

Groton Water Commission  
Regular Meeting of the  
Board of Water Commissioners  
Tuesday, February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2024  
Virtual Meeting via Zoom

**Minutes**

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

Mr. McCaffrey called the meeting to order at 7:32pm. He stated that the meeting is being recorded and everyone introduced themselves.

**Manganese Treatment Plant**

Mr. Schmidt said the punch list is being cleaned up by R.H. White and the final sign offs will be February 20<sup>th</sup>. The dedication plaque will lag because they need to decide on the layout and then order it. New locks will be installed tomorrow, so R.H. White will now need GWD to get access into the building. The town is getting insurance on the building. Mr. Orcutt said the insurance was approved. Mr. Schmidt said that construction affidavits have been sent to the town, Board of Health to be closed out tomorrow, building permit closed out as soon as fire department signs off. There have been 448/553 resubmittals completed and 79/79 RFIs. The second change order will be sent this week. The first change order was 6 months ago for \$155,000 including solar panels (\$105K) and propane tanks. The second change order is \$29,783, mostly for solenoid valves at request, splash blocks for release valves, trim, and pressure reducing valve for the domestic water system. This brings the total change order value to \$184,900 which is about 2.26% of contract value. It is only \$45,000 without owner changes which is 0.5%. The final balancing change order will balance out unused contract allowance for rock and test pits and those funds can be used to epoxy the floor and have remaining unused funds. Pay requisition 20 for January is being reviewed in the amount of \$158,168. There is no retainage on that pay requisition. There is 6% left to be billed (\$498,000 remaining including retainage). No more progress meetings are scheduled.

Mr. Maloney would like to see the floor done but otherwise will be all set. Mr. Maloney said the controls are great from Harbor Controls. Mr. McCaffrey asked about the data logger for the solar panels. Mr. Schmidt will find out if it is working yet. Mr. Maloney thinks it was programmed and set up to be transferred over to the SCADA system.

Mrs. Crory reviewed the interest rate with the Board which came in at 3.57%. This is good news as we had budgeted using an interest rate of 4%.

**Whitney Pond Well #3**

See below.

February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2024

## **Operational Updates (Superintendent)**

The divers are coming the last week of March to clean. The cleaning of Whitney I is out to bid. Whitney I and II will be offline during that time and typically we would use the emergency connection from Westford in these situations. It will take about two weeks and the pressure is reduced in that area. We could take Westford water or use Whitney Well III water during this time. Mr. Orcutt thinks the Westford PFAS numbers will be greater than what Whitney Well III would produce. Mr. Orcutt asked Board to reconsider using Whitney Well III temporarily rather than Westford. Mr. Fishbone says go with the lowest PFAS option.

Mr. Orcutt said that Baddacook on its own could supply about 70% town. About 30% would be through the interconnection or Whitney Well III. Mr. McCaffrey asked what would happen if we did not clean Whitney Well I. Mr. Orcutt said since the screen is dirty, it is about 30% reduction in production. Mr. Gmeiner asked what happens if we pump Whitney Well III to the system. Mr. Orcutt said it goes through the treatment plant then right into the tank. Mr. Gmeiner said whereas Westford connection only gets to a portion of town but at a higher concentration. Mr. McCaffrey said it would be diluted once mixed into the system. Mr. Maloney asked where Westford stands with their public notice and Mr. Orcutt believes they have notified the public. Mr. Gmeiner asked if we would need to notify Groton residents and Mr. Orcutt would put something on the website and Mr. McCaffrey would want us to notify them.

Mr. Gmeiner wants Whitney Well I to get cleaned, it will at least be diluted, and Whitney Well III may be a better option than getting it from Westford, and we won't have the fire concerns. Mr. Fishbone said since it is approximately two weeks, and it will be blended with Baddacook, we are trying our best not to contribute, but its not avoidable to get the well cleaned. He believes Whitney Well III is the better of the two solutions. Mr. Orcutt said they can still run Baddacook 24/7 and supplement with Whitney Well III. Mr. Maloney said that is possible, and Whitney Well III will run as low as it needs to be.

Mr. McCaffrey's opinion is to not clean Whitney Well I and take the irrigation hit this summer. He does not believe we should be using water with PFAS above projected new EPA standards. Mr. McCaffrey said that Whitney Wells typically pump the well dry. He believed that Whitney I at 70% and Whitney II and Baddacook at 100% would be sufficient for this year. Mr. McCaffrey said in July the aquifer drops typically, so he will argue that in a typical summer we won't hurt them more in July in August because normally have a low aquifer. Mr. Orcutt said the aquifers are better levels this year, so pointed out that if it is a dry summer, we could lose revenue. Mr. Maloney said without cleaning we can't draw water in at the rate needed. Mr. Orcutt said we can run longer hours at a lesser rate. Mr. McCaffrey said next year we will be facing the same problem if we do not clean it. Mr. Gmeiner asked if Westford is doing anything about their PFAS and Mr. Orcutt said they are in the planning and design stage. Mr. Gmeiner also agrees with Mr. McCaffrey that even if temporary, its against our stance.

Mr. McCaffrey asked why the temporary PFAS is so expensive. Mr. Orcutt said its permits, engineering, planning involved and not something that just gets plugged in.

Mr. McCaffrey said we need to fix our own problem if Westford is not good water anymore. He thinks that we should do one more flush and sample in the spring before adding planning to add PFAS treatment.

Mr. Fishbone is sympathetic to it but fears if we don't clean it now, we will need to clean it later and its going to get worse. Mr. Orcutt said the well can be surged with no chemicals but it will not clean the gravel pack which is a short-lived fix. Mr. Orcutt said it will help some production. Mr. McCaffrey asked about Baddacook and Mr. Orcutt said it is running very well.

Mr. Orcutt will review the summer conservation program at the next meeting.

### **Financial Update**

Mrs. Crory said the \$150,000 fall transfer that was going to be used to fund the SCADA upgrades, is now going to be used to offset the budget shortfalls this year. She is forecasting a \$100,000 shortfall in income and possibly a small shortfall in expenses but the \$150,000 should be sufficient.

### **Other Business**

Mrs. Crory reviewed an irrigation abatement request from the condo association at 71 Champney. Francine McColgan is the resident in unit A and manages the finances for the condo association. The association pays the irrigation bills for the 4 units. She noticed that unit D had a high usage. She found out that there was a power outage that reset the irrigation system to irrigate every day. Mrs. Crory can see the usage and estimates this occurred for about two weeks and caused the increased usage. Mrs. Crory said their average usage is about 62 units in the summer and they were billed for 137 units (75 more). If the extra 75 units are billed at the lowest tier, the abatement amount would be \$256.50.

Mr. Gmeiner made a motion for a one-time abatement to the lowest tier of \$256.50, Mr. Fishbone seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

Next Meeting is February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

Mr. Gmeiner made a motion to approve the minutes of December 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023 as amended, Mr. Fishbone seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

Mrs. Crory will review a question the January 16<sup>th</sup>, 2024 minutes, to be approved at a later meeting.

Mr. McCaffrey made a motion to adjourn at 8:28pm, Mr. Gmeiner seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lauren Crory

February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2024