



City of Groton, Connecticut

**City Municipal Building
295 Meridian Street
Groton, CT 06340**

**Committee of the Whole
Minutes**

Council Chambers

Monday, June 22, 2020

6:00 PM

In response to State of Connecticut Executive Order No. 7B "Protection of Public Health and Safety During Covid-19 Pandemic and Response – Further Suspension or Modification of Statues", dated March 14, 2020, suspending in-person open meeting requirements, all public meetings will be closed to the public at this time. Public Meetings will be available on Groton Municipal Television Channel 2 in real time.

Mayor Hedrick called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

I. ROLL CALL

Present: Mayor Keith Hedrick, Deputy Mayor Jamal Beckford, Councilors Lisa McCabe, Reginald Stanford, Gweneviere Depot, Minerva Ortiz, Rashaad Carter, Finance Director Ron Yuhas and City Clerk Debra Patrick

II. REFERRALS:

REFERRAL ITEM #561 GROTON UTILITIES FINANCIALS

Finance Director Yuhas gave an overview of the revenues, operation expenses, net income/earnings for the electric, water and sewer divisions.

Mayor Hedrick said the accounts receivable as the Councilors may know is being allowed by the Governor and looked into by the Town of Groton to defer payments for July, August and September. He said GU is on track at this time and they will keep the Council informed.

Councilor Carter asked if there was a way to distinguish homeowners from renters as it could get worse as we go into the winter months. He asked if there might be a method for forgiveness to taxpayers.

There was discussion that GU Customer Care can separate the 2, that there are programs such as TVCCA and the United Way for assistance, if this goes into November shutoff prohibition into May, reserves are in place, that utilities are essential to everyday life for water and power and they should get the information on the avenues for assistance out to the public.

REFERRAL ITEM #690 CITY BUDGET PRESENTATIONS

Mayor Hedrick said they would have a report on the end of FY in July.

REFERRAL ITEM #742 GROTON UTILITIES

AZ CORPORATION SAFETY CONSULTING SERVICES

Utilities Director Ron Gaudet said the safety team determined that a 3rd party review of safety practices is needed and they put this out to bid 5 years ago and there is the option to renew for 1 year over 4 years. The consultant comes in 4 days a week and does training with employees as well evaluate the safety protocols.

Councilor Depot asked if the safety record has improved in this time.

Director Gaudet said the numbers for self-reporting were up but have gone down this year.

Mayor Hedrick said the types of injuries and the workman's comp costs are down. The training with Jim Healy has shown results and the safety manual is being revised.

Councilor Ortiz asked if we could have a member of the staff be trained for this.

Mayor Hedrick said that was considered and the costs would be more to have it in-house.

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Councilor Depot said while it seems like it should save money once you factor in the salary and benefits it would be more.

Councilor Carter said he understands Councilor Ortiz's perspective on this but if it was determined they needed someone with specialized training to come in beyond what the employees is trained for the cost would be higher.

There was discussion that they would look at the costs for a trained employee versus a contractor prior to next year.

There was further discussion on using best practices, modifying the safety manual as needed, looking at the costs for in-house, getting the Council injury reports dating back 2 years and the tremendous assistance AZ Corporation provided when ConnOSHA came in.

Councilor Depot moved Councilor Stanford seconded a motion to move Referral Item # 742, AZ Corporation Safety Consulting Services, to the July 6, 2020 Mayor & Council meeting.

Motion carried.

ENVIRONMENTAL PARTNERS CONSULTING

Director Gaudet said they have been recommended to work with the PCB issue with the paint and the dirt pile.

Councilor Depot said this is the contractor hired by the City when Stantec wasn't able to get their plan approved and asked if there would be a recovery of funds.

Director Gaudet said the issue of the funds will be dealt with later.

Deputy Mayor Beckford asked if there would be time constraints to get recovery.

Director Gaudet said this will go on until November and then there will be discussions.

There was discussion on the testing schedule, the methods of disposal and possible reuse of some of the dirt, whether this is for the old plant or current project and a timeframe for legal remedies.

Councilor Depot moved Deputy Mayor Beckford seconded a motion to move Referral Item # 742, Environmental Partners Consulting, to the July 6, 2020 Mayor & Council meeting.

Motion carried.

SPRINGBROOK FINANCIAL ACCOUNTING SYSTEM

Director Gaudet said this is for the annual maintenance and support fee for the financial program used.

Councilor Depot moved Deputy Mayor Beckford seconded a motion to move Referral Item # 742, Springbrook Financial Accounting System, to the July 6, 2020 Mayor & Council meeting.

Motion carried.

UNDERGROUND STORAGE PROJECT

Director Gaudet said the tanks at East Slope and West Side have exceeded their shelf life and need to be dug out and replaced with above ground tanks.

Councilor McCabe asked if there would be pavement disturbance if they are underground.

Mayor Hedrick said the contractor will take care of that.

Councilor Carter asked how old the tanks were.

Director Gaudet said they are supposed to be replaced in 20 years and these are beyond that.

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Councilor Carter said he has concerns that there have been several pieces of equipment that have needed to be replaced in a short period of time during his tenure on the Council.

There was discussion that the funding wasn't always available and projects were put off, there are regulatory requirements that must be met, that now that there is cash flow in the account it is prudent to do the work now, having a maintenance schedule in place will help and that funds in the sewer account must be spent on sewer projects.

Councilor Depot moved Deputy Mayor Beckford seconded a motion to move Referral Item # 742, Underground Storage Project, to the July 6, 2020 Mayor & Council meeting. Motion carried.

ORDINANCE APPROVING REVISIONS TO THE EXISTING GROTON UTILITIES WATER RATE SCHEDULE

Director Gaudet said when the presentation was done 4 years ago for the WTP project the rate increases were outlined to be built in over time to avoid a large increase all at once. He said this increase will not go into effect until October. There was a Public Hearing on this June 15th and then approved at a special Groton Utilities/commission/WPCA meeting that same night.

Mayor Hedrick said the 4% increases over a period of years should prevent sticker shock.

Councilor Depot said the presentation at the Public Hearing was comprehensive and can be viewed on YouTube noting how the increases will have less of an impact on residential customers. There was some discussion on the purpose on the increases.

Councilor Depot moved Deputy Mayor Beckford seconded a motion to move Referral Item # 742, Ordinance Approving Revisions To The Existing Groton Utilities Water Rate Schedule, to the July 6, 2020 Mayor & Council meeting. Motion carried.

REFERRAL ITEM #772 SHIPP GRANT UPDATE

Mayor Hedrick said he contacted the CT Port Authority to see where the grant application stands and this is just for information purposes. The City has been approved for an \$815,416.00 grant with the City matching \$166,083.20 for the new dock and \$75,000.00 with no matching funds required for the municipal dock study to make Thames View Park ADA accessible for the boat/kayak launch.

III. ADJOURNMENT

Councilor McCabe moved Councilor Stanford seconded a motion to adjourn. Motion carried.

Mayor Hedrick adjourned the meeting at 7:07 p.m.

ATTEST:

APPROVED:

**Debra Patrick
City Clerk**