

**CITY OF GROTON UTILITIES COMMISSION
/WATER POLLUTION CONTROL AUTHORITY
MINUTES**

October 16, 2019 10:00 a.m.
City of Groton Municipal Building
Council Chambers

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Hedrick called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m.

ROLL CALL

Present:

Chairperson Mayor Keith Hedrick

Commissioners:

Paul Duarte, Jeffrey Godley, Robert Zuliani, George Scully

Staff present:

Director of Utilities Ronald A. Gaudet
Executive Administrator, Director of Utilities, Noemi Walencewicz
Executive Administrative Assistant Maureen French
City Finance Director Ronald Yuhas
General Manager-Operations Mark A. Biron
General Manager-Customer Service Tina Daniels
General Manager-Key Accounts Leonard J. Mediavilla
General Manager Information Technology Sue Blanchette
Manager-Water / PAF Richard M. Stevens
Manager-Operations Water Raymond L. Valentini
Manager-Communications and Community Outreach Daniel L. Bouges
Accounting Manager Yi Xiang
Manager-Electric Engineering Brian Roche
Manager-Electric Operations Randall Surprenant

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Godley moved, **Commissioner Scully** seconded a motion to approve the minutes of September 18, 2019.

Motion carried.

3. REVIEW AND ACCEPTANCE OF TREASURER'S REPORT

Commission Zuliani moved, **Commissioner Godley** seconded a motion to approve the Treasurer's Report for the month ending September, 2019.

Motion carried.

4. COMMUNICATIONS AND CORRESPONDENCE

The following correspondence were received:

- A. State of Connecticut Circular Letter #2019-20 – General Manager Daniels stated as of October 1, 2019 we have changed the Safe Drinking Water fee down to \$0.13 from original rate of \$0.22 per meter. Chairperson Hedrick clarified this is imposed by the State and not from GU. Director Gaudet confirmed it directly supports the drinking water section of the DPH.

5. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS

- A.** Sam Spano – 300 Thames Street, Groton – Mr. Spano addressed the Commission stating that he has lived diagonal to the WPCA for 25 years. Informed the Commission that the WPCA has operational problems, most notable odor problems starting July 8, 2019 until present and mentioned it is also dependent on weather conditions. Mr. Spano believes there is a direct correlation of the odor issues to the removal of Kevin Cini, Chief Plant Operator earlier this year. Mr. Spano stated they have not experienced this problem to this degree or duration for many years. Mr. Spano thanked the Commission for their help in advance. Commissioner Zuliani asked if Mr. Spano was an employee of GU. He responded he is not an employee but a resident. Chairperson Hedrick stated that Mr. Spano and he spoke yesterday, October 15, 2019, he and other residents on Thames Street have complained about the odor from the Pollution Abatement Facility.

Commissioner Godley pointed out smells have been detected at Eastern Point pump station and was not sure if this is indicative to the entire. Commissioner Duarte asked if there has been a change in operations or chemicals being used. Chairperson Hedrick noted that there is a meeting this afternoon with Staff from WPCA to discuss. Chairperson Hedrick recognizes the purpose of the plant and the smell is hydrogen sulfide or methane. Chairperson Hedrick is aware the issue needs to be identified, possibly a scrubber issue, burner issue or deodorizers in the Pump stations. Recently, there was a complaint at the corner of Route 1 and South Road; Director Gaudet confirmed it was the Town of Groton's pump station.

General Manager Biron stated that the odor issue was a topic of discussion in the Water Operations Meeting this morning, and management is looking into odor reduction at the PAF. General Manager Biron said that the department is working on obtaining parts to get flair operational to burn off methane. Additionally, a chemical purchased from Bioxide is supposed to help deodorize. Representatives from Bioxide have agreed to come to take a survey of the system. They will look at the process to check the way process machinery is working in the PAF and will identify issues with flow rates, possible re-piping and check the pump stations. This service will be provided free of charge. The survey will also identify if we need to add Bioxide chemical pumps to those areas. The PAF generates gas from the microbes and although it's not likely to get rid of the odor completely, the hope is to minimize it. Chairperson Hedrick asked that this item be added to the monthly Agenda as an Old Business item to monitor progress.

Chairperson Hedrick is concerned about economic development on Thames Street.

