

Groton Water Commission  
Regular Meeting & Public Hearing  
Of the  
Board of Water Commissioners  
Tuesday, December 12th, 2017  
1<sup>st</sup> Floor Meeting Room

**Minutes**

Present are Vice Chairman Greg Fishbone, Clerk James Gmeiner, Superintendent Thomas Orcutt and Business Manager Lauren Croy.

Mr. Fishbone called the meeting to order at 7:10pm.

**Water Conservation Program**

Mr. Orcutt reported that water levels are about the same at both wells. He said we will be using Whitney 2 now and will continue to pump 9 ½ to 11 hours a day. He also reported that pond levels look good. Mr. Fishbone asked if all boards have been pulled and Mr. Orcutt said there is one remaining board to be pulled soon, if not already.

**Whitney Well Construction**

Mr. Orcutt said there is a progress meeting on Wednesday at 2:00. He hopes to get an updated schedule with information regarding when Wright Pierce will put the transformers in, where they stand with MCC panels, piping, etc. Mr. Orcutt will send the commissioners the updated scheduled once he receives it.

**Other Business**

Mr. Orcutt said we will review 6 month financials at the first meeting in January.

*Chairman Mr. McCaffrey arrived at 7:25pm.*

Mr. Gmeiner made a motion to approve the minutes of November 28<sup>th</sup>, 2017 as amended, Mr. McCaffrey seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

Invoices for Expense Warrant 13 were signed.

**Public Hearing: Water Rates, Fees, and Miscellaneous Charges**

Mr. Gmeiner read the public notice hearing, "In accordance with Chapter 40, section 42-A to 42-I, of the Massachusetts General Laws and the Town of Groton Usage Fee Regulations, the board of Groton Water commissioners will hold a Public Hearing, Tuesday, December 12, 2017 at 7:30pm in the first floor meeting room of the Town Hall, 173 Main St., Groton, MA in order to review and adjust accordingly the water rates, fees and miscellaneous charges per the Town of Groton Water regulations."

Mr. McCaffrey asked Mr. Orcutt to review the spreadsheet of current and proposed fees.

There are no proposed changes to the water rates or service charge.

Mr. Orcutt proposed that the late fee be changed from \$10.00 per month to \$15.00 per month to encourage people to pay on time or to sign up for automatic debit. Mr. McCaffrey asked if there is any incentive to sign up

for automatic debit and Mr. Orcutt said there is not but we could look into reducing the service charge when people sign up. The commissioners will continue this discussion at the next meeting.

Mr. Orcutt created a labor cost analysis for the service technicians to ensure we are charging enough labor fees to cover our labor costs.

In order to cover our labor costs, Mr. Orcutt recommended we increase the turn on/ turn off charge from \$50.00 to \$60.00. After hours would be \$120.00.

Mr. Orcutt recommended we increase our final reading charge from \$35.00 to \$50.00.

Mr. Orcutt recommended we decrease our frozen meter replacement fee from \$200.00 to \$65.00. After hours would be \$120.00.

Mr. Orcutt recommended we do not change the Meter Tamper fee of \$300.00.

After an analysis of surrounding towns and discussion on upcoming system development projects, Mr. Orcutt recommended we change the System Development fees as follows:

	Current	Proposed
5/8"	\$ 3,750.00	n/a
3/4"	\$ 3,750.00	n/a
1"	\$ 3,750.00	\$ 4,250.00
1 1/4"	n/a	\$ 5,000.00
1 1/2"	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 6,500.00
2"	\$ 7,500.00	\$ 10,000.00
3"	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 12,500.00
4"	\$ 15,000.00	\$ 17,500.00
6"	\$ 25,000.00	\$ 30,000.00
8"	\$ 35,000.00	\$ 45,000.00
10"	\$ 35,000.00	\$ 45,000.00
12"	\$ 35,000.00	\$ 45,000.00

Mr. Orcutt recommended the tapping fee be increased from \$100.00 to \$150.00.

