

Groton Water Commission
Regular Meeting of the
Board of Water Commissioners
Tuesday, October 28th, 2025
Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Minutes

Present are Chairman John McCaffrey, Vice Chairman Greg Fishbone, Member James Gmeiner, Superintendent Tom Orcutt, Business Manager Lauren Croy, Tyler Schmidt and Hanna Schenkel from Apex Companies.

Mr. McCaffrey called the meeting to order at 7:41pm. He stated that the meeting is being recorded and everyone introduced themselves.

Operational Updates (Superintendent)

Mr. Schmidt said that there have been some issues with the media in the greensand filters. There was manganese breakthrough about 6 months into the filtering process. He contacted the manufacturer of the media and the thought it may be damaged due to insufficient backwashing. The operators followed the training from the manufacturer. They also think silica in the source water has affected the process. In the early spring they worked with Mr. Orcutt and Mr. Haddad and the President of the media company. The company agreed to provide new media but not installation.

Mr. Schmidt said that a similar situation is now happening 6 months later. They would like to get more data on this and keep the manufacturer out of the conversation until they know what is going on. He reached out to Blueleaf who can do the on-site testing. Mr. McCaffrey asked if we are still within state guidelines and Mr. Schmidt said 1-2 filters have sampled above the state limit. Mr. Orcutt said all the filters are being used the same.

Apex Companies will oversee this testing. Ms. Schenkel will be meeting with Blueleaf onsite this week. Mr. Schmidt is not sure how long this process will take and will report back. Mr. Orcutt asked how many in house resources will be needed and Mr. Schmidt does not expect much more than daily checks to make sure things are flowing. Mr. Orcutt said they are available.

Mr. Schmidt is waiting on the cost and scope from Blueleaf.

Mr. Gmeiner asked for clarification and Mr. Schmidt said there could be a chemical agent or chemical byproduct interfering with media's ability to remove manganese and the other one is channeling, where water goes to the path of least resistance, so will avoid the media if it is not working properly.

FY26 Fall Transfer Increase

Mrs. Crory explained that the Department of Revenue required us to increase our Fall Reserve Fund Transfer to cover the income shortage caused by the delay of the Groton Farms Project. Since the FY26 Budget was voted in at the increased income level, the state is requiring us to pull out funds to keep our budget “whole”. Mrs. Crory explained that we should be able to make up some of this income shortfall internally as rates are trending higher than budget and can make up some in unspent expenses. Any unused transferred funds will be sent back to reserves.

In the future, we can make budget changes by September and get a revised budget approved at Fall Town Meeting. We will also budget new and standalone capital projects more conservatively to avoid large fluctuations in the budget.

Financials FY27 Draft Budget (Business Manager)

Mrs. Crory pulled up the debt schedule which shows the “old debt” declining and completely falling off in FY28. She wanted to make sure that the commissioners understood that when the old debt fell off, it was being replaced by the new manganese debt. She reminded everyone that the manganese capital fees were collected and handled internally in a fund that was dispersed each year to help us get to the point where all old debt falls off and can be used for the manganese treatment plant debt.

This is why we have spoken about possibly reducing the manganese capital fee in FY28. However, that is only the case if we continue to use about \$400,000 of operating income to offset our debt payment. The commissioners would like to look at keeping the fee the same to free up some of this operating funds.

Mrs. Crory then presented the manganese debt spreadsheet which shows an annual debt payment of about \$630,000. The current capital fee brings in about \$280,000 per year meaning we will need at least \$350,000 from the operating budget to complete these debt payments. She also showed that the internally tracked “manganese fund” will no longer be needed after FY28 and the debt schedule is simplified and easier to manage.

The Whitney Well III capital fee brings in about \$70,000 per year and the debt payment is about \$90,000 until FY32 and then will be reduced to \$50,000 per year for the remaining life of the debt. Mr. McCaffrey said that the idea behind Whitney Well III was that some of the increased income would offset the debt payment for this project so is comfortable with the operating budget (rate income) offsetting a portion of this debt payment.

Mr. Fishbone added that we could also track how much of the operating budget is being used to offset the Whitney Well III debt payments (Mrs. Crory said about \$20,000 per year) and keep that in mind when the debt drops in FY33. It could be rational to leave the fee and recoup some of those funds, if needed. He noted there will be an increase in customers at that point which will also affect these numbers.

Mrs. Crory reviewed a forecast for this year's budget since we will not be getting a \$144,000 connection fee from the Groton Farms project due to the delay. She said that rates will offset this amount a bit but is forecasting income to come in about \$110,000 short. This is based on another large connection fee coming in for the new facility being built at Four Corners on the Dunkin Donuts/Bank Corner. Mrs. Crory said we can use the \$50,000 Capital Fund line item in the expense budget to offset the shortage also which brings the net shortage to about \$60,000 if all else goes as planned. These figures would project the FY27 Beginning Free Cash to be close to \$300,000. She also noted that there will be other unknown budget changes happening involving Mr. Orcutt's retirement and adding the new employee.

Mrs. Crory said we will need to decide how to handle the Groton Farms connection fees. She said that a clean option would be to use that extra income to offset some of the debt payments. Mr. Gmeiner added that once they start making the payments the Department of Revenue should allow us to incorporate it in the budget if we wish to do so.

Other Business

Mr. McCaffrey said the new employee should spend as much time as possible with Mr. Orcutt and should focus on the top responsibilities of the position. He said that the operators have a good handle on the field and Mrs. Crory can handle the finances and help with the office responsibilities while Mr. Decker is learning.

Next Meetings will be Thursday, November 6th and Wednesday, November 12th.

Mr. Gmeiner made a motion to approve the minutes of September 30th, 2025, Mr. Fishbone seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. McCaffrey made a motion to adjourn at 8:42pm, Mr. Gmeiner seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lauren Crory