

Groton Water Commission
Regular Meeting of the
Board of Water Commissioners
Tuesday, November 23rd, 2021
Virtual Meeting using Zoom

Minutes

Present are Chairman Jack McCaffrey, Vice Chairman Greg Fishbone, Member James Gmeiner, Superintendent Tom Orcutt, Business Manager Lauren Crory, Bob Rafferty from Environmental Partners, and Michael Ohl of CEI.

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

Manganese Treatment Plant

Mr. Rafferty said everything has been sent to MA DEP. They are looking at all previous bids from the year and contractor questions so everything will be clarified in the bid documents. Mr. Orcutt said MA DEP has been reviewing plans and specs for about two weeks and Mr. Rafferty said we should expect another two weeks or so. Mr. Orcutt asked if we can start the advertising process without the formal approval. Mr. Rafferty said we will prepare and advertise before Christmas. Mr. McCaffrey asked about milestones and Mr. Orcutt will pull that together for the next 6 months for both projects. Mr. McCaffrey asked who is handling power and Mr. Orcutt said that will be the well project. Mr. Orcutt wants to know when we need to check in with DEP and Mr. Rafferty said a few weeks. Mr. Orcutt said we will have \$5.6 million available 2/18/22. Mr. McCaffrey asked about the bid date and Mr. Rafferty said they will advertise in late December with a bid date in February. Mr. McCaffrey asked Mr. Orcutt to pick a date so that we can tell MA DEP.

Whitney Pond Well #3

Mr. Ohl said the anticipated bid advertisement date will be before the holidays and open the bid in January to award by the end of January. There will be two separate bids which will be the well, submersible pump and the adapter; then the utilities and the work in pump station. Mr. Ohl sent a cash flow to Mr. Orcutt. He looked into the lead times for various items and there is one item they may want to bid separately is a well screen. For another project it was about two months. Mr. Ohl will get a cost of the screen but ballpark will be over \$50,000. Mr. McCaffrey asked if the pump and control panel will arrive on time and Mr. Ohl thinks those are fine. Mr. McCaffrey asked Mr. Ohl for milestones including when we need parts by. Mr. Orcutt will push to have GELD finish the power in by the end of the year. Mr. Orcutt said Nashoba Tech is doing great and the building is up so they will be siding soon and probably done in a few weeks. Mr. Orcutt said a gravel road will be put in but it is part of the bid package.

Finances – Treatment Plant and Whitney Well III

Mrs. Crory said that she and Mr. Orcutt met with the Town Manager finance committee and bond counsel. Another \$700,000 for Whitney Well III will be borrowed on 2/18/22. Another \$5.6 million will be borrowed on this same date based on the cash flow schedule for the Manganese Treatment Plant. The rest of the cost will be borrowed the following year. We do not have these updated debt schedules yet and will prepare this for the rate hearing to see exactly what we need to raise. Mr. McCaffrey asked if we are required to take the lowest bid and Mr. Orcutt said we are required to accept the lowest qualified bidder.

FY23 Budget

Mrs. Crory said there were a few changes that Mr. Orcutt had to make. The debt service amount was off by about \$40,000. We had to add a transfer line to cover this debt payment. Mr. Gmeiner asked how long it goes for and Mr. Orcutt said that debt will also be rolled into our new debt and there are a few more years left. Mrs. Crory has the full current debt number in her manganese debt spreadsheets.

Mrs. Crory said our rate income is on track to meet our budget, Mr. McCaffrey said our rate increases must be helping since we haven't pumped as much water.

Mr. McCaffrey asked if the rate hearing should be in December or in February once we have our bids and Mr. Orcutt said we should not wait. He would hate to have to raise it again after the bids come in. Mr. Gmeiner is still trying to figure out how we are making ends meet with the new employee. The hope is that rates will be covering these new costs due to the new well and recent rate increases.

Mr. McCaffrey said our reserves look good and we are in a position now to have water available to customers so in addition to rate increases we should get good revenue.

Other Business

Mrs. Crory reviewed new manganese fee scenarios and the Board discussed charging a tiered rate based on class (Schools, Commercial, Residential). Mr. Orcutt would like to see us bringing in closer to \$290,000. He also discussed that School accounts vary drastically compared to small faculty housing versus large administrative buildings and gyms etc. Mrs. Crory will look at breaking up the school category into commercial or residential rates based on faculty housing. Mr. Fishbone would like to see how many people may apply for a low-income exemption and Mrs. Crory will try to get a number.

Manganese levels look good in the distribution system and may have come down due to thorough flushing this year. The well looked very clean also. Baddacook is being run as much as possible.

Mr. Gmeiner made a motion to approve the minutes of September 28th, 2021 as amended, Mr. Fishbone seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Rate Hearing December 7th.

Regular Meeting December 14th.

Rate Hearing December 21st.

Mr. McCaffrey made a motion to adjourn at 8:31pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lauren Crory