- B.** Joseph Fazekas, Regional Manager with MCR Property Management and Shelby Carlson, Property Manager - Groton Estates, 260 Shennecossett Road, Groton – two (2) handouts, sewer feed chart change analysis and income limits were passed out to the Commissioners.

Groton Estates is an affordable community with 85 buildings with 340 resident units. Financed by the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority. The spreadsheet with income limits targets the rate of household income Groton Estates, operates at 20% of the 80% medium income; in short it's about 60% of median income. Implementation of the sewer charges, there was a rate reduction 5.22 to 4.58 in 2018-2019 and from 5.22 to 4.30 from

2019-2020, translates to a savings of about \$11,000.00 a year in mill rate tax reduction; however, the sewer charges implemented is about \$100,000.00. The structure of Groton Estates is 85 buildings with 4 units per building. There are separate Sewer meter charges of about \$2,000.00 a month. Some similar complexes have one or two master meters, whereas Groton Estates is being hit with \$100,000.00 a year of additional sewer charges which get passed onto the residents. Mr. Fazekas is requesting the Commission to offset the cost based on the affordability component or have one (1) meter reading/charge which would save about \$25,000.00 per year of the \$100,000.00 deficit. Groton Estates provides very reasonable housing; two (2) bedroom units at \$975.00 per month including heat and water. Mr. Fazekas feels they provide something for Economic Development for Groton. Ms. Carlson added that beyond percentages there are 340 separate units which is a large population of Groton City. Increasing rent has an impact on the residents and may choose to find residency outside of the City of Groton.

Mr. Fazekas stated there is no irrigation just pure residential usage. There is a concern that a change to this property could impact the whole customer base of the sewer program. Commissioner Scully pointed out that 85 housing units creates a lot of sewage.

Chairperson Hedrick asked if there is a way to put a master meter in the beginning to be separately metered. Manager Valentini pointed out that two (2) master meters would need to be installed, this would turn over the whole system to Groton Estates expenses and maintenance. Chairperson Hedrick requested staff meet with Groton Estates to do a business cost analysis.

Mr. Fazekas recognized this request could set a precedent, but suggested it would be possible to offset because of affordability- waiving 84 of the monthly charges would save them about \$25,000.00 of the \$100,000.00. Director Gaudet was aware of the request, the issues would have global impact and low income credit would raise the fees for everyone else. Director Gaudet will continue the conversation. Commissioner Zuliani indicated he wants to be sure we can verify the financial information, Mr. Fazekas said he would welcome verification and audit. Chairperson Hedrick asked for this information to be shared with General Manager Daniels.

6. CMEEC BOARD OF DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Utility Director Gaudet reported over the past month the budget and finance committee developed the Transco budget that will be approved at the next Board meeting. More meetings to follow, hopefully the final version will go to the Board in November.

Risk Management Committee met and recommended going to the Board for CMEEC solar approval. Trial to allow CMEEC to be involved with putting solar on houses or businesses.

Chairperson Hedrick reported that the Legislative Committee met to discuss scheduling meetings, lobbyist; CMEEC and MAU have lobbyists but doesn't have a policy on lobbyists.

There is a 2:00 PM MECA meeting this afternoon at the CMEEC offices.

7. **REGIONAL WATER UPDATE**

Manager Valentini reported the last Cross Connect with SCWA was installed on Iron Street and will turn everything over to SCWA.

Tower Avenue in Gales Ferry (owned by SCWA), there was a vandalism at the pump station. GU was asked to set up a filling station at the fire house which was completed within two (2) hours. The State produced a letter to SCWA of items they are lacking. Manager Valentini reported that interconnects are complete but were not turned on during the emergency. GU is standing by to assist as necessary as requested from SCWA or from recommendations or directions from DPH. As a result, Chairperson Hedrick requested we double check our stations, we are secured and no vulnerabilities.

8. **MONTHLY FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS**

Accounting Manager Xiang presented

Electric

- Overall this September was milder than September of last year.
- Electric Revenues are 4.5% below budget for the month and 0.9% less than budget for the FYTD which is mostly driven by Residential and Commercial Class.
- O&M Expenses are 17.2% below budget for the month and 17.4% below budget for the FYTD.

