

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

February 19, 2020 10:30 a.m.
City of Groton Municipal Building
Council Chambers

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Hedrick called the meeting to order at 10:33 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
Executive Administrative Assistant Maureen French
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 Operations Randy Surprenant
Manager-Water / PAF Richard M. Stevens
Manager Water Operations Ray Valentini
Utility Analytics Manager Aaron Brooks
Manager of Communications and Community Outreach Dan Bouges
City Finance Director Ronald Yuhas
Accounting Manager Yi Xiang
Senior Accounting Assistant Nicole Romanski
Executive Administrative Assistant Kelsey Haughey

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Scully moved, **Commissioner Duarte** seconded a motion to approve the minutes of January 15, 2020.

Motion carried.

3. REVIEW AND ACCEPTANCE OF TREASURER'S REPORT

Commissioner Zuliani moved, **Commissioner Duarte** seconded a motion to approve the Treasurer's Report for the month ending January 2020.

Motion carried.

4. COMMUNICATIONS AND CORRESPONDENCE

- A.** 2018 Water Fluoridation Quality Award – Commissioner Zuliani commented on the lag time of receiving the award.
- B.** Thank you letter from Native Plant Trust

5. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS

Sam Spano – 300 Thames Street – Submitting comments in writing, attached.
Commissioner Zuliani asked Mr. Spano if odor has been detected since last month. Mr. Spano stated that since it is winter there have been zero odor days but concerned for warmer months to come.

6. CMEEC BOARD OF DIRECTOR'S REPORT

All committees met and approved Charters. They and starting their regularly scheduled meetings.

7. REGIONAL WATER UPDATE

No update this month.

8. MONTHLY FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

Accounting Manager Xiang presented

Electric

- Overall this January was warmer than January of last year.
- Electric Revenues are 0.2% above budget for the month and 1.6% less than budget for the FYTD which is driven by the Industrial Classes.
- O&M Expenses are 3.5% more than budget for the month and 9.7% below budget for the FYTD.

Water

- Water Revenues are 1.6% more than budget for the month and 0.5% less than budget for the FYTD which is driven by Industrial Classes.
- O&M Expenses are 0.7% below budget for the month and 12.6% below budget for the FYTD.
- Net Earnings before DWSRF grant is \$1M more than budget for the FYTD due to below budget O&M Expenses, and delay of DPH Consent Agreement Projects.

Sewer

- Sewer Revenues are 12.3% above budget for the month and 5.5% over budget for the FYTD which is driven by all Classes.
- O&M Expenses are 17.4% below budget for the month and 20.4% below budget for the FYTD.
- Net Income from Operations for the FYTD is \$462K more than budget due to over budget Revenues plus below budget O&M Expenses.

9. PROJECTS / INITIATIVES UPDATE

General Manager Blanchette wanted to keep the commission apprised of her work regarding management of the lease/purchase of copiers for the City and the Utility. Department Heads and General Managers have been given costs for their budgets. The lease will be going to the Committee of the Whole on Monday, February 24, 2020. The City will take the lead and execute the contracts-she explained the update for the Commission was information only.

Manager Stevens handed out an advisement regarding the pH of the water leaving the Plant. The Commission was informed that the system was designed and built by Groton Utilities Staff.

10. OLD BUSINESS

A. PAF Odor Update – General Manager Biron stated the remediation plan is being followed and an action item to execute maintenance and monitoring program to help control the odors is on the Agenda. Equipment is continually being repaired. Tank cleaning schedules have been followed. Chairperson Hedrick asked General Manager Biron to address the concerns in Mr. Spano's public comment. The Primary Backup Pump is expected to be completed in two weeks. Manager Valentini noted a Purchase Order for the gas alarm and digester will be cut and the sensors will be upgraded. Manager Stevens informed the Commission that a facility plan will be completed in March.

Commissioner Zuliani requested clarification on cleaning tanks and maintenance. Manager Valentini noted the digester cleaning schedule is 5-7 years and said it was cleaned less than two years ago. Manager Stevens added that the primary settling tanks are cleaned at a minimum two times per year and that one is always empty for rotation.

