

Groton Water Commission
Regular Meeting of the
Board of Water Commissioners
Tuesday, February 15th, 2022
Virtual Meeting using Zoom

Minutes

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

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

Manganese Treatment Plant – progress update, schedule

Mr. Patangia said they received general bids from 4 contractors and R.H. White is the apparent low bidder at \$8.1 million. The last estimate was \$8.9 million so the number looks very good. Environmental Partners has worked with them and they have been described as a solid polished company and they specialize in treatment plants. The next steps are to check the bid packages and make sure there are no initial issues. They will provide an award package to Mr. Orcutt with reference checks etc. Mr. Orcutt asked if they check the other bidders to make sure the math is right etc. Mr. Orcutt asked if he was surprised that we got only four bids and Mr. Patangia said he was happy to get four good bids in this market. Mr. McCaffrey asked if the bidding is closed and Mr. Patangia said it is. Mr. McCaffrey asked how long it will take to move forward and Mr. Patangia said about a week to prepare the award package, then a notice of award package, 10 days for performance bonds, then it will be in our hands. The best case a month (end of March) to get all of the paperwork in order. Mr. McCaffrey said the goal is start construction on April 1st and can approve it at the next Board meeting.

Mr. Fishbone asked if there were any substitution materials requested and Mr. Patangia said that will come up at construction drawing process.

Mr. McCaffrey asked if there is a schedule with this and Mr. Orcutt said it is too early and we will have lots of meetings with them to work out all of those details. The first 4-6 months will be shop drawings while they start excavating and preparing.

Mr. Orcutt said GELD is ready to go but wants to make sure the poles are getting set in the correct location. There will need to be an upcoming meeting with the engineers and Harbor Controls who will be handling SCADA work. ITS will build the panel for Whitney Well III and tie it into Baddacook. Harbor Controls and ITS will submit price proposals to update software and hard drives at Baddacook. He has spoken with Michael

Chaisson (Groton IT Direction) to put in a dedicated Fios line from Baddacook to Whitney (\$8,000-\$10,000 estimate) to help the two sites talk directly through a hard line. It will make it more operator friendly for communication and repairs.

Mr. Fishbone asked if this would be a good time to look at our security and Mr. Orcutt said they will make sure it is built in.

Whitney Pond Well #3 – progress update, schedule

Mr. Ohl had a conversation with MA DEP regarding the permitting for Whitney Well III and there are concerns from the staff that they were overbooked and couldn't commit to any review schedule. Bob Boswick spoke with Mr. Ohl and said that the central water region has five staff openings and he can't commit to accelerate reviews and requests and could only commit to statutory review guidelines. Items that stay in the central region aren't bad and may have a 60-day review window. The Water Management Act can be 6 months or 9 months out as it has to go through the Boston office. Mr. Ohl will update the schedule based on this information. If things go well, we should get the Water Management Act by the end of June and the statutory limits would push out to November. Mr. Ohl told Mr. Boswick someone from the town may be calling him and he said everything is out of his hands. As a side note, the Manganese Treatment Plant approvals stay in the central region so that project should not be impacted.

Mr. Orcutt said we need to submit our plans for Whitney Well III and that will be a simple approval so the big lift is to get an increased withdrawal from Boston. Mr. Orcutt is going to speak to his contacts at the Boston office. He asked if Mr. Gmeiner would go to the Boston office with him to explain the situation and need for this approval. We pay a water tax to the state to help keep their offices running so this is disappointing. Mr. McCaffrey thinks reaching out to Boston is a good idea. One issue being the ability to operate Whitney Well III and the second is how much water we can pull. He asked what do we need just to operate Whitney Well III but use the current withdrawal. Mr. Ohl said it is all tied together. Even if we aren't exceeding our current limit, it still needs to go through the Water Management Act as an amendment. Mr. Ohl said technically you could put the well in but you are not supposed to pump anything without the approval. If it was a replacement well you could pitch it, but with the new well you cannot.

Mr. Orcutt said we can still start the construction and keep moving, but the worst case will be that we cannot use it when we planned. Hopefully it won't be much later than the plan and can still be used this irrigation season.

Mr. McCaffrey asked if they would approve the well use but not increased limit and Mr. Orcutt does not think they can do that. Mr. McCaffrey said we could at least run our full current permitted withdrawal limit if we could at least get Whitney Well III approved to run.

Mr. Gmeiner asked if they are available in Boston and Mr. Orcutt believes that people are returning to their offices.

Mr. Ohl said that next up will be the contract award for the gravel packed well. The low bidder for the drilling was Denis L. Mahar who is well established. There was one discrepancy in the costs for well pump and water quality testing as it was substantially lower than the other bidders. Mr. Ohl contacted them and they did miss something but they are standing behind their bid. We will need to accept his bid and get the paperwork going.

Mr. Gmeiner made a motion to accept the well driller's bid from DL Mahar in the amount of \$112,310, Mr. Fishbone seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Ohl will get the contracts ready for next week.

The equipment going in the pump station will be going out to bid shortly. Town Counsel will need to review it first.

Finances – Manganese Treatment Plant and Whitney Well III

Mrs. Crory reviewed Treatment plant numbers and town meeting articles. For the treatment plant, the \$722,000 was borrowed last year for OPM and engineering through bidding and was approved at Spring Town Meeting. At the Fall Town Meeting we were approved for another \$10,082,000 for the construction admin and construction based on the estimate from Environmental Partners. The winning bid came in at \$8,175,000 and if we add \$1,400,000 construction admin costs (TBD) we get a total of \$9,575,000 which is within our \$10,082,000 authorization.

The Whitney Well III project should be below our borrowing authorization also. We are waiting on the next bids to come in.

Other Business

The next meetings will be March 1st, March 15th and March 29th.

Mr. McCaffrey looked at West Groton Water meeting minutes and Mr. Gmeiner looked at DEP records and they have very low PFAS.

Mr. Orcutt made a visit to GDRHS and suggested they take a raw water sample in case the PFAS are coming from their treatment process. Mr. McCaffrey thinks the Water Department needs to be involved in this PFAS investigation because it could fall on us if things are as bad as they appear in that area. He asked if Mr. Orcutt would want to appoint himself to help out Michelle Collette on the Board of Health and Mr. Orcutt will have a discussion with her and will oversee what is going on.

Mr. Gmeiner said we have approval for zoom meetings until the end of March. Mr. Orcutt said there will be a bill to make a zoom meeting optional.

Mr. Fishbone said it would be informative to know the results of any GDRHS abutter's PFAS tests.

Mr. Orcutt does not think that GDRHS is being contaminated by the Nashua River.

Mr. Gmeiner made a motion to approve the minutes of January 11th, 2022 as amended, Mr. Fishbone seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. McCaffrey made a motion to adjourn at 8:57pm, Mr. Gmeiner seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lauren Crory