

Groton Water Commission
Regular Meeting of the
Board of Water Commissioners
Tuesday, July 28th, 2026
Virtual Meeting using Zoom

Minutes

Present are Vice Chairman Greg Fishbone, Member James Gmeiner, Water Superintendent Dan Stoneking, Business Manager Lauren Crory.

Mr. Fishbone called the meeting to order at 7:33pm. He stated that we are being recorded and everyone introduced themselves.

Operational Updates – Water Superintendent

Mr. Stoneking said that aquifer levels have not changed since last meeting and the precipitation for the last 30 days was 2.2 inches.

Mr. Stoneking gave an update on the Chicopee Row Water Main project which currently involves installing water mains on some of the side streets such as Hawtree and Radin.

Mr. Stoneking spoke with water management at MA DEP. The maximum per day has been an issue but overall annual has been ok. Whitney Well #3 has exceeded the daily limit on occasion. Mr. Stoneking will have to explain these overages and will explain the new High School irrigation connection. Mr. Fishbone asked if this is required and Mr. Stoneking said we have to report any time we exceed the maximum daily withdrawal limit. The operators now know about the maximum per day and they will be sure to stay within the limit moving forward. Mr. Fishbone knows we have exceeded those amounts in the past but was not sure of the process. Mr. Stoneking said Mr. Orcutt would have reported to DEP on why the overages happened. In the past, it was most likely because we didn't have Whitney Well III yet.

Mr. Stoneking said the operator position will be posted again in late August. The operators are planning water main flushing for the fall. Lead & Copper testing will be starting up relatively soon and he will be sending out samples in the next few weeks.

Mr. Stoneking said the current cost to tap a water main is \$250.00 and would like to increase that because it doesn't cover the cost of labor and parts. Mr. Fishbone said we will discuss it at our next public rate & fee hearing. Mr. Gmeiner asked if he can prepare an estimate of an appropriate cost.

Water Conservation – Water Superintendent

Mr. Stoneking will get a drought update on August 6th.

Common St Project – Water Superintendent

The contractor will be putting a cost analysis together which Mr. Stoneking will review first and approach the Water Commission with a plan.

Capital Improvements – Water Superintendent

Mr. Stoneking said he is working on a Capital Improvement plan and will send it before the next meeting to discuss when Mr. McCaffrey is back.

FY26 Budget – Business Manager

Mrs. Crory reviewed the FY26 year-end budget. Rate Income exceeded the budgeted amount by \$182,488 due to a combination of new customers and a rate adjustment mid-year. The FY27 rate budget is in line with the actual amount brought in during FY26. This excess rate income helped offset a construction income deficit which ended the year short of budget by \$125,867. This was mainly caused by the delay of a large project which had been included in the FY26 budget. The overall income ended up exceeding the total income budget by \$51,943.

Mrs. Crory reviewed the FY26 Expenses. A few categories exceeded budget substantially due to one-time issues such a costly VFD repair, the need to clean 2 wells instead of just one, a pump repair during well cleaning, and a complex leak on Main Street which required an outside vendor to assist as well as increased police details and overtime pay. There were also some items that exceeded budget that may be the new normal based on the new treatment plant and Whitney Well III running full time. These items include Electricity, Propane, and Well Testing. Mrs. Crory will discuss these items with the operators to determine if there were excess expenses this year or if the amount will continue moving forward.

Mrs. Crory also reviewed the FY27 budget and compared some of the line items to the FY26 actual data to determine if the FY27 budget still looks stable. She believes the Rate Income budget is in line with FY26 actuals and should be met. She said the Construction Income is fairly conservative and she believes we will meet it with a combination of parts, labor, and connection fees. She will continue to monitor both.

Miscellaneous Income remains level but Mr. Gmeiner noticed that it often runs just short of the budgeted number and asked if we can remind the operators to schedule backflow testing at appropriate times to allow time to bill out and receive all payments within the fiscal year.

Mrs. Crory said the FY27 salary budget looks accurate. She said the FY27 wage budget estimated a new operator for the full year which is now going to be a partial year so we will keep that in mind moving forward. Wages can fluctuate due to overtime so she does not want to depend on extra funds in this category.

Expenses look generally good but after penciling in a few over budgeted and underbudgeted items she estimates it could be short by \$16,000. She reiterated these are estimated and does not think this amount is concerning at this time.

Mrs. Crory recommends doing quick review at each meeting but doing a thorough review in early October as the irrigation season winds down. Checking the rate income at this time helps determine where the rate income for the year will be in comparison to the budget. The commissioners are in agreement with this plan.

Other Business: budget, bills, minutes, meeting schedule etc.

Mr. Gmeiner made a motion to approve the minutes of July 14th as amended, Mr. Fishbone seconded, and the motion carried unanimously. Roll Call: Gmeiner-Aye, Fishbone-Aye

Next Meeting is August 11th, 2026.

Mr. Fishbone made a motion to adjourn at 8:42pm, Mr. Gmeiner seconded and the motion carried unanimously. Roll Call: Gmeiner-Aye, Fishbone-Aye

Respectfully Submitted,

Lauren Crory