- B. PCB Update** – General Manager Biron stated extensive testing and core boring has been completed. All areas of concern have been identified and prioritized and matched up against the construction schedule. The consultant is meeting with Groton Utilities staff every week to update the plan. A draft plan has been sent to EPA and CTDEEP and a call back is expected this week. The plant is on schedule for completion without interference. The sampling plan is rigorous and an additional consultant has been hired to do a risk based assessment for the Old Plant. Commissioner Hedrick asked about the time frame of approval. Manager Valentini said three contractors, R.H. White, Groton Utilities staff and the consultant plan to tour and price out areas this afternoon. This will be part of the existing change order. Chairperson Hedrick asked if the use of dry ice is still in the table for remediation. Manager Valentini stated it is no longer an option. Commissioner Scully asked about Sika 62 and questioned if it is a liquid. General Manager Biron confirmed it is not a liquid but an epoxy.
- C. Water Cost Of Service Study** – President of Utility Financial Solutions (UFS), Mark Beauchamp, presented the Water Cost of Service Study. Mr. Beauchamp has completed the 2018 Electric and 2019 Waste Water Cost of Service Studies for Groton Utilities. Mr. Beauchamp plans to focus on three target areas as results of the Water Financial Projections: 1) debt covered ratios 2) minimum cash 3) target operating income. Mr. Beauchamp wanted to point out the two tier retail rate structure and clarified that CF = cubic feet and there is about 7.5 gallon/CF. Commissioner Godley asked if the increased rates are in anticipation of plant costs as he believes they were recently increased for the WTP. Chairperson Hedrick noted this is a continuation of that plan in efforts to reduce rate shock. Commissioner Godley stated that 5% interest rate is high. Mr. Beauchamp said they are conservative rates and Finance Director Yuhas said we currently have 2-5% rates. Commissioner Godley asked who uses 1.5” meters. General Manager Daniels noted that mostly residential (apartment complexes) do. Commissioner Duarte asked for clarification on fire sprinklers, and if the customer only charged when they go off. Mr. Beauchamp noted that there is a monthly charge as it’s a dedicated line (standby charge). Commissioner Scully asked if the customer gets charged monthly. General Manager Daniels replied that the charge is annual. Commissioner Scully clarified if retail consumption is 10,000 CF then commercial customers are getting larger increase. The proposed Water Rate Increase implementation schedule was agreed upon by the Commission.
- D. Electric Vehicle Charging Stations** – Communications and Community Outreach Manager Bouges passed out a photo of the proposed location of the Electric Vehicle charger at Eastern Point Beach. Quotes are still being sought, and the purchase will be charged to the Key Accounts budget. Manager Bouges will need to obtain approval from the Eastern Point Beach Historical Association. Chairperson Hedrick reminded Manager Bouges to be sure the Building Inspector is involved. Chairperson Hedrick brought up the concern for flooding in that area, but Commissioner Scully said he didn’t believe flooding will be an issue as the transformer is on same ground level. Commission Scully also noted the charging connections are made to withstand the elements.

Commissioner Godley asked if the area is monitored for surveillance. Chairperson Hedrick stated the area is monitored, but will need to confirm with Director of Parks and Recreation, Mary Hill, if the EV Charger will be under surveillance.

- E. Capital Bonding – Mark Beauchamp reviewed the presentation in depth to provide guidance for a capital improvement plan which will be requested next month.

11. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Safety Team – Year in Review – will be moved to next month

12. ACTION ITEMS

- A. **GUC-WPCA 20-02-03** Consideration of and action to authorize Groton Utilities Management to approve the two year agreement for the Bioxide Solution Full-Service Odor Control Program for the Plant Street Pump Station and East Slope Pump Station, as a Source Provider, Evoqua Water Technologies LLC, 2650 Tallevast Road, Sarasota, Florida not to exceed the amount of Fifty Six Thousand Five Hundred Dollars and No Cents (\$56,500.00) to be paid from the approved Fiscal Year 2020 and anticipated funds available in the approved Fiscal Year 2021 Sewer Division Operating and Capital Budget and that the City Council be apprised of this action with the recommendation that it concur

Commissioner Godley moved, **Commissioner Scully** second that the Groton Utilities Commission / Water Pollution Control Authority approve Action Item GUC-WPCA-20-02-03.