Water

- Water Revenues are 9% below budget for the month and 0.6% below budget for the FYTD which is mostly driven by all the Classes.
- O&M Expenses are 20.8% below budget for the month and 16.5% below budget for the FYTD.
- Net Earnings before DWSRF grant is \$635K more than budget for the month and \$479K more than budget for the FYTD due to below budget O&M Expenses, and delay of DPH Consent Agreement Projects.

Sewer

- Sewer Revenues are 8.6% below budget for the month and 9.2% over budget for the FYTD which is mostly driven by the Industrial Class.
- O&M Expenses are 29.1% below budget for the month and 28% below budget for the FYTD.
- Net Income from Operations for the FYTD is \$281K more than budget due to over budget Revenues plus below budget O&M Expenses.

Commissioner Zuliani appreciates the extensive depth of the report and the additional time to review the report. Chairperson Hedrick would like to come up with metrics to help gage month to month and year to year.

Director Gaudet would like to implement an overview page and continue with the detailed report for specific questions.

9. **PROJECTS / INITIATIVES UPDATE**

Director Gaudet referred to the first page of the Director's Report that has an overview of last month's sponsorships, rebates and purchase orders.

Electric

Manager Roche updated the Commission on the replacement of the breaker at Buddington station, a bond fund project. The circuit breaker built in 1950 was replaced, the importance of the breaker is it protects the 400 lines of any faults, integral feeder to the whole system. The average life of a new breaker is about 15 years.

Reverse power relay blew last Thursday which caused a quick outage. Manager Surprenant explained NERC compliance, prepping on costs for a pre-audit audit. 2020 is a full audit for Bozrah and Groton. Manager Surprenant is working with General Manager Blanchette on the SCADA upgrade.

General Manager Biron and the Managers reviewed all projects for the fiscal year and determined which projects will be outsourced. 30-40% of Electric projects will be outsourced, Water/Sewer can handle most of their projects in house. The goal is to spend capital dollars on time, hence the push for firm scheduling, start dates and end dates, and costs being monitored monthly.

Communication

Manager Bouges reported on the success of the Groton Fall Festival in which GU was the premier sponsor. There was about 4,200 people in attendance due to more advertisement, vendors, tents, and more activities. Currently there is a campaign on the radio and social media about promoting Energy Conservation. Manager Bouges is cleaning up the internet; Google and Yelp pages, Groton and BL&P Facebook pages. In the process of converting the Connection Newsletter from mail to email.

Water

Manager Stevens noted the Avalonia MOU has been executed and would like to offer the Commission to present the check to Avalonia.

Manager Bouges worked with staff on Watershed informational websites.

Lead and copper is a huge topic in the regulatory environment and communities we serve. There has been extensive outreach over the past 2 years. The EPA is forecasting to reduce the limit of lead by 33%, from 15 parts per billion to 10 parts per billion. Changed the chemical orthophosphate for corrosion control and modified ph control system. Source water and water pumped out to the customers is lead free. Taking samples from the customer is prioritized by age building (prior to ban on lead and solder), mapping of areas with lead goosenecks. Chairperson Hedrick wants to ensure there a way to isolate to minimize our risk. Currently, 60 samples are being taken in target areas and will keep the Commission updated.

Manager Valentini confirmed 4,000 feet of pipe was replaced on Valley Road, looped the whole system, provided fire protection, and the road has been paved.

Key Accounts

General Manager Mediavilla reported on renewable energy, three (3) new homes have installed solar on their roofs. Girard Nissan shifted to 50 kW of solar on their roofs. We are reporting and tracking so we comply with the low carbon initiatives of the State.

There have been monthly meetings with EB and their endeavors to expand their facilities.

10. OLD BUSINESS

- A. Update – Rick Stevens- Watershed informational website links – Thanked Dan Bouges for the updates
- B. Oversized check presentation to Avalonia will be coordinated and will provide public relation opportunities.

11. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Reliable Public Power Provider (RP3) Program Application – General Manager Biron stated this is an APPA program and applauded Dawn Renaldi’s efforts in completing the application. We are waiting to hear if we met the standard as there is a set criteria to meet. We are currently RP3 recognized and would like to continue to be.
- B. Presentation: Mark Biron – Emergency Preparedness
General Manager Biron reviewed the Emergency Management and Response at Groton Utilities (GU) presentation in detail. Some important changes are his goal to get GU to industry standard, need to identify roles of all City of Groton employees, updating matrix’s to prepare for future storm events, minimize future grievances and increase after storm debriefing.

