

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

March 18, 2020 10:30 a.m.
City of Groton Municipal Building
Council Chambers

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Hedrick called the meeting to order at 10:30 a.m.

ROLL CALL

Present: Chairperson Mayor Keith Hedrick

In Person Commissioners: Paul Duarte (via Skype), Jeffrey Godley (via Skype), George Scully (via Skype), 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-Projects & Planning Bruce Kruszewski
General Manager-Key Accounts Leonard J. Mediavilla
General Manager-Information Technology Sue Blanchette
IT Operations Manager Donnie Niles (via Skype)
Manager Water Operations Ray Valentini
City Finance Director Ronald Yuhas

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Zuliani moved, **Commissioner Scully** seconded a motion to approve the minutes of February 19, 2020.

Motion carried.

3. REVIEW AND ACCEPTANCE OF TREASURER'S REPORT

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

Motion carried.

4. COMMUNICATIONS AND CORRESPONDENCE

General Manager Biron provided an update on the Utilities' actions regarding COVID-19. Actions are benchmarked against Eversource and UI and also complying with recommendations of NEPPA, and the CDC and the CT DPH website. Groton Utilities Electric, Water, and Sewer divisions are operating as usual and management has limited traveling to only two (2) people per vehicle. Large work requiring more than two (2) people is limited only to emergency work. Management has coordinated a call every day to identify employee absences and review policies. Meetings with individual departments have been held. There are continuous updates and flexibility amongst staff. Childcare issues are being worked out on an individual basis.

Commissioner Godley inquired about plans in the event an individual is unable to pay their bill. Chairperson Hedrick responded that payment arrangements will be looked into and added that because of the Governor's Executive Order, there is an emergency moratorium on utility shut offs. He also said the Municipal Building has been closed to the public, and there will be evaluation of flex time and remote work to promote social distancing. A policy has been created, but may not be fully implemented until department heads review.

Commissioner Scully made the suggestion to split the Electric crew in half with one crew assigned to Bozrah and the other crew in Groton. General Manager Biron said that currently, there are five or six linemen who are working on the South Road project in Bozrah and are reporting directly to Bozrah Operations and will do so for the remainder of the twelve week project.

Chairperson Hedrick said that the union contracts are also being reviewed to allow work to be accomplished on back shifts.

5. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS

There were no calls received for Public Communication.

6. CMEEC BOARD OF DIRECTOR'S REPORT

No update this month.

7. REGIONAL WATER UPDATE

No update this month.

8. MONTHLY FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

City Finance Director Yuhas provided a high level review of Electric, Water, and Sewer revenues and net income. He reported that Electric and Water revenues are both down based on year to date amount; Electric down \$644,000 and Water is down \$40,000 both due to less volume sold. For both divisions, net income is above budget - \$677,000 for Electric and \$1.5m for Water. Sewer is \$181,000 to the positive on revenue side based on 2 million more cubic feet sold through that division, and \$529,000 above budget on revenue side. Electric and Water are a little behind budget based on volume from a year to year comparison but as far as net income goes all three divisions are above budget. There were no questions asked by the Commission.

9. PROJECTS / INITIATIVES UPDATE

No updates this month.

10. OLD BUSINESS

- A.** PAF odor update –General Manager Biron reported that work continues according to the plan. A purchase order has been generated for the spare pumps at the PAF which will eliminate any down time. Parts for the automatic burner which lights when gas is present are on order. There is also a purchase order for identified pump stations to be equipped with materials to help remove odor prior to coming into the plant. He said the project will be started in the next sixty days and should be completed this spring. There is continued operation of the scