

Groton Water Commission
Regular Meeting of the
Board of Water Commissioners
Tuesday, July 15th, 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.

Mr. McCaffrey called the meeting to order at 7:40pm. He stated that the meeting is being recorded and everyone introduced themselves.

Operational Updates

Mr. Orcutt just completed the lead and copper sampling and it looks good. He made a modification to annual statistical report after speaking with DEP today. The attorneys were sent the financial data and information for the greensand filter and they will send a demand letter to R.H. White.

There have been minor issues at the Baddacook cistern but it was cleaned and seems to be ok and everything looks very clean and clear but it is still being monitored. The 4-log is helping because otherwise would it would be offline.

Mr. Orcutt went on to report that we closed out the year with halfway decent pumping numbers and he is hoping for good numbers this summer. The aquifers and levels are looking good. Mr. McCaffrey asked how we are with our permitted withdrawal and Mr. Orcutt said we have not exceeded and are not close yet. He said that when we get over the 900,000-gallon mark we will watch carefully. He said that if we are not over that number and the levels are healthy, we will let people irrigate.

GDRHS Water Project

Mr. Orcutt said all the pipe is in, pressure tested and 85% has been. Two leaks were found and will be fixed tomorrow. The full chlorination will not be ready by August 15th and it will be later in August or September. They are waiting for some parts for the high school pump house to at least get them irrigation water soon.

They are installing services along the new route but cannot start connections until the chlorine booster station is up and running. Residential services may begin in October.

Mr. Orcutt wants to discuss certifying contractors to make the residential connections. According to MA DEP, anyone with a contaminated well from PFAS must be offered a free water service connection and the town must install the water service.

Mr. Orcutt said that going out to bid is an option to have all the services done through the bid, but it would cost about \$1.4 million dollars to go this route. The number has grown from 40 to about 80 mandatory water connections.

Mr. Orcutt said Mr. Haddad is working on a reimbursement program rather than putting the water connections out to bid. Mr. Orcutt said there will be more control if they have a list of contractors. Mr. Orcutt has 6 contractors that we are familiar with, as well as some plumbers.

Mr. McCaffrey asked if anyone in town gets a free connection and Mr. Orcutt said there is a map of the PFAS site and plume that shows homes impacted by PFAS (possibly from the high school contamination). The green homes on the map have no detect but they will continue to do testing so homes may be added or fall off. If there are 4 clean quarters they will fall off the map. LSP has drawn the radius and MA DEP has accepted this area. The yellow and red homes will be connected at no cost.

Mr. McCaffrey asked if Groton is responsible for Dunstable Properties and Mr. Orcutt said only the high school. Mr. Fishbone asked how much is Groton and how much is Dunstable/Pepperell. Mr. Orcutt said we are providing water to the Dunstable homes during the first phase. Pepperell will be responsible for Jersey Street once their treatment plant is online. Mr. Orcutt said Groton will be responsible for the Dunstable homes for about a year. Mr. Fishbone asked how long we will continue to monitor the plume. Mr. Orcutt said the towns are responsible for the plume for 2-3 years until the hazmat is cleared.

Mr. McCaffrey asked who is paying for this and Mr. Orcutt said the town is required to cover this cost. The Water Department is only assisting in the homeowner installation portion of the project. They are anticipating construction next spring for Phase II.

Mr. Fishbone said we are putting the pipe in that will eventually be taken over by Pepperell/Dunstable. Mr. Orcutt said Pepperell will be paying for their portion of the pipe on Jersey St. Mr. Fishbone asked what will happen if someone turns to yellow or red after the hazmat site is cleared and Mr. Orcutt said that has not been discussed yet. Mr. Fishbone can see this plume growing over time and creating additional exposures. Mr. Orcutt said anyone can connect on their own dime at any time. Mr. Orcutt agrees there will be more issues down the road.

Mr. Orcutt is hoping for the board to certify a list of contractors. Mr. Gmeiner has concerns about endorsing the contractors if there were ever negligence the water commissioners could be liable. Mr. Gmeiner would like Town Council to verify the approved contractor list and then would be ok to move forward with it.

Mr. McCaffrey suggested that Mr. Gmeiner could meet with Mr. Haddad and Mr. Orcutt to get this process streamlined for the town and Mr. Orcutt's replacement. Mr. Gmeiner said it is a possibility. Mr. Fishbone said instead of naming contractors we could have a list of criteria and the contractors with the criteria will be reimbursable. Mr. Gmeiner is seeing this as a town project and the town should be doing it on their own without endorsement from the Water Commissioners. Mr. McCaffrey thinks certified sounds more appropriate than endorsed. Mr.

Orcutt said we could pre-certify and then open it to other contractors that want to get on the list if they fit the criteria.

Water Management Act Permit Renewal

Mr. Orcutt said we got the Permit Renewal letter from the state and have 90 days to respond. Mr. Orcutt wants to see if the commissioners are ok with Apex/Environmental Partners to respond to MA DEP. Mr. Orcutt said we aren't getting more water out of this and we may need more water for future projects and being an MBTA community. He is looking for a \$10,000 limit to work on this project with Apex. Mr. Gmeiner asked if this a renewal of our existing permit and Mr. Orcutt said our permit was up in 2017 and the permitted numbers got adjusted and we are receiving a ten-year permit with one increase.

Mr. McCaffrey asked if this is just Groton or across the board and Mr. Orcutt thinks this will be an issue for many towns. Mr. McCaffrey sees the importance. Mr. Fishbone would approve it given it will have an impact for ten years. Mr. Gmeiner said the engineers help piece it all together and agrees professional help is appropriate.

Mr. Gmeiner made a motion to approve a limit of \$10,000 for Apex to assist in the response, Mr. Fishbone seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Fiscal Year 2025 Budget Updates

Mrs. Crory recapped the fiscal year 2025 budget which exceeded rates income by \$95,000. Construction Income came in below budget as expected due to the delay of the Groton Farms project. The overall income was about \$26,000 over budget.

Expenses looked good and were under budget by about \$22,000. Extra Debt will be carried forward in the manganese fund. The only overages on expenses were due to estimated costs for adding the new treatment plant (propane fill up, electricity, chemicals).

Mrs. Crory estimated our certified free cash to hold steady around \$450,000 and will withhold about \$40,000 of this amount for the final year of the "manganese fund" to help pay the manganese debt before all of our old debt falls off.

Other Business

Mr. Gmeiner asked about the emergency repair on Hollis St. The homeowner had a plugged iron pipe and Bob Black replaced their side and our side. We paid for the public side.

Mr. Gmeiner asked about the fire hydrant that was hit and Mr. Orcutt said we hired a company to trace down the insurance company of the person who hit it who got it replaced.

Mr. McCaffrey asked when the search will start for the new Superintendent and Mr. Orcutt said in Early August. Mr. McCaffrey asked if they can review a copy. Mr. Gmeiner asked to send the Town Manager criteria also.

The next meeting will be held in August.

July 15th, 2025

Mr. Gmeiner made a motion to approve the minutes of June 24th, 2025 as amended, Mr. Fishbone seconded, and Mr. McCaffrey abstained.

Mr. Gmeiner made a motion to adjourn at 7:53pm, Mr. Fishbone seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lauren Crory

July 15th, 2025