

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

December 18, 2019 10:00 a.m.  
City of Groton Municipal Building  
Council Chambers

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Chairperson Hedrick called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

**ROLL CALL**

**Present:** Chairperson Mayor Keith Hedrick

**Commissioners:** Paul Duarte, Jeffrey Godley, George Scully, Robert Zuliani

**Staff present:** Director of Utilities Ronald A. Gaudet  
Executive Administrator to the Director of Utilities, Noemi Walencewicz  
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-Electric Engineering Brian Roche  
Manager-Water / PAF Richard M. Stevens  
Project Manager-Water Bruce Kruszewski  
Project Manager-Water Mike Weber  
City Finance Director Ronald Yuhas  
Accounting Manager Yi Xiang  
Senior Accounting Assistant Nicole Romanski

**2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**Commissioner Godley** moved, **Commissioner Duarte** seconded a motion to approve the minutes of November 20, 2019.

**Motion carried.**

**3. REVIEW AND ACCEPTANCE OF TREASURER'S REPORT**

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

**Motion carried.**

**4. COMMUNICATIONS AND CORRESPONDENCE**

The following correspondence were received:

- A.** Customer Henry Gunning – Thank you email
- B.** Customer Krista Barbara – Thank you phone message

**5. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS**

Sam Spano – 300 Thames Street, Groton – Passed out a photo to the commissioners and submitted his main points in writing.

(Attached)

Chairperson Hedrick addressed the Commissioners with any questions, General Manager Biron will address under old business.

Sam Spano 300 Thames St

I am submitting the main points of my comments for this meeting in writing.

Odor days since the last meeting- Mon 11/25, Tues 11/26, Wed 12/4. Again corresponding to warmer days

Primary back-up pump still not installed.

Mini Bio-scrubbers still disabled.

Tanks still not being cleaned or maintained on a regular schedule.

Correct schedule for cleaning tanks-

Primary Sludge Tanks -2x year (spring/fall) (3 out of 4 rotation)

Chlorine Contact Tank- 2x year (spring/fall)

Final Effluent(secondary) Tanks-1x year (fall)

Airation Tanks – Every 2 years

All Lines entering the plant-2x year (July/Nov)

In short the plant is not being properly maintained.

As I have stated at the last two meetings, I see a direct correlation between the removal of Kevin Cini as Chief Plant Operator and this years unprecedented odor problems.

Again, I am asking that Kevin be reinstated as Chief Plant Operator. Unless this is done I fear the warmer weather coming again in 2020 will bring back the same or worse odor problems than experienced in 2019.

Again, Thank You in advance for your help

**6. CMEEC BOARD OF DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Director Gaudet stated at the last Board of Directors meeting, approval was given to offer the CEO position to Dave Meisinger. Budgets were approved.  
Project performance is predicted to be flat for the upcoming year. Reviewing load factor.

**7. REGIONAL WATER UPDATE**

No new update

**8. MONTHLY FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS**

Accounting Manager Xiang presented

*Electric*

- Overall this November was warmer than November of last year.
- Electric Revenues are 4.5% below budget for the month and 2.1% less than budget for the FYTD which is mostly driven by almost all classes.
- O&M Expenses are 5.5% less than budget for the month and 14.5% below budget for the FYTD.

*Water*

- Water Revenues are 2% more than budget for the month and 0.4% above budget for the FYTD which is mostly driven by Sales by Resale Class.
- O&M Expenses are 12% below budget for the month and 16.3% below budget for the FYTD.
- Net Earnings before DWSRF grant is \$878K more than budget for the FYTD due to below budget O&M Expenses, and delay of DPH Consent Agreement Projects. Commissioner Duarte confirmed with Accounting Manager Xiang that the Industrial class is using the most amount of water.

*Sewer*

- Sewer Revenues are 2% over budget for the month and 6.9% over budget for the FYTD which is mostly driven by the Industrial Class.
- O&M Expenses are 7.3% below budget for the month and 21.9% below budget for the FYTD.
- Net Income from Operations for the FYTD is \$369K more than budget due to over budget Revenues plus below budget O&M Expenses.

Accounting Manager Xiang would like feedback and suggestions from the Commissioners on the financial reports. Commissioner Duarte prefers more narrative than numbers. Commissioner Zuliani would like to see a different presentation, with the approval of the Commissioners and Mayor. All Commissioners agreed the financial report is impressive.

