

Groton Water Commission
Regular Meeting
Of the
Board of Water Commissioners
Tuesday, January 7th, 2020
1st Floor Meeting Room
Minutes

Present are Chairman Jack McCaffrey, Vice Chairman Greg Fishbone, Member James Gmeiner, Superintendent Thomas Orcutt, Business Manager Lauren Crory, Finance Committee Member David Manugian, Attorney Deutsche from Brooks & Derensis.

Mr. McCaffrey called the meeting to order at 7:01pm.

Manganese – Open Public Forum

Mr. Gmeiner said that it was mentioned at a recent Select Board meeting that the elevated manganese levels could have been caused by pumping during the drought. Mr. Ohl said this is relevant and although it is naturally occurring, it is common to see increases over time which could coincide with pumping. During recent, lower ground level waters and droughts, more ground water is exposed to oxygen and can exacerbate the natural occurrence, but this is a normal part of pumping.

Mr. McCaffrey said the board is going to a Select Board meeting next week to go over the consent order. We are continuing to do monthly monitoring and are posting samples up to December. Mr. Orcutt said we will have more updated results next week. Mr. McCaffrey said we have installed a filtration system at town hall if people would like to fill containers.

Mr. Manugian is on Finance Committee and Capital Expenditure Committee. He asked if Whitney Wells are registered or permitted, Mr. Ohl said they are permitted and do not have any restrictions and have approved yield only. Mr. Manugian asked if there are concerns about draw over time and if statistically report would show above approved state yield. Mr. Ohl said no and thinks biggest concerns were because of the drought. Mr. McCaffrey said we had very strict restrictions during the drought. Mr. Manugian asked if we had any concerns about irrigation and if we would we ever raise rates to discourage irrigation. Mr. McCaffrey explained a few years ago we split the rate so irrigation is a bit higher. Mr. Manugian said we could raise irrigation rates quite a bit but also understands if the rate was too high people may want to put in their own well. Mr. Orcutt said there are also Board of Health issues with installing separate irrigation wells. Mr. Orcutt added that the schools would probably be able to install their own irrigation wells if needed.

Mr. McCaffrey said coming off the drought we updated Whitney and got permitted to use Whitney I and Whit II together, we used smaller pumps and variable speeds, and it is more

controlled. Mr. Gmeiner said we need people to water their lawns to get the rate income to support our operating budget; relying on domestic use would result in very high rates. Mr. Manugian said yes if it's too high consumption might go down. Mr. Manugian asked if new rate increase will help cover upcoming capital costs. Mr. McCaffrey said no and that the rate increase is meant to keep up with increasing expenses and we are trying to build reserves back up. The new capital charge will help offset the new debt. Mr. Fishbone said this is based on prospective debt schedules. Mr. Gmeiner said our current debt will drop off in FY2025/FY2026 so we can take over much of the new debt at that point but can't cover all of it. Mr. McCaffrey said we used to get a hydrant fee from the town (\$75,000). Mr. Orcutt said it will be up for discussion in January. Mr. Manugian said there was a line item on the budget but for informational purposes. Mr. Manugian asked why the fee is \$75,000 and Mr. Orcutt said it's based on a formula to cover costs.

Mr. McCaffrey added that the hydrant fee from the town would cut the capital charge in half for our customers. Mr. Orcutt said we save the town money by providing fire protection. Mr. Manugian said this is a great point.

Mr. Manugian asked if we would consider a small increase each year rather than large rate increase every 10 years or so. Mr. Gmeiner said he's been doing this awhile and thinks people like level rates. Mr. Manugian said there are increasing expenses on an annual basis so would be fair to customers to increase rates accordingly. Mr. Orcutt said it also depends how much you want in reserves. Mr. Manugian asked about emerging contaminants and if we anticipate this new treatment plant would help any future contaminants. Mr. Orcutt said that we can expect PFAS testing to be required (probably be quarterly) sometime over the next couple of years. We will create the facility to allow the addition of PFAS treatment, if need be down the road. Mr. Fishbone asked about other contaminants and Mr. Ohl said many other things could be treated but reverse osmosis would be difficult in this facility.

Mr. Manugian left the meeting.

Mr. Orcutt provided an informational packet about PFAS and sewage solids and will stay on top of it to make sure it will not start to be spread on farmland.

Mr. Orcutt said the town's Baddacook funding for \$15,000 was removed.

Mr. Orcutt said water levels are up and water consumption is up for the past 12 months.

Executive Session

At 7:32pm Mr. Gmeiner moved that the Commission meet in Executive Session – Pursuant to M.G.L. c. 30a, Sec. 21 (a) Clause 3 – To discuss strategy with respect to litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the litigation position of the public body and the chair so declares. – DEP Administrative Consent Order , to resume public session following the executive session. Mr. McCaffrey declared that an open meeting would have a detrimental effect.

Mr. McCaffrey seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

The Commission then met in Executive Session.

Executive Session

The Commission then returned to the public meeting after ending its Executive Session

Other Business: Bills, Minutes, etc

Mr. McCaffrey presented an outline for Monday's Select Board meeting. He said that SRF loans are not as flexible so we are not looking at them at this time.

Mr. Ohl said SRF are all 20-year loans (couldn't do 20 yr/30yr). This doesn't work well with our debt schedules.

Mr. Gmeiner said that Mrs. Manugian asked about Overstressed Well Grants. The board was not familiar with this.

The board went over the outline for the Select Board meeting.

Mr. Ohl reviewed the pilot testing proposal. Biological piloting is very costly (for example \$70,000 in another town) because it takes much longer. Membrane testing would be additional cost also. Mr. Orcutt asked about reverse osmosis and Mr. Ohl said it is a type of membrane but not the kind we need to treat manganese.

The piloting draft will be ready at the end of March.

Invoices for EW15 were signed.

Mr. McCaffrey approved minutes of December 30th as amended, Mr. Fishbone seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. McCaffrey made motion to adjourn at 9:34, Mr. Gmeiner seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lauren Crory