

Groton Water Commission
Regular Meeting of the
Board of Water Commissioners
Tuesday, April 1st, 2025
Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Minutes

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

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

Water Conservation Program/Grant

Mr. Orcutt was approached by David Roman of CEI. He helped us apply for grant funds to be spent by June 30th. The grant is 100% funded with no match and we got it. There are three components; leak detection, meter calibration, and to buy equipment for leak detection. There were about 22 applications for a total of \$2 million and we were awarded \$50,000 of the drought management component. CEI will use these funds to help construct information for the public such as how to cope with a drought. Mr. McCaffrey asked if we will put this on our website and Mr. Orcutt said we will once it is finalized. The funds will be spent by June 30th.

Mr. McCaffrey would like to review the aquifer levels soon. Mr. Orcutt sent out the updated graphics which are little misleading because they show an uptick, but we are still not in great shape. The Nashua River is very low. Mr. McCaffrey said the first level of conservation is in place and they should look at more information to see if they need to take any more action regarding the conservation program. Mr. Fishbone would like to put something on social media also. Mr. Orcutt said the CCR will be going out and has language about it also. Mr. Orcutt said the newspaper and social media is helpful also. Mr. McCaffrey said people are used to seeing it more in the middle of summer and not in the winter.

Johnson's Restaurant – Abatement Request

Mrs. Crory summarized the leak situation at Johnsons Restaurant, 164 Boston Rd. The owner, Rick Santiano, received a large bill last July and contacted the office. Mr. Santiano spoke about his various efforts to locate and repair the leak. He worked with various contractors to test and repair toilets and to check the ice machine. He was in contact with the office as he tried various repairs and turning off certain valves. The contractors never found an evident issue which may have been caused by the intermittent nature of the leak. Mr. Santiano tried various efforts over the course of the next months and received a total of three quarterly large bills. His average usage is 67 units per quarter and he received three quarterly bills ranging from 118-196 units. His last quarterly bill issues on 4/1/25 was a very low usage of only 36 units. Mrs. Crory

provided the abatement request which shows the usage above 67 units being billed at the lowest tiers.

Mr. Orcutt asked where his plumbing is and Mr. Santiano believes it is in the walls and not under the slab. Mr. Santiano did not find any water pooling at the property during the large leak times. Mr. McCaffrey said the water must have been going down a drain somewhere if water was not pooling.

Mrs. Crory prepared abatement amounts based on billing the high quarters at the lowest tier. Mr. Fishbone pointed out that the first 67 units should be billed at regular tiers. Mrs. Crory will revise her calculations for the next water meeting.

Operational Updates: Whitney, Baddacook, SCADA

Mr. Orcutt said we are still waiting for the filter media to be replaced. He is trying to get them in next week.

Mr. McCaffrey said the Chicopee Row project looks good and Mr. Orcutt said the Groton line is completed; besides the High School. They cannot make connections after Williams Barn until the booster station is in place.

Mr. Orcutt said that the new SCADA system is online running both facilities with no issues.

Mr. McCaffrey asked what the start-up date for the high school is and Mr. Orcutt said the chlorine booster arrival will be in June and then have DEP approval in July so are still on track for the August 15th contracted date.

Mr. McCaffrey asked about the Littleton Water Department security breach. Mr. Orcutt said our system is very secure and you must be on the site or through log me in which is a two-factor authorization process connected only the 4 phone numbers of the department. Mr. Fishbone asked if someone got a phone could they knock the others out. Mr. Orcutt said they also would need to know the password. Mr. Orcutt said if someone was able to get in, they could make changes to the system and other phones etc.

Mr. McCaffrey wants to know what happened in Littleton and asked if we can put something on our website regarding this. Mr. Orcutt will find out more about the issue in Littleton but does not feel comfortable putting too much information on our website as it could attract hackers.

Mr. McCaffrey asked if any maintenance is to be done before the irrigation season. Mr. Orcutt said water main flushing will take place later this month.

Fiscal Year 2025 Budget Updates / Town Meeting Appropriation

Mrs. Crory reviewed the forecasted budget and income looks good overall with rate income (including the extended deficit fee), interest income, and pipe sale offsetting the shortage in construction income. Expenses look to be in line with the budget and Mrs. Crory hopes to have about \$46,000 of unspent general expenses to help our reserve fund balance.

Mrs. Crory recommended transferring \$75,000 from the reserve fund as an insurance for added Manganese Treatment costs as the borrowed funds are nearly spent and a few issues are still being ironed out. The board members were ok with taking out the funds but want to make sure it is tracked properly if the funds are used on Manganese Treatment Plant issues.

Mr. Gmeiner made a motion to approve a Spring Town Meeting Transfer of \$75,000, Mr. Fishbone seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

Mrs. Crory said if any of the transfer is spent, we will review and make sure the Manganese Capital Fund is updated accordingly.

Other Business

Mr. Orcutt said they are developing an emergency room facility at the 500 Main St complex. They have been in touch regarding fire and water connections. The flows should be enough with the recent upgrades. They are looking at a Fall 2026 opening. They still need to go through the various committees and permitting processes.

Mr. Orcutt said they are interviewing two applicants this week. They received 7 applicants and 4 have licenses.

The next meeting is April 29th, 2025.

Mr. Gmeiner made a motion to approve the minutes of March 4th, 2025 as amended, Mr. Fishbone seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Gmeiner made a motion to adjourn at 8:40pm, Mr. Fishbone seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lauren Crory