

Groton Water Commission

Regular Meeting of the Board of Water Commissioners

Wednesday, June 08, 2016

Groton Town Hall

Minutes

Present are BOWC's Chair John McCaffrey, Vice Chair James Gmeiner, Member Greg Fishbone, Water Superintendent Thomas Orcutt, and Business Manager April Iannacone.

Mr. McCaffrey called the regular BOWC meeting to order at 7:30 pm.

Goals and Objectives:

Mr. McCaffrey stated that what he would like to do is have Mr. Orcutt update the Commissioners on the projects that are currently in process, and then have each Commissioner propose up to 3 projects that they feel are important for the department to consider working on. After discussion and prioritizing of the projects, he would like each commissioner to be comfortable with the proposed projects, and hopefully have each commissioner take the lead on working one of the projects along with the department staff. Mr. Orcutt gave a brief update of the projects currently in progress in the department which included the SWMI Grant program for permitting and rate review, the new metering system, the Baddacook Lagoons and minor plant improvements at Whitney Pond Well. Mr. Orcutt and the other Commissioners answered Mr. Fishbone's questions with regard to the projects in process to inform him of what all these projects consisted of, as the other Commissioners were already aware of them. Mr. McCaffrey also stated that he was involved and providing additional support with regard to the Baddacook weed removal. This was a project that the Commissioners had agreed to take part in helping with, but they were not the lead of or responsible for.

Mr. Gmeiner stated that his biggest project was beginning to be addressed with the SWMI grant, which was the finances and having funding available for capital improvements without having to borrow above and beyond the debt the department already carries. Being able to balance conservation but still sell water and make rates money for the department needs, increasing customer base for revenue, but not affecting or being limited by the State permitted withdrawal limits. These are things he would like to see the information from the grant results and see what we can further do to implement or investigate options. His other project/concern is over the iron bacteria at the Baddacook Well. He knows that the issue is ongoing, but would like to begin creating a maintenance plan for management, and look at putting a more regular budget line item in for these expenses as they are beginning to occur more frequently, rather than on an occasional basis. Mr. Fishbone asked if the departments' water source was high in iron. Mr. Orcutt explained that there was a slightly elevated iron content in the source, but issues many years ago caused some bacteria that feed specifically on the iron in the source. This happens all before treatment, but it has become a maintenance issue to keep under control. Mr. Fishbone then asked if the lagoon project taking place at Baddacook would address this issue. Mr. Orcutt replied that it will help the issue, but the problem already exists and consultants have reviewed the situation stating that the particular type of iron bacteria is extremely difficult to completely remove. Mr. Gmeiner asked about the high manganese test result at Whitney Well. Mr. Orcutt replied that after the elevated result of manganese at Whitney 2 at the action level, the State DEP is now requiring quarterly testing in place of the annual testing protocol that had been followed until a determination could be made on the extent of any problem. Mr. Orcutt stated that the operators

are now testing monthly as well as the State's required quarterly in order to monitor the situation internally. The monthly results seem to be up one month and down the next, but overall seem to be improving. The concern is that Whitney 1 is on the same aquifer, as well as pumping more, and does not have the issue with the high manganese. Mr. Orcutt stated that things would continue to be monitored and he would keep them informed, but if it came down to a bigger issue that needed resolution, he would rather be investigating treatment options over adding phosphates, even though the treatment will be more expensive. His concern over adding phosphates is it only masks the problem instead of removing it, could change the treatment license grade for the well, and can be cause for bacteria concerns in the future.

Mr. Fishbone stated that his main project/concern was improving communications, through improving the website capability and data, and looking into social media options or other ways to engage with the customer base. Mr. Fishbone stated that being new to the Commission and not being familiar with the operations end, this is the only project he has that he would like to see worked on.

Mr. McCaffrey handed out a summary of his first project, which was in line with Mr. Gmeiner's concerns over revenue and capacity. He would like to look at the impact of incentivizing growth, and looked forward to the results of the grant study in order to move forward with this task. Mr. Fishbone asked if there was a program for people looking to connect. Mr. Orcutt stated that he and the Commissioners had recently begun working on a policy that was handed out to the Commissioners for review and discussion at a future meeting. Mr. McCaffrey handed out his second summary of the next project he was proposing which was the possibility of supporting renewable energy/solar installation. He would like to look into opportunities to work with Groton Electric on identifying sites the water department owns that could work for solar installation to reduce costs.

Mr. Orcutt stated that the project he would like to see take place would be for work to begin on a new master plan for the department and would like to look into grant opportunities to do so. The master plan would identify piping and infrastructure improvements, like certain extensions or looping lines to connect back to other parts of the system, look into storage capacity and pumping capacity. It would lay out all of the recommended or needed capital improvements and make recommendations on how to implement and move forward on these items. Mr. Fishbone asked if there was an alternative to the master plan if it was not done. Mr. Orcutt replied that some of these things were being done now on a smaller scale, like the grant we are doing now. It would just be done more on an as needed or approached rather than being laid out in a plan to stay organized by. Mr. Gmeiner requested Mr. Orcutt locate and scan the old master plan so all commissioners could review them before further discussion of a new plan.

Upon review and discussion of all of the goals it was determined that the communications and the revenue/capacity plans were the highest of priorities among all, followed by the solar and the master plan. Mr. Fishbone stated that he would like to take the lead on communications as he has many ideas for improvement. He would work with Ms. Iannacone and the IT department to begin a redesign of the website. Mr. Orcutt would take the lead on working on the master plan and getting the commissioners the old one. Mr. McCaffrey would take the lead on the solar initiative, and the revenue/capacity goal would be reviewed upon the completion of the SWMI grant program and recommendations.

Superintendents Report:

Mr. Orcutt gave a brief update on day to day operations with regard to local projects going on in town, the metering system that the business manager is working with the 2 vendors on the conversion process for, the CCR that had been printed, mailed and sent to DEP for certification. He informed the commissioners that the summer help had started and his tasks had been laid out for him. His last update was with regard to water consumption and conservation. The consumption has begun to increase as irrigation systems are being turned back on for the summer season. The

department will be including a notice on the next 3 billing cycles as a reminder to residents about the mandatory odd/even policy and he will be putting a reminder in the local newspaper as well.

Other Business

Mr. McCaffrey stated that National Heritage had approved the work proposed for the Baddacook weed removal, the highway and water departments are all set with the removal sites, and that work would begin in July.

Mr. Gmeiner requested that a statement be noted in the minutes that it is his opinion that Mr. Fishbone’s blog violates the open meeting law. He would like it stated on record that he does not agree with the blog should anyone file a complaint in the future.

The Commissioners agreed to put an open meeting law discussion on their next meeting as an agenda item so the topic could be discussed in further detail.

Minutes:

Mr. Gmeiner made a motion to approve the regular meeting minutes of Tuesday, May 24th 2016 as written. Mr. McCaffrey seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Bills:

The bills presented to the Board were all signed and submitted for payment.

Mr. Gmeiner made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:25 p.m., Mr. McCaffrey seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

April Iannacone
Business Manager

John McCaffrey _____ Date _____

James Gmeiner _____ Date _____

Greg Fishbone _____ Date _____