

Groton Water Commission
Regular Meeting of the
Board of Water Commissioners
Tuesday, March 4th, 2024
Virtual Meeting using Zoom

Minutes

Present are Chairman Jack McCaffrey, Vice Chairman Greg Fishbone, Member James Gmeiner, Superintendent Tom Orcutt, Business Manager Lauren Crory, and Ginger Villmar from the Sustainability Committee.

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

Long Range Planning – MWRA Metrowest Connection

Mr. McCaffrey introduced the topic by saying Mr. Orcutt is working on this long-term plan for an additional water source through the MWRA. Mr. Orcutt met with the group and said they did not discuss much about costs and it was more about which communities would be involved. Some communities are not against it but do not have as much need so they may not contribute financially yet. Mr. Orcutt said there are 10-11 communities involved in the first stage. Mr. Orcutt was asked to be on the RFQ process to help evaluate the consultants involved. They had no problem with Groton deferring payment until next Fiscal Year. They have not finalized the IMA and need to circulate it for signatures before the first phase. Mr. Orcutt does not know the long-range costs at this point. Mr. McCaffrey said it is good to have about ten communities but he would want to set a limit of \$50,000 cumulatively until we really vet the need.

Mrs. Villmar asked why we are pursuing this at all. Mr. Orcutt explained this is a long range 20–30-year plan that can help offset treatment costs (construction and maintenance) and helps the possibility of being short on water in the future as we would be gaining access to the Quabbin reservoir. Permitting is also an issue and this MWRA project would not be subject to certain permits. She asked if the first phase is seeing if the towns want to invest in this and Mr. Orcutt said it is to see who is interested. Mr. Orcutt reiterated the regulatory and permit process is getting more difficult and MWRA is not subject to the same regulations. Mr. Gmeiner wants Mr. Orcutt to confirm that.

Operational Updates: Whitney, Baddacook, SCADA

Mr. Orcutt said the updated SCADA system is running at Baddacook. The Whitney Treatment Plant needs filter media changeout at a cost of about \$55,000. The week of March 10th will be the first week to switch out a filter. Mr. McCaffrey asked if we are going to get a new procedure from them and Mr. Orcutt said we will and they will be there every step of the way. Mr. McCaffrey asked how our check valve is going and Mr. Orcutt said we are still waiting on it. Mr. Orcutt is working on the annual statistical report to be submitted to DEP. He is finalizing some

Lead and Copper issues also. The Consumer Confidence Report is done and just needs to be reviewed before it is sent out. Mr. Orcutt asked if we should continue to mail these to our customers or if we should just post it online. Mr. Fishbone likes knowing that people receive it in the mail since people may not remember a new one has come out. Mr. Gmeiner said sewer is doing a mailing and we may combine to save on costs.

Mr. Orcutt said the water main extension is almost done in Groton and they will be moving onto Dunstable. Mr. McCaffrey asked where the pipe goes first and Mr. Orcutt said they will try to pipe to the school during April vacation at night. The booster station drawings are being approved and will be coming up. Mr. Orcutt said August 15th is still the goal for drinking water at the high school. Irrigation may be available sooner.

Fiscal Year 2025 Budget Updates

Mrs. Crory shared a new spreadsheet recapping the Manganese Treatment Plant Debt timeline. The first stage of the plan was to save up the Manganese Fees into a Manganese “Fund” (held within our Water Enterprise Fund) in the first few years. Over the following few years, we pulled various amounts out of the Manganese Fund to help pay our first Manganese Debt payments. Beginning in FY28, all our old debt will be paid off so we will have \$400,000 available in our budget to use towards our approximately \$635,000 annual manganese debt payment. From FY28 until the remainder of the loan (about 21 years), we will pay the loan with the available \$400,000 plus a capital fee set to raise the additional \$235,000 per year. All commissioners recalled making this plan and were happy with how it has played out. We will continue to transfer smaller amounts from the Manganese Fund in FY26 and FY27. Mr. Fishbone asked how much will be left in the Manganese Fund after FY27 and Mrs. Crory said the extended Manganese Debt Spreadsheet shows there should be about \$18,000 left in the fund. Mr. McCaffrey reviewed the spreadsheets and understands the plan but mentioned the names of the fees and funds could be more uniform across spreadsheets and when speaking about these items.

Other Business

Mr. Gmeiner made a motion to approve the minutes of February 18th, 2025, Mr. Fishbone seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

Next Meeting April 1st, 2025

Mr. McCaffrey made a motion to adjourn at 8:16pm, Mr. Gmeiner seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lauren Crory