Manager Stevens noted this was previously discussed and will target all the waste that flows into the PAF. Chairperson Hedrick reminded the Commissioners that this system will help protect the piping.

Commissioner Duarte asked if the costs of having Groton Utilities staff performing some of the work have been calculated. It is not an additional cost.

Motion carried.

- B. **GUC-WPCA 20-02-04** Consideration of and action to authorize Groton Utilities management to provisionally approve Change Order No. 11 from R. H. White Construction Company, Incorporated, 41 Central Street, Auburn, Massachusetts for additional compensation for equipment, materials and labor to remove and replace damaged face brick on the exterior walls of Unit 1 and Unit 2 of the Water Filtration Plant as part of the State of Connecticut, Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) Project No. 2013-0140, pending final approval by the State of Connecticut, Department of Public Health (DPH) in an amount not to exceed Seventy Two Thousand, One Hundred Twenty Five Dollars and No Cents (\$72,125.00), and furthermore that the City Council be apprised of this action with the recommendation that it concur and Mayor Keith Hedrick be authorized to execute the Change Order No. 11 upon final approval by the State of Connecticut DPH

Commissioner Godley moved, **Commissioner Zuliani** second that the Groton Utilities Commission / Water Pollution Control Authority approve Action Item GUC-WPCA-20-02-04.

Motion carried.

Manager Valentini stated the brick work makes the building structurally sound. Commissioner Godley pointed out that the engineers did not pick this up in the design phase. Manager Valentini confirmed.

- C. GUC-WPCA 20-02-05** Consideration of and action to authorize Groton Utilities management to provisionally approve Change Order No. 12 from R. H. White Construction Company, Incorporated, 41 Central Street, Auburn, Massachusetts for additional compensation for equipment, materials and labor to install 4-inch concrete masonry units (CMU) and repoint masonry joints on the exterior walls of Unit 3 of the Water Filtration Plant as part of the State of Connecticut, Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) Project No. 2013-0140, pending final approval by the State of Connecticut, Department of Public Health (DPH) in an amount not to exceed Ninety One Thousand, Three Hundred Ten Dollars and No Cents (\$91,310.00), and furthermore that the City Council be apprised of this action with the recommendation that it concur and Mayor Keith Hedrick be authorized to execute the Change Order No. 12 upon final approval by the State of Connecticut DPH

Commissioner Godley moved, **Commissioner Scully** second that the Groton Utilities Commission / Water Pollution Control Authority approve Action Item GUC-WPCA-20-02-05.

Motion carried.

Manager Valentini noted this is a different area (newest part of the building).

13. EXECUTIVE SESSION

There was no Executive Session.

14. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, at 12:12 p.m., **Commissioner Scully** moved, **Commissioner Zuliani** seconded a motion to adjourn.

Motion Carried.

Attest:

Paul Duarte
Clerk

Sam Spano 300 Thames St

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

I am Very Concerned about the Gas Alarm and Detection System in the Methane Boiler room that I noticed was unplugged on my tour of the facility on 1/14/20. If in fact this is not functioning it could cause a Major Safety Issue with the potential for an explosion. I had asked the General Mgr.of Operations to look into it at the last meeting. I would like to know what he found out?

Primary Back-Up Pump Still Not Installed.
Mini Bio-Scrubbers Both Removed from WPCA premises- Who authorized?
Tanks still Not being Cleaned or Maintained on a regular schedule.
Gas Alarm and Detection System - Unplugged

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)
Aeration Tanks – Every 2 years
All Lines entering the plant-2x year (July/Nov)

In short the plant is not being properly maintained

This is the fifth time I have addressed the Commission about the problems at the WPCA. During this time period I have seen little forward progress by Groton Utilities management to correct these issues with the exception of the methane burner parts being ordered. Unlike the current mess at the new fresh water plant now involving both the EPA and DEEP there is a simple solution to correcting the issues at the WPCA.

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

No matter what plans GU management comes up with to address the odor issues I have absolutely no faith that the current staffing at the WPCA are going to fix the odor problems.

Again, I am asking that Kevin be immediately 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.