

Groton Water Commission
Regular Meeting of the
Board of Water Commissioners
Tuesday, November 7th, 2023
Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Minutes

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

Mr. McCaffrey called the meeting to order at 7:03pm. He stated that the meeting is being recorded and everyone introduced themselves.

Manganese Treatment Plant

Mr. Schmidt said the temporary tie in to I and II was completed today. The VFD is being relocated into the treatment plant. There is programming progress, Fall River progress, R.H. White is finishing the chemical feed systems and has done pressure tests. The doors and frames will be completed in the next week. The filtration starts up and training begins after Thanksgiving. There have been 410/414 submittals and 71/71 RFIS returned. There are 18 change orders and 1 is still being negotiated. The net change in value, omitting solar panels, is \$56,749. The Solar Panel submittal was approved and should come in December. The change order bulk are items added to contracts, propane tanks, plywood sheeting, and chemical feeds. Pay requisition 17 is being reviewed by EP because R.H. White needs to correct the prevailing wage rate. The pay requisition for October was \$468,000. There is about 10% left to bill and 15% retainage. Wednesday, November 15th will be on site progress meeting.

Mr. Schmidt said the contractor requested a no-cost 40-day time extension Dec 11 – January 21st, 2024. He recommends approving, but adding Substantial Completion by December 22nd which is required by DEP.

Mr. Orcutt did not think R.H. White had anyone on site yesterday or today, and Mr. Schmidt said subcontractors have been out there. Mr. Schmidt will talk to them and make sure they are having people there. Mr. Orcutt likes the idea of DEP approval in December. Mr. Schmidt said if they need time beyond that, liquidated damages would be assessed.

Mr. McCaffrey asked about the training and Mr. Schmidt will enforce the contractual training and training is vendor initiated. The vendors will not send a training representative until they know it's complete.

Mr. Orcutt said as they go through the two-week training mode the facility should be ready for DEP to come. Individual performance tests will be done, and then a functional test of everything. They will be doing the testing with the operators. Once everything is working, they will ask DEP to come to inspect.

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Mr. McCaffrey asked about the permanent tie-in and Mr. Schmidt said it will not happen until DEP approval so that would be January. Mr. Gmeiner asked if DEP approval would be January and Mr. Schmidt is trying to push for December and the water will be running through plant by December 22nd.

Mr. Fishbone asked about our requirement on the ACO. Mr. Schmidt said generally DEP is aware of the progress and knows there is progress so the ACO is a bit more flexible.

Mr. McCaffrey wants to know when it will be in the system and Mr. Orcutt said once they have approval, all water will run through the plant and then I and II will be disconnected. Mr. McCaffrey said the temporary connection is a working connection so will be fine to run in January.

Whitney Pond Well #3

Mr. Schmidt has PFAS treatment cost numbers for the Board. The GAC cost estimate is \$6.2 million construction costs with additional costs total \$10.2 million. It would treat all Whitney sites. The ion exchange total is about \$8 million. Ion exchange has to be disposed of as hazardous waste. GAC filters need to be replaced every two years and Ion Exchange every four years. The cost becomes equal in year 24 (including construction costs).

Mr. McCaffrey asked for the level of PFAS being removed and Mr. Schmidt said it should be relatively the same. Mr. McCaffrey asked which category will have more innovation and Mr. Schmidt thinks Ion Exchange. GAC catches more and IX targets only PFAS. Mr. Orcutt said emerging contaminants may come down the road. Mr. Schmidt said it would depend on the contaminant and new regulations.

Mr. McCaffrey explained to everyone that we may have to temporarily pretreat Whitney Well III to use it next summer if PFAS numbers do not go down. Mr. Schmidt will get quotes. An estimate would be \$50,000 a month possibly. Mr. McCaffrey said this would only be a temporary fix. Mr. Schmidt does think it would work temporarily. Mr. Patangia said they would need to start planning that now, if they want a temporary trailer. Mr. Orcutt said the PFAS was 8-9 ppm and PFOA around 6ppm. We need it below 4ppm to use it. Mr. McCaffrey said it sounds like we are planning on it. Mr. Patangia said you could cancel it if a miracle happens.

Budget Update (Business Manager)

Mrs. Crory reviewed the FY25 Budget Draft with the Board. The debt has gone up significantly but will be covered by rates and capital fees. The increased costs include a potential new vehicle, increased treatment plants costs, and temporary PFAS treatment. The extra costs may need to be offset by a temporary service charge. This will be reviewed at the budget meeting as well as the rate hearing in December.

Operational Updates (Superintendent)

Mr. Orcutt said they are done flushing. The Lead and Copper sampling for the state is also done. The sanitary survey is done. There is an article for spring town meeting regarding MWRA. They

are waiving the connection fee before FY27. We may want to look into this even if we are not taking water so that we will get the opportunity for no connection fee. Mr. Orcutt thinks we should be pursuing a plan with the other communities. Mr. Orcutt said this is a rare opportunity. Mr. Fishbone said it looks like we wouldn't be able to connect for decades. Mr. Orcutt said it depends. Permitting maybe 5 years, but construction yes maybe 10-20 years so this would be for more of a future plan. Mr. McCaffrey asked if we would spend money on this and Mr. Orcutt said yes but probably not for 5 years.

Mr. McCaffrey asked if our Westford Interconnection would benefit if Westford connects and Mr. Orcutt said somewhat but not for the whole town, hydraulic wise. Mr. Fishbone said it seems like a good long term plan especially with no up front cost in the next few years.

Other Business

Mr. Gmeiner made a motion to approve the minutes of October 10th and October 24th as amended, Mr. Fishbone seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. McCaffrey made a motion to adjourn at 8:34pm, Mr. Fishbone seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Next Meeting November 14th to discuss the budget.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lauren Crory