

Groton Water Commission
Regular Meeting of the
Board of Water Commissioners
Tuesday, April 29th, 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.

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

Shattuck Well-Proposed Walking Trail

Mr. Orcutt was approached by the Trail Committee to put some markers on the existing trail off Route 40. Mr. Orcutt is okay with residents using the trail as it helps police the area. Mr. McCaffrey asked if it is zone 1 and Mr. Orcutt said it is zone 2. Mr. Fishbone asked if there would be things like ATVs and snowmobiles and Mr. Orcutt said they are hard to catch and can try to monitor. Mr. Gmeiner would like to create a letter saying we are granting permission on a temporary basis as a footpath and that it is permissive use only.

Mr. Gmeiner made a motion to permit the trails committee to mark a path on the trail and send a letter that the permission is revocable at our discretion, Mr. Fishbone seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

Summer Conservation Program

Mr. Orcutt sent out graphics of precipitation and well levels. Mr. Orcutt submitted notification of the conservation program in the Herald. Mr. Orcutt reported that the irrigation season has begun and Mr. Orcutt's best take is to stay ahead of this with the odd/even program in place. They have not increased Whitney Wells, but have increased the time running at Baddacook to make up the difference as irrigation is turned on. Mrs. Vollmar asked if they will leave it at the first level of restrictions and then increase if there is no rain. Mr. Orcutt said he monitors the levels at the wells to make that determination. When Mr. Orcutt sees the wells at a certain level, he will approach the Board about being more aggressive with conservation efforts. Mr. McCaffrey asked if the aquifer is remaining at about the same level and he said it is. Mr. McCaffrey asked where we are in terms of permitted withdrawal and Mr. Orcutt said we are not close to our limit. Mr. Orcutt will police the first conservation program in the mornings when the levels are plummeting. Mr. McCaffrey asked who we would worry about and Mr. Orcutt said residents sometimes turn on irrigation and rain sensors may not work or they may not be able to set it correctly. Mrs. Vollmar asked if this will be on the bill and Mrs. Crory said there will be a newsletter going out in the next round of bills with this information.

Mr. McCaffrey asked when the high school will be connected and Mr. Orcutt hopes in July.

Mr. McCaffrey said we will monitor it but noted that we have had to move to level 2 and 3 conservation programs in past years.

Long Range Planning – MWRA Metrowest Water Connection

Mr. Orcutt will be attending an upcoming Selectboard meeting to review the MWRA plan and go over the 25-year look ahead of this plan. Mr. Orcutt reiterated that this could help with treatment costs and lack of water down the road. The MWRA has plenty of water that they can sell. The cost could be \$1.2 billion in 2050. Mr. Orcutt said we do have some sites that could be tapped, but after that, there is not a lot of options around. Mr. Orcutt said this is only the first step in planning and will stress this to the Selectboard. Mr. McCaffrey asked about the Shattuck Well site and Mr. Orcutt said they gave up that registration to get water to the high school. Shattuck Well would need to be permitted again and would need to go through a new source approval process. Mr. Orcutt said Unkety Brook would have interbasin transfer implications. Mr. Gmeiner said the MWRA is an interbasin transfer also. Mr. Orcutt said when many communities are involved it gets easier. Mr. McCaffrey asked about state or federal funding and Mr. Orcutt said they haven't given much of that information yet. There is a federal program funding source but we would need to pay our portion. This first step is looking at the financial feasibility. Mrs. Vollmar asked if this is just a study right now and Mr. Orcutt explained that the MWRA initiated this study for a first draft pipe route and demands, and now are working on the financial aspect. Mrs. Vollmar said there has been some talk about water from MWRA being very costly to rate payers. Mr. Orcutt said it is a great question, but if you look at water costs and treatment costs in surrounding towns plus trying looking 25 years out, it is hard to say what it will look like. Mr. Orcutt said the costs for building and maintaining treatment plants could be more expensive. Mr. Orcutt said they would not see this water or cost for 25-30 years. Mr. McCaffrey said the surrounding towns are going to be spending large amounts of money on treatment in the upcoming years.

Operational Updates-Whitney, SCADA, Flushing

Mr. Orcutt said the filter swap has been completed with great help from the technicians, and we will try now to recoup some of the funds. They will have one more meeting on site to go over training and questions.

New employee Billy Walsh from Pepperell has started. Mr. Orcutt asked if he can bring the town vehicle home to Pepperell with the Town Manager's approval. Mr. Fishbone asked if this would allow better response time and Mr. Orcutt said it will. The Commissioners approved this.

Mr. Orcutt was asked to approach the Board regarding Heritage Landing and consider waiving a portion of the water connection fees or contribute to the pipe to the property. Mr. Orcutt informed Attorney Rob Antcil that the Board has never waived connection fees in the past. Mr. McCaffrey asked why this would benefit the town. Mr. Orcutt said it could benefit the DPW complex with water and fire protection. There would not be many new customers (maybe 7) besides the development. Mr. Gmeiner said that Cow Pond has a new well. Mr. Orcutt said they also have a well and cistern for fire protection at DPW. Mr. Gmeiner asked if this helps a loop

and Mr. Orcutt said it's a dead end. Mr. Fishbone asked how far it goes down and Mr. Orcutt said they would have to bring it about a mile. Mr. McCaffrey asked if they run the pipe and others connect will they contribute to the cost. Mr. Orcutt said we have done that with a resident but not a developer. Mr. Gmeiner is not enthused in paying anything towards this where there is not much benefit for the system or town. Mr. Gmeiner asked about maintenance and Mr. Orcutt said with 24 units it would be ok. Mr. McCaffrey asked about PFAS and Mr. Orcutt does not believe its an issue. Mr. Orcutt said the developer does not have an option to use a well.

Mr. Orcutt is taking a seminar tomorrow on the Littleton cybersecurity issue. Mr. Orcutt did get an email from DEP and they want every department to have designated personnel in charge of cybersecurity. Mr. Orcutt said our new SCADA company is out of Rhode Island and has two factor authentication. Mr. McCaffrey said we should have a conversation on this with them after learning more about Littleton.

Mrs. Crory summarized the Johnson's abatement request that was reviewed at the previous meeting and said her revised calculation charging the excess usage at the lowest tier would be an abatement of \$785.40. Mrs. Crory confirmed the leak has not returned since January and that the owner is set up for leak alerts.

Mr. Gmeiner made a motion to approve the abatement of \$785.40 for the July 2024 – January 2025 quarterly bills, Mr. Fishbone seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Fiscal Year 2025 Budget Updates

Mrs. Crory did not have any fiscal year 2025 updates.

Other Business

Mrs. Crory will work on a draft newsletter to go out in the next round of bills. The Water Department will share this cost with the Sewer Department.

The next meeting is May 13th, 2025.

Mr. Gmeiner made a motion to approve the minutes of April 1st, 2025 as written, Mr. Fishbone seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Gmeiner made a motion to adjourn at 8:29pm, Mr. Fishbone seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lauren Crory