Commissioner Scully commended General Manager Biron on the well written plan. Chairperson Hedrick explained in detail the process of activating EOC and GU and management of overtime pay versus on-call pay. Manager Surprenant will be meeting with Fire, Police, and Public Works staff regarding live wire.

12. ACTION ITEMS

- A. **GUC-WPCA 19-10-41** Consideration of and action to authorize Groton Utilities Management to approve proposed Change Order No. 8 from R.H. White Construction Company, Incorporated, 41 Central Street, Auburn, Massachusetts for changes in scope as part of the State of Connecticut, Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) Project No. 2013-0140, in the State of Connecticut approved amount of Eighty Four Thousand, Two Hundred Forty One Dollars and Three Cents (\$84,241.03), and Mayor Keith Hedrick be authorized to execute Change Order No. 8, and that the City Council be apprised of this action with the recommendation that it concur

Commissioner Hedrick moved, **Commissioner Duarte** second that the Groton Utilities Commission / Water Pollution Control Authority approve Action Item GUC-WPCA-19-10-41.

Manager Valentini stated this change order is for replacement of a broken man hole. The break was not identified in the initial plan but identified during construction. The change order spread sheet reflects the three change orders No. 8, 9, and 10.

Motion Carried.

- B. GUC-WPCA-19-10-42** Consideration of and action to authorize Groton Utilities Management to approve proposed Change Order No. 9 from R.H. White Construction Company, Incorporated, 41 Central Street, Auburn, Massachusetts for changes in scope as part of the State of Connecticut, Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) Project No. 2013-0140, in the State of Connecticut approved amount of Seventy Eight Thousand, Seven Hundred Ninety One Dollars and Forty Six Cents (\$78,791.46), and Mayor Keith Hedrick be authorized to execute Change Order No. 9, and that the City Council be apprised of this action with the recommendation that it concur

Commissioner Hedrick moved, **Commissioner Duarte** seconded that the Groton Utilities Commission / Water Pollution Control Authority approve Action Item GUC-WPCA-19-10-42.

Manager Valentini noted that there was a slowdown of construction when silt was identified.

Motion Carried.

- C. GUC-WPCA-19-10-43** Consideration of and action to authorize Groton Utilities Management to approve proposed Change Order No. 10 from R.H. White Construction Company, Incorporated, 41 Central Street, Auburn, Massachusetts for changes in scope as part of the State of Connecticut, Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) Project No. 2013-0140, in the State of Connecticut approved amount of Seventy Four Thousand, Four Dollars and Forty Nine Cents (\$74,004.49), and Mayor Keith Hedrick be authorized to execute Change Order No. 10, and that the City Council be apprised of this action with the recommendation that it concur

Commissioner Hedrick moved, **Commissioner Duarte** seconded that the Groton Utilities Commission / Water Pollution Control Authority approve Action Item GUC-WPCA-19-10-43.

Manager Valentini stated that this change order reflects the removal of silt identified during construction and the addition of stone.

Motion Carried.

- D. GUC-WPCA-19-10-44** Consideration of and action to authorize Groton Utilities management to issue a purchase order to Ti Sales, Water and Wastewater Supplies, 36 Hudson Road (Route 27), Sudbury, Massachusetts for the purchase of replacement commercial and residential meters and associated parts / equipment as part of the Water Division's Advanced Metering Infrastructure Meter Replacement Project in the amount of Five Hundred Twenty Thousand Dollars and No Cents (\$520,000.00) to be paid from funds available in the approved 2016 Water Bond Fund, and furthermore that the City Council be apprised of this action with the recommendation that it concur

Commissioner Hedrick moved, **Commissioner Duarte** seconded that the Groton Utilities Commission / Water Pollution Control Authority approve Action Item GUC-WPCA-19-10-44.

Manager Valentini stated the purchase of meters is to support the Water Division's Advanced Metering Infrastructure Meter Replacement Project. Commissioner Scully questioned how many meters does \$520,000.00 buy? Manager Valentini said the number of meters is dependent on size of the meters.