Mr. Orcutt recommended the labor rate be increased from \$50.00 per hour to \$65.00 per hour and after hours rate increased from \$100.00 to \$120.00. Based on the labor cost analysis, Mr. McCaffrey feels this amount is fair and does not exceed the actual labor cost per hour.

Mr. Orcutt recommended the fire flow test fee be increased from \$100.00 to a \$250.00 flat fee that will include anything needed to complete the fire flow test.

Mr. Orcutt does not think the hydrant charges should be changed. He used updated parameters and plugged them into an AWWA formula to calculate hydrant charges. One of the parameters includes the area covered by hydrant protection and he does not want private hydrant payers to pay for public area.

Mr. Orcutt used an AWWA formula to calculate sprinkler charges. Based on the formula, Mr. Orcutt made the following recommendations:

	Current	Proposed
2"	\$ 200.00	\$ 200.00
4"	\$ 200.00	\$ 386.88
6"	\$ 319.00	\$ 580.32
8"	\$ 511.00	\$ 773.76
10"	\$ 734.00	\$ 967.20
12"	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 1,160.60

Mr. McCaffrey asked if this is the charge when a sprinkler line is put in and Mr. Orcutt said it is the annual charge for fire protection and being able to supply adequate water for the sprinkler systems. Mr. Fishbone asked if we anticipate any 10" or 12" lines and Mr. Orcutt said we do not. Mr. Gmeiner asked if we still plan to switch these charges from quarterly to annually and Mr. Orcutt said yes because we want to keep these charges separate from the Water and Sewer Charges. Mr. Orcutt said we will want to send a letter to the sprinkler customers informing them of the change to annual billing. Mr. McCaffrey asked why we charge them a fee every year and Mr. Orcutt explained that it goes back to capital investment and making sure we are able to supply adequate water to the sprinkler systems.

Mr. Orcutt recommended increasing the backflow test charge from \$100.00 to \$150.00 for the first test. Other tests on devices in the same building would remain at \$50.00 each. The charge for a retest was recommended to be increased from \$50.00 to \$75.00. After hours test would be increased from \$100.00 to \$150.00. Mr. McCaffrey asked why these charges would be increased and Mr. Orcutt explained that the cost must cover Stephen Knox's travel time, labor time, administrative time, and backflow testing license fees as well as the office administrative time to record data, send bills, and receive payments. Mr. McCaffrey would like an analysis of these costs to determine if the \$150.00 charge for the first test is fair. The commissioners will continue this discussion at the next meeting.

Mr. Orcutt proposed adding a fee of \$150.00 for service line flushing and \$300.00 for service line flushing with the jellybean machine. Mr. Orcutt explained the process of flushing with and without the jellybean machine both which require two workers. The jellybean machine flushing can take a few hours depending on how many times they need to flush. We are going to enforce that people turn on cold taps for 15 minutes and if they still want the flush after doing this, we would assess the fee. Mr. McCaffrey asked if there would ever be a case that we did not charge the customer because it would be our responsibility to flush their service line. Mr. Orcutt explained that it is hard to judge who really needs it and who thinks they need it without being there to see what flushes out. The commissioners will continue this discussion at the next meeting.

Mr. Gmeiner discussed some upcoming capital projects such as Shattuck Well and mentioned that a capital improvements program study suggested that we be spending \$1 million a year on improving and repairing our system. He also reiterated that the connection fees we charge should be used to make sure we can supply the water delivery. He noted that our connection fees are in the middle of the fees charged by surrounding towns. The towns that are lower are probably not investing much back into their systems.

Mr. McCaffrey suggests that we continue the hearing at the next meeting.

Mr. Gmeiner made a motion to continue the hearing on December 19<sup>th</sup> at 7:30pm, Mr. Fishbone seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. McCaffrey made a motion to adjourn at 8:38pm, Mr. Gmeiner seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lauren Crory  
Business Manager