

Groton Water Commission
Regular Meeting of the
Board of Water Commissioners
Tuesday, October 24th, 2023
Second Floor Meeting Room

Minutes

Present are Chairman Jack McCaffrey, Member James Gmeiner, Superintendent Tom Orcutt, and Business Manager Lauren Crory.

Mr. McCaffrey called the meeting to order at 7:09pm and announced that the meeting was being recorded and everyone introduced themselves.

Water Main Ext. Ridgewood Ave

Mr. Orcutt explained there are a few customers interested in extending town water down Ridgewood Ave to service 5 potential homes (3 current potential investors). The extension would be 450 ft on Ridgewood Ave and would include one fire hydrant to be paid for by residents on Ridgewood Ave. Mr. Orcutt would create a license agreement for the investors for future connections, typically up to 5 years although they are requesting 10 years. Mr. Orcutt would need to check with town counsel. Mr. Gmeiner asked about the design and Mr. Orcutt said there would be plenty of flow and pressure. Mr. Gmeiner wants them to be aware that they may not get any takers to hook up and help with costs. Mr. McCaffrey asked about the reasoning and Mr. Orcutt said one resident has an issue with her well and Board of Health is recommending town water. Mr. Orcutt can bring the license agreement back in a couple of weeks. Mr. Gmeiner made a motion to approve the extension of the 450-foot water main extension on Ridgewood Ave per the 8/9/23 drawing with one hydrant, Mr. McCaffrey seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Manganese Treatment Plant – Update (Superintendent)

Mr. Orcutt said the first change order is about \$30,000 and does not include the solar panels. They are looking for extra time on the contract but no monetary value. Mr. Orcutt will ask Mr. Rafferty if there will be any additional engineering costs and doesn't expect there to be. Mr. McCaffrey does not think they will charge us extra where it is their delay. Mr. Orcutt expects it to be completed the first week of November. Mr. Orcutt asked them to create a training schedule.

Whitney Pond Well #3 – Update (Superintendent)

Mr. Orcutt said the latest Whitney Well III PFAS results are in at 8 ppm. Mr. McCaffrey asked what the needs are for Whitney Well III until spring. Mr. Orcutt said just for testing in the treatment plant. He said they cannot draw a sample right in the well so sampling is on hold for now. Mr. McCaffrey said we will keep trying to flush and test, but come May, we may need a temporary PFAS treatment system. Mr. Gmeiner said to include something in the FY25 budget for this.

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Operational Updates (Superintendent)

Mr. Orcutt said they are flushing the system on the condensed schedule again.

Town Meeting is coming up this weekend and Mr. Haddad and Mr. Schmidt will be making a presentation. Mr. Orcutt said they need a 2/3rd vote to move forward. Otherwise, there will end up being a consent order from DEP.

Organizational Plan & Staffing Plan

Mr. Orcutt will be retiring within 1-3 years and the Board needs to decide the direction for the Board and the Superintendent position. Mr. Orcutt thinks the DPW model (for a Board) does not work well for our town. Mr. Gmeiner said you could keep the enterprise and the water commission separate. For Mr. Orcutt's replacement, one option would be an in-house training program, but the in-house candidates may not have the education portion of the current job description. Mr. McCaffrey asked if the majority of Superintendents have the education requirements and Mr. Orcutt said they would have a combination of the education and experience (for example a Bachelor's degree and 10 years' experience). Mr. McCaffrey asked if our internal candidates have any degrees and they do not. The current job description was recently updated for Mr. Orcutt's qualifications. Mr. McCaffrey said that increase was due to his experience and value that he holds due to his time in the position.

Mr. Orcutt thinks you could get a Superintendent from another town or a Water Operator with the education requirements. Mr. McCaffrey thinks they need to be near the town in a Water Department position (maybe 30 minutes).

Mr. McCaffrey asked if we could look internally and externally and Mr. Orcutt said we could post the position both ways simultaneously.

Mr. McCaffrey and Mr. Gmeiner may consider slightly revising the job description. Mr. Orcutt believes that Human Resources and the Town Manager will still review and consider the internal candidates if they do not meet the current job description.

Mr. Orcutt said the Board will need to work on any job description amendments with the Town Manager and Human Resources.

Mr. Orcutt said there will also be a need for a Sewer Superintendent.

Mr. McCaffrey is not in favor of joining the DPW and Mr. Gmeiner agrees.

Mr. Gmeiner said that the Water and Sewer Commission may need to be combined. Mr. McCaffrey would not be in favor of this but Mr. Gmeiner said that realistically the Sewer Commission opening has been posted and no one has come forward in two weeks. Mr. Orcutt

thinks the same problem will happen with the Water Commission. Mr. Gmeiner is just saying that it is easier to fill less seats if the commissions are combined.

Mr. Gmeiner will ask about changing the education requirements based on a certain level of experience.

Mr. Orcutt does not think a working in the field Superintendent is a good idea. He helps the operators as needed but is not out of the office more than 50% of the time. There are way too many technical aspects needed in the office. Mr. McCaffrey agrees but does feel its important to have someone that will help the operators in the field as needed. Mr. Orcutt said the job description requires licenses and you need field hours to get those licenses so they should have a working knowledge.

Mr. Orcutt thinks we will be ok with our three operators and a Superintendent. Mr. Orcutt said that we hired our third operator knowing the Treatment Plant would be coming online. Mr. McCaffrey said if we start this process and find someone who is not licensed, how long would it take and Mr. Orcutt thinks it would take them 12-18 months to get both licenses. You can take the test but then need time in the facility to get the full license. Treatment 1 and 2 are the minimum license requirements. Treatment 1 and Distribution 2 is the minimum to be a Water Superintendent. Mr. Gmeiner said the new person would need to shadow Mr. Orcutt for at least 6 months. Mr. Orcutt said it depends on their experience but 6 months is probably a good estimate. Mr. McCaffrey asked if that candidate is internal, would we have to fill their position. Mr. Orcutt said not while he is still employed. An external candidate would need to come in and shadow and could acquire licenses during that time if needed

Mr. Orcutt said he should have a firm retirement date around April.

Mr. Orcutt thinks it is better to advertise as Water Superintendent but add on Sewer responsibilities later on and mention that it could be added or possibly result in a pay increase.

Other Business: budget, bills, minutes, meeting schedule etc.

Mr. Gmeiner made a motion to approve the minutes of September 26th, 2023, Mr. McCaffrey seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Next Meeting is November 7th, 2023.

Mr. Gmeiner made a motion to adjourn at 8:26pm, Mr. McCaffrey seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lauren Crory

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