

Groton Water Commission
Regular Meeting
Of the
Board of Water Commissioners
Tuesday, September 24th, 2019
Assessor's Meeting Room – 1st Floor
Minutes

Present are Chairman Jack McCaffrey, Vice Chairman Greg Fishbone, Member James Gmeiner, Superintendent Thomas Orcutt, Business Manager Lauren Crory, and CEI Senior Engineer Michael Ohl.

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

Water Conservation Program – Well Levels & Pumping

Mr. Orcutt said water levels are fairly consistent and we had a good September for pumping, similar to August. Mr. McCaffrey asked if the water conservation program is still in affect and Mr. Orcutt said it will be in affect until the end of the month.

Whitney Pond Well – Manganese Planning

Mr. Ohl said that at the DEP Meeting (Wednesday), we will discuss our submitted plan and the goal will be to determine compliance dates. Mr. Orcutt asked if they will want to see any alternatives and Mr. Ohl said their biggest concern is that we are working on getting the problem solved.

Mr. Gmeiner said that other parties might be interested in any less expensive alternatives. Mr. McCaffrey said that a connection with Dunstable would not be feasible, which was one alternative discussed. Mr. Fishbone asked why it is not feasible and Mr. Ohl said that the distance is too far, they don't have enough capacity, their system is small, it is a farming community which may have higher nitrates, and rates are too high. Mr. McCaffrey asked what other alternatives people have asked about and Mr. Gmeiner said the Town Forest (West Groton). Mr. Orcutt said there would be limits to how much could be taken and Mr. Gmeiner said that we would not know how long it would be until they need to treat for manganese. Mr. McCaffrey said that about three quarters of our water source comes from Whitney Pond so we need to make sure we have that capacity and can treat it. All other alternatives don't give us enough capacity. Mr. Orcutt said possibly a third well would, but Mr. McCaffrey said that option would cost millions and could possibly not fix the issue.

Mr. McCaffrey said that the Selectboard wants to be involved in the planning process and Mr. Gmeiner said that we will present the plan and explain how we decided on it, once Mass DEP approves it. He also said that typically more communication is better but if it is not good information it can cause problems. Mr. McCaffrey would like to continue directing the public to

visit our website for the most up to date and accurate information regarding manganese levels and treatment plans.

The board members discussed the tentative treatment plan schedule and strategized ways to expedite certain areas. Piloting will hopefully be done this fall to get the process starting. We will need to transfer funds out of our reserve fund to pay for this.

Mr. McCaffrey asked Mr. Ohl why greensand is the most cost-effective route. Mr. Ohl explained that membranes have limited vendors so you are at their mercy for costs and end up with acids to clean out, and biological is difficult because need to start and stop depending on bacteria dying off. Mr. McCaffrey asked if we should have any concerns about needing to treat anything else in the near future and Mr. Ohl said that PFAs are becoming more prevalent. Treatment for PFAs would be a supplemental process at Baddacook Well. Mr. McCaffrey asked if we should test for them now, and Mr. Orcutt said that Mass DEP will soon be requiring this testing. Mr. Orcutt asked the board if they would like to conduct the testing now and all were in favor. Mr. Orcutt will plan to get the PFAs testing done in the next six months.

Mr. McCaffrey asked Mr. Ohl if he thinks we could run the pipes sooner to start treating some of the water. Mr. Ohl said DEP will be in favor of anything sooner rather than later. Mr. Ohl thinks pipeline could be completed by the end of 2020. Mr. Ohl said the deadline for Srf Funding is October 15th but we can certainly send earlier in the year once we are ready. Mr. McCaffrey said that we are probably in agreement with DEP that we need to balance a conservative but aggressive plan.

Water Rates and Fees

Mrs. Crory calculated various capital charges to determine how much annual revenue would be brought in for various amounts. The capital charge would be quarterly and would be charged to all non-irrigation accounts. Based on 1765 Non-Irrigation accounts, a \$10 quarterly charge would generate \$70,600 annually, a \$15 quarterly charge would generate \$105,900 annually, and a \$20 quarterly charge would generate \$141,200 annually. The town treasurer prepared an outline of what borrowing 2.3 million (to start the project and get pipes in the ground) would look like. By looking at the amount of our debt payment, prior to our current debt being paid off, the board agreed that a \$20 quarterly charge along with the \$141,200 annual revenue could be one way to cover this new debt payment.

Mr. Fishbone asked what will happen for customers that cannot afford this increase in their quarterly water bill and Mr. McCaffrey said we could discuss the details down the road. Mrs. Crory reminded the board that about \$280,000 of our current debt will be paid off in FY2025. Followed by the remainder being paid off in FY2026.

Other Business

The board is expected to attend the October 7th Selectboard meeting to give them an update on the manganese treatment. The board will have an executive session meeting on October 2nd to recap the Mass DEP meeting.

Invoices for Expense Warrant 8 were signed.

Next Meetings: October 2nd, 2019 and October 7th, 2019

Mr. McCaffrey made a motion to adjourn at 9:14pm, Mr. Fishbone seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lauren Crory
Business Manager