Chairperson Hedrick is looking to streamline the report without being a burden to the finance department.

Director Gaudet suggested forwarding the CMEEC's financials to Commissioners to use as an example.

**9. PROJECTS / INITIATIVES UPDATE**

**A. Water Filtration Plant – Contingency spreadsheet**

Water Project Manager Weber reviewed the outcome of a meeting with EPA and DEEP on December 10, 2019 for change order #13, that plan would not be approved per EPA regulations, the \$1.3M will go back into the contingency funds.

General Manager Biron reported on the PCB plan. A third party consultant (Paul Muniz) was hired to review the plan. Stantec's PCB expert was not in communication with EPA even though the

presence of PCBs have been known for a few years. There are two areas of concerns with identified PCBs, on walls in old Water Treatment Plant and a 3,500 cubic yard pile of soil.

The EPA coordinator stated that the soil should have never been moved and then sampled. We are noncompliant with EPA rules on notification and plan to deal with contaminated material. EPA and CT DEEP agreed with the Town of Southington's remediation plan and our third party expert will review and mimic Southington's plan. It will not be as costly as if Stantec were to complete remediation.

Commissioner Zuliani asked for a dollar figure, General Manager Biron estimated about \$300-400K, depending on sampling.

Commissioner Scully asked where the contaminated soil gets disposed. Disposal is dependent on the Parts Per Million (ppm) levels.

PCBs in the old Water Treatment Plant were found in paint and high levels in the caulking around windows. Stantec stated a Risk Based Assessment could be completed, but per the EPA it doesn't meet regulatory compliance.

General Manager Biron stated a detailed project schedule in order of priority is being complied. A complete inventory of sampling of soil and paint has been done. Chemical stripping versus sand blasting for PCB removal in the old WTP is the plan of action.

Commissioner Godley asked if there has been any investigation with the manufacture of the paint or caulking. General Manger Biron is investigating with legal counsel.

Chairperson Hedrick reiterated the plan and reviewed areas outside of the project area. Cost of cubic yard is dependent on contamination levels.

Manager Stevens reminded the Commission that construction is continuing and new pumps are in the second day of testing. PCBs are not interrupting the construction or startup of the plant.

#### **B. Regional Water – Cross Connect updates**

Manager Stevens said all cross connects are completed with SCWA and now working on the Norwich interconnection, the design is about 90% completed. Once estimates are in, the cost share with Norwich will be determined.

#### **C. Training – Capital needs of companies**

General Manager Biron handed the Commissioners a plan from Capital Funding strategic meetings. Electric, Water and Sewer Bond Funds were reviewed in detail.

A large portion of the Electric Bond Funds will go towards removing the remaining Gen 1 meters. Bozrah's Electric capital funding is about \$1.3M a year mainly funding the removal of Gen 1 meters which impacts our restoration ability. Chairperson Hedrick requested an update on the number of Gen 1 meters deployed. About 5,000 Gen 1 meters are still deployed and noted issues with getting the reads. The issues are the physical meter, communications web, and software that feeds billing. Accurate and correct readings propagates errors right down to billing. We are beyond the useful lifespan and will outsource to a firm to install new meters.

Commissioner Duarte asked if the meters are AMR or AMI. General Manager Biron stated most are AMI (first meters put in around 2008). Commissioner Duarte mentioned that he heard of meters age out about 12 years, in which we have exceeded. We are not the only utility with these issues.

Commissioner Duarte asked about the purchase of new meters. General Manager Biron noted there are only a few meter distribution companies in the US.

Commissioner Scully asked if any meter can be purchased. Manager Roche noted as long as the communicator connects with our system.

General Manager Daniels wanted to note that billing accuracy is not an issue, any reads that do not look correct based off of six (6) verification points, a physical read will be completed from a meter reader.

There is also a section for proposed funding for facility projects. Over the next 5 years, \$2.25M will be needed to renovate the electric side of the Operations building and redevelopment of space in Municipal building. Water Project Manager Kruszewski noted areas being reviewed.

Formal bonding requests will be brought to the Commission early next year.

**D. Financial and UB software replacements**

General Manager Blanchette updated the Commissioners on the search for a new software system that will replace our two (2) current software systems. A complete solution with payroll and HR would require add-ons.