Motion Carried.

- E. GUC-WPCA-19-10-45** Consideration of and action to authorize Groton Utilities Management to issue a purchase order to Synagro Northeast, LLC, 435 Williams Court, Suite 100, Baltimore, Maryland, in the amount not to exceed One Hundred and Four Thousand Dollars and No Cents (\$104,000.00), for sludge removal at the wastewater treatment plant to be paid from funds available in the approved FY 2019-2020 Water Division Operating and Capital Budgets and furthermore that the City Council be apprised of this action with the recommendation that it concur

Commissioner Hedrick moved, **Commissioner Duarte** seconded that the Groton Utilities Commission / Water Pollution Control Authority approve Action Item GUC-WPCA-19-10-45.

Manager Stevens explained that PAF is currently in an extended contract executed with Synagro and this request is to create a purchase order.

Motion Carried.

- F. GUC-WPCA-19-10-46** Consideration of and action to amend UC Action Item GUC-18-01-01 as approved by the GUC on January 17, 2018 and the City Council on February 5, 2018 , Resolution R-18-2-9:

Consideration of and action to authorize Management to waive the bidding requirement of Groton Utilities Policy No. 1004, Policy and Procedures Governing the Purchasing Practices of Groton Utilities and issue a purchase order to Crowley Chrysler Plymouth, Inc., 1461 Farmington Avenue, Bristol, Connecticut for the purchase of two (2) 2018 Dodge Ram 5500 Regular Cab Chassis 4x4 vehicles, with Altec Squirt Boom / Bucket Body Option package per Altec specification No. 387934-1 based on its quote of One Hundred Eighteen Thousand, Six Hundred Eighty Dollars and Sixty Cents (\$118,680.60) per vehicle for a total cost of Two Hundred Thirty-Seven Thousand, Three Hundred Sixty-One Dollars and Twenty Cents (\$237,361.20) to be paid from funds available in the Vehicle Replacement Fund, and furthermore, that the City Council be apprised of this action with the recommendation that it concur;

to change the purchase order vendor from Crowley Chrysler Plymouth, Inc., to Altec Industries, Inc., Po Box 11407, Birmingham, Alabama, and furthermore that the City Council be apprised of this action with the recommendation that it concur

Commissioner Hedrick moved, **Commissioner Duarte** seconded that the Groton Utilities Commission / Water Pollution Control Authority approve Action Item GUC-WPCA-19-10-46.

Manager Surprenant explained that an agreement to purchase two (2) chassis 4x4 vehicles from Crowley and installed with an Altec package was made after the Resolution was approved. Crowley was unable to provide the two (2) chassis, Altec had them in stock and installed the

package and delivered the completed trucks to GU. Altec is honoring the purchase price of (\$118,680.60/truck) for a total of \$237,361.20. Chairperson Hedrick reiterated that this was just a change in vendor on the purchase order but would like to have been apprised of this sooner.

Motion Carried.

13. EXECUTIVE SESSION

A. Pursuant to General Statutes section 1-200(6)(E) and 1-201(b)(5)(A) for a discussion of Key Account Customer Contracts / Negotiations: Discussion of Pfizer Contract

Commissioner Hedrick moved, **Commissioner Zuliani** seconded that the Groton Utilities Commission / Water Pollution Control Authority enter into Executive Session at 12:12. p.m., to include Commissioners Duarte, Scully, Godley, Zuliani; Chairperson Hedrick; Director Gaudet; General Managers Biron, Daniels and Mediavilla; City Finance Director Yuhas; and Accounting Manager Xiang.

Motion Carried.

Executive Session ended at 1:05 p.m.

G. GUC-WPCA 19-10-47 Consideration of and action to authorize Groton Utilities Management to approve the terms of Exhibit B-1 to the Market Price Power Supply Agreement between the City of Groton, Department of Utilities and Pfizer, Inc., as presented to the Commission, together with such revisions, clarification and amendments as the Director of Utilities shall deem appropriate, and to execute and deliver the same on behalf of Groton Utilities

No Action Taken.

14. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, at 1:06 p.m., **Commissioner Scully** moved, **Commissioner Godley** seconded a motion to adjourn.

Motion Carried.

Attest:

Paul Duarte
Clerk