**Groton Select Board**

**Meeting Minutes**

**Joint Meeting with Groton, Dunstable and Pepperell Officials**

**Wednesday, July 30, 2025**

**PRESENT:** **Pepperell**: Select Board members Tony Beattie and Chuck Walkovich; Pepperell Board of Public Works members Tom Nephew, Pat Harrington, Jim McDonald, David Walsh III, Town Administrator, Andrew MacLean; DPW Director Kenneth Kalinowski, Deputy Director Paul Brinkman;

**Dunstable**: Select Board members Kieran Meehan and Ron Mikol; Advisory Board Member Harold Simmons; Board of Water Commissioners John O’Brien, Bridgette Pontbriand, and Davidi Tully III, Road Commission Chair Mike Martin, Dunstable Town Administrator Jason Silva; Sue Fayne, Assistant to Town Administrator and Select Board

**Groton**: Select Board members Matt Pisani, Peter Cunningham, John Reilly, Becky Pine and Alison Manugian (virtual); Groton Finance Committee Members Bud Robertson, Gary Green and Mary Linskey; Groton Town Manager Mark Haddad and Executive Assistant Kara Cruikshank; Groton Water Commissioners Jim Gmeiner and Greg Fishbone and Groton Water Department Thomas Orcutt,

**Apex Engineering**: Tyler Schmidt, Hanna Schenkel

**Pepperell Community Media**: David Pease, Ed Caron, Gerry Couper

## DISCUSSION / ACTION ITEMS

### Regional Water Quality Project Update

### Tyler Schmidt, a representative from the project team (Apex Engineering) provided a comprehensive update on the Regional Water Quality Project addressing PFAS contamination originating from the Groton Dunstable Regional High School. The presentation covered the history of the contamination, project phases, construction progress, and funding.

### The contamination was first detected when MassDEP found high levels of PFAS in the school's water and surrounding private wells. MassDEP determined that the school was responsible for the contamination, which originated from aqueous film-forming foam used by firefighters. The contamination spread through groundwater to nearby residential properties in Groton and Dunstable.

### The project team outlined the regional solution developed by representatives from the three towns (Groton, Dunstable, and Pepperell):

### ● Phase 1: Installing water mains up Chicopee Row to the high school and surrounding streets (Kemp Street, North Street) to service properties affected by the initial contamination discovery

### ● Phase 2A: Connecting to additional affected areas including portions of Groton Street

### ● Phase 3: Adding water mains to newly discovered contaminated areas on Ready Meadow, Raddin Road, Hawtree Trail, and southern Kemp Street

### ● Phase 2B: Eventually connecting Pepperell and Dunstable water systems (subject to interbasin transfer approval)

### Mr. Schmidt explained that the contamination plume had expanded since the original 2023 assessment, requiring service to three additional streets in Groton and one in Dunstable. This expansion was discovered in March 2025 when the Licensed Site Professional (LSP) informed the project team of new test results.

### Regarding construction progress, Phase 1 began in January 2025 with crews installing 5 miles of water main by April 2025. Mr. Schmidt noted that construction was moving ahead of schedule, with water service to the school expected by November 2025 and completion of all Phase 1 water mains by the end of 2025. Final paving would follow in May 2026.

### For Phases 2A and 3, the schedule includes:

### ● July 2025: Authorization to begin design

### ● Summer/Fall 2025: Design and survey work

### ● Fall/Winter 2025: Permitting

### ● Spring 2026: Bidding

### ● Spring/Fall 2026: Construction

### ● Spring 2027: Final paving

### Mr. Schmidt addressed the funding breakdown:

### ● Phase 1: $11,400,000

### ● Phase 2A: $4,800,000

### ● Phase 3: $4,100,000

### ● Private water service installations: $1,500,000

### The cost-sharing arrangement between towns was detailed as follows:

### ● Groton: 77.6% of costs (reflecting student percentage at the school), plus $1,000,000 from Groton Water Department

### ● Dunstable: 14.6% of Phase 1 costs ($1,600,000)

### ● Pepperell: $10,400,000 for Phase 2

### Groton appropriated $16,700,000 at their 2023 Fall Town Meeting for both phases. A 0% interest loan from the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund was secured in January 2024, and a federal grant of $5,000,000 was obtained for a portion of Phase 2 work. Mr. Schmidt confirmed that despite the expanded scope, each community had sufficient appropriated funds to complete the additional work.

### A significant concern was raised about private water service connections. Mr. Schmidt explained that properties within the plume boundary with any detectable PFAS must be offered free water service connections. A reimbursement program would be established for 78 affected properties, allowing residents to select from pre-approved contractors for installation work. Residents would need home inspections and would be required to decommission PFAS-containing wells to receive reimbursement.

### During public comment, several residents expressed concerns:

### Gail Brown from Dunstable objected to the reimbursement program, stating it was unfair to require homeowners to pay upfront costs for a contamination issue they didn't cause. She described the hardship of dealing with contaminated water, including having to carry in bottled water monthly. Mark Haddad, Groton Town Manager, responded that the towns were working to address this concern and trying to find a solution that wouldn't require upfront payment from residents.

### A resident from Groton Street asked how long the testing and remediation would continue. Mr. Schmidt explained that the process would end once a permanent solution (water main connection) was implemented for all impacted properties, allowing the LSP to close the site.

### Karen King, a resident at 427 Groton Street, requested testing of her property, noting she was just outside the plume boundary but surrounded by affected properties. She expressed concern about health issues (Crohn's disease and thyroid cancer) that might be related to the contamination. Mr. Schmidt offered to connect her with the LSP for testing.

### Another resident commented on the continued expansion of the plume and expressed concern about future homeowners who might discover contamination after the site is officially closed, leaving them without financial assistance for connections.

### A final comment highlighted the positive aspect of this project creating a more resilient regional water system with emergency interconnections between the three towns' water systems and expanded municipal fire protection coverage.

### Meeting Adjourned at 6:45 p.m.

### Respectfully submitted,

### Mark W. Haddad

### Groton Town Manager