In order to make a financially and strategically appropriate decision, demonstrations from vendors and a software research team identified to benefit the Utility and the City.

Chairperson Hedrick asked if the new software would have auto pay option. General Manager Daniels stated we are in the final steps for conversion to the new database for Northstar (our existing software). All options moving forward would include auto pay.

Commissioner Duarte asked what system the Town of Groton uses, General Manager Blanchette believes they use Munis but it does not have an integrated component for utility billing.

General Manager Blanchette invited the Commissioners to be a part of the research team. She also reminded the Commissioners that internal resources factor into implementation.

Commissioner Zuliani questioned what budget year. General Manager Blanchette believes the 2020/2021 budget and if a third party gets hired, then funding will be required sooner. At least three (3) years to complete the funding. Chairperson Hedrick suggested phasing the funding.

**10. OLD BUSINESS**

**A. PAF odor Update –**

General Manager Biron reviewed all the parts ordered. The scrubber manual was reviewed and the scrubber currently is not running as designed. A representative has been secured to review our equipment but no confirmation of when the rep will be here. Results of the odor study were to install more meter pumps in some wet wells and feed bioxide.

A cover like the New London WPCA has is being investigated.

Commissioner Zuliani asked if the parts ordered will be delivered in a timely manner. General Manager Biron said parts are routine pieces and are on schedule for delivery.

Manager Stevens noted many factors are being considered for the WPCA. An outside engineer is going to be used for the tank cleaning schedule and to ensure it follows all state mandates.

**11. NEW BUSINESS**

**A. AWWA – Annual Conference**

Commissioners Scully and Duarte are interested in attending.

**B. APPA – Annual Conference**

Chairperson Hedrick noted the travel policy will support commissioners but not their spouse.

**12. ACTION ITEMS**

- A. GUC-WPCA 19-12-54** Consideration of and Action to authorize Groton Utilities Management to approve the low bid and issue two (2) purchase orders to Shaker Family Ford Lincoln, 831 Straits Turnpike, Watertown, Connecticut for the purchase of two (2) 2020 Ford Ranger 4x4 Super Crew Midsize Pickup trucks in the quoted amount of Twenty Seven Thousand Five Hundred Forty-Three Dollars and No Cents (\$27,543.00) each to be paid from funds available in the approved Fiscal Year 2020 Electric Division Non Bonded Capital funds, and furthermore, that the City Council be apprised of this action with the recommendation that it concur

**Commissioner Godley** moved, **Commissioner Duarte** second that the Groton Utilities Commission / Water Pollution Control Authority approve Action Item GUC-WPCA-19-12-54.

**Motion carried.**

General Manager Biron noted a fleet management program with the help from Admin has been created and tracks data of every single vehicle Groton utility owns including trailers. Identified vehicles to be replaced is based off mileage and repair costs.

Commissioner Godley asked if the created a surplus. General Manager Biron stated the vehicles to be replaced are traded in or auctioned off, we are not building up the fleet.

Of the five (5) vehicles being traded in, three (3) are hybrids and very expensive to service and maintain.

- B. GUC-WPCA-19-12-55** Consideration of and Action to authorize Groton Utilities Management to approve the low bid and issue three (3) purchase orders to Shaker Family Ford Lincoln, 831 Straits Turnpike, Watertown, Connecticut for the purchase of two (2) 2020 Ford Ranger 4x4 Super Crew Midsize Pickup trucks in the quoted amount of Twenty Seven Thousand Twenty Seven Dollars and No Cents (\$27,027.00) each, and one (1) 2020 Ford Explorer in the quoted amount of Twenty Five Thousand Nine Hundred Forty One Dollars and No Cents (\$25,941.00) to be paid from funds available in the approved Fiscal Year 2020 Water Division Non Bonded Capital funds, and furthermore, that the City Council be apprised of this action with the recommendation that it concur

**Commissioner Zuliani** moved, **Commissioner Duarte** second that the Groton Utilities Commission / Water Pollution Control Authority approve Action Item GUC-WPCA-19-12-55.

**Motion carried.**

**13. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

**14. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, at 11:15 a.m., **Commissioner Godley** moved, **Commissioner Duarte** seconded a motion to adjourn.

**Motion Carried.**

Attest:

Paul Duarte  
Clerk