Mrs. Crory explained that there was a \$16,000 pump replacement under contracted services and some additional system that should not be something we see on an annual basis.

### **Other Business**

Mr. Orcutt reported that Whitney Well 3 PFAS has gone down to 9 ppt and we are awaiting final DEP approval and then can get it online if the Board agrees. Mr. Orcutt said we can wait for Mr. McCaffrey to decide. Mr. Orcutt assumes it will continue to go down as we use it. We have to do the next round of sampling for all sites soon. Mr. Fishbone asked which they are looking at and Mr. Orcutt said the PFOA and the PFOS are added together to get the 9.69 ppt. Mr. Orcutt said his goal was to get results under 10 ppt. Mr. Gmeiner asked when its being tested again. Mr. Orcutt ordered a kit from another company and would like to test all sites in August. Mr. Gmeiner wants to see the entire copy of the test results.

Mr. Orcutt said they need to discuss an amendment to Environmental Partners contract for the PFAS preparedness study for the Manganese Treatment plant. Mrs. Crory will look at the town meeting vote and the construction contract to see how much borrowing authorization we still have. Mr. Gmeiner said to put a placeholder on the fall town meeting for this and we can possibly a state note for this addition if needed.

**Mr. Gmeiner made a motion to authorize the purchase of the software and three iPad as well as the annual charges, Mr. Fishbone seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.**

Mr. Gmeiner made a motion to approve the minutes of June 27<sup>th</sup>, 2023 as amended, Mr. Fishbone seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Next Meeting is July 18<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

Mr. Gmeiner made a motion to adjourn at 8:58, Mr. Fishbone seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lauren Crory