

Groton Water Commission
Regular Meeting of the
Board of Water Commissioners
Tuesday, April 26th, 2022
Virtual Meeting using Zoom

Minutes

Present are Chairman Jack McCaffrey, Member James Gmeiner, Superintendent Tom Orcutt, Business Manager Lauren Crory, Dave Patangia and Alysa Longo from Environmental Partners and David Roman and Michael Ohl from CEI.

Mr. McCaffrey called the meeting to order at 7:30pm. He stated that we are being recorded and everyone introduced themselves.

Manganese Treatment Plant – progress update, schedule

Mr. Patangia said they are in the construction administration phase which includes shop drawings and the big equipment is starting to roll in. The contractor is updating the schedule and schedule of values and they hope to have drafts in by May 4th. There is no work planned until July 1st. The storage containers will be going out next week. Mr. Orcutt asked if the schedule of values will be for the 18 months and Mr. Patangia said yes it will be a total project schedule.

Mr. Orcutt said they had the field at Whitney Well mowed last Friday so it is cleaned up and ready for them. Mr. McCaffrey asked about the meeting on May 4th and Mr. Patangia said it is a virtual meeting to go over everything quickly and make sure things are moving along. The monthly construction meetings will be coming up and will be in person.

Mr. Patangia thinks the earliest bill should be about June.

Mr. Ohl asked if nothing further came out of the electrical subcontractor rejecting Philips and Mr. Orcutt said it's all set.

Whitney Pond Well #3 – progress update, schedule

Mr. Ohl said the gravel packed well hasn't had any activity as of last meeting. The contractor did provide shop drawings for the key pieces. However, they are waiting on the well screen drawings and they can't release that until the contractor is on site. They were hoping to see them on site last week and nothing happened. There was a virtual meeting yesterday with the contractor. Mr. Ohl emphasized the deadline and a formal letter went out putting them on notice. The contractor had indicated that their rig is stuck finishing up a project. He was supposed to know better today when they would be able to shift to Groton and it had sounded promising. Mr. Orcutt heard differently.

Mr. Orcutt expects them to be on site Monday although Mr. Ohl was told tomorrow. Mr. Orcutt was told by his contact that the project would get done. However, the biggest lift is to get the shop drawings for the well screen approved. Mr. McCaffrey said we talked about pre-ordering the screen before the digging. Mr. Ohl said that typically is not done because there can be surprises below surface. Mr. McCaffrey asked how many different sizes are out there and Mr. Ohl said that they are custom made. Mr. McCaffrey asked Mr. Orcutt what his cutoff date would be to give up on the contractor and Mr. Orcutt thinks Mr. Ohl would need to reach out to the other contractors first to see if they are available. Mr. McCaffrey asked when would Dankris be cutting into the pipe and Mr. Orcutt believes that would be May.

Mr. Roman said the WS20, which is the new source approval, is being reviewed right now and some comments were received and being responded to, but so far there are no show stopping comments. He also said that we got approval from the MA Wildlife MESA review. The Water Management Act amendment is under review and comments should be issued within a few weeks but there are no expected issues. Regarding the Interbasin Transfer Act, he has been conversing back and forth with the DCR, legal is looking at everything, and DCR has decided we need to move forward with an insignificant review, based on past precedent. Mr. Roman said that we were hoping to be in the clear because after digging they agreed the sewer transfer from Groton to Pepperell is grandfathered but, in the regulations, there still is an ability to transfer more water out of town. The insignificance review application will be submitted as soon as possible. He is hoping to get in in as early as end of this week. The review time is a maximum of 90 days but it is a rigorous review by different groups and will be voted at monthly water resources meetings. This may add 2-3 months onto the schedule for permitting. July was best case scenario and it is now extended to August/September. Mr. McCaffrey asked about a positive result on this and Mr. Roman thinks it will be a good result and the worst-case would be the system being subject to a full environmental impact report. However, at the low volume we are looking at, he is hoping it won't be an issue. Mr. Orcutt said the water management request is not for more water so asked if we will we need to do this again next year when we do ask for more water. Mr. Roman said they are interested in the maximum day use, which they will look at now so we should not need to do it again. The cutoff is 1,000,000 gallons to do a full impact review. Mr. Roman believes it is focused on Groton Center and not the Four Corners area. Mr. Orcutt asked what their summer schedule is and if they will meet monthly. Mr. Roman believes it's the second Thursday of each month. Mr. Orcutt asked if they should be present for the vote and Mr. Roman said they can be and it is all online now. Mr. Roman said that the staff has been very responsive so far. Mr. McCaffrey asked if the second week of July would be the vote and Mr. Roman said June or July.

Fiscal Year 2022 & 2023

Mrs. Crory said things look good to meet our rate income budget and we are closing in on our construction income budget. Expenses look fine also and we should not need to worry about overspending at this point. It is too early to forecast free cash but we will look into this in the upcoming weeks.

Other Business

Mr. Orcutt will be at the Town Meeting on Saturday and the transfers are under the consent agenda.

Mr. Orcutt has a zoom meeting on Friday regarding the new Water Resources Protection District regarding the new zone 2 maps to be voted. Mr. Orcutt asked for the old zone 2 map to be included to avoid confusion.

Mr. Orcutt said water main flushing is continuing and hasn't resulted in many dirty water complaints.

Mr. Orcutt said there is not an uptick in water use yet but people are turning on their systems.

Mr. Orcutt said the divers will be coming in mid-May to clean Baddacook.

Mr. Orcutt said the annual report (CCR) was mailed out last week.

Mr. Orcutt said Baddacook came back non-detect for PFAS sampling and we do not have Whitney back yet. Other results from town will be received next week.

Mr. McCaffrey asked about the high school and Mr. Orcutt said they have secured their engineer to begin the process.

Mr. Orcutt said the Town Manager was approached by Aqualine who is a private water management company. Mr. Orcutt explained what is entailed with privatization. It has to be put out to bid. These companies can be part of Wall Street. There are a lot of costs to get this done. Typically, they come into communities that need a financial lift and poor staffing. Mr. McCaffrey said they have recently been acquired by Eversource and they have about 50 municipalities and the reviews are mixed. Mr. McCaffrey asked why Groton would bother looking at this. Mr. Orcutt is not sure if labor costs could be cut as they typically streamline but he doesn't see that happening. He is not sure about any other cost savings so for the rate payers. Mr. McCaffrey asked about current employees and Mr. Orcutt said some staff is rolled in and some would remain as public and it depends on the contract. Mr. Gmeiner asked what arrangement was made at Dover. Mr. Orcutt said they are very small (like Dunstable). After discussion the Board said that Mr. Orcutt

could research this more and find out if there are any upsides for the Town of Groton to privatize the Water Department.

Mr. McCaffrey asked if we can have an emergency meeting if there is no good progress on the Whitney Well III project.

Mr. Gmeiner approved the minutes of April 12th, Mr. McCaffrey seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. McCaffrey made a motion to adjourn at 8:24 pm, Mr. Gmeiner seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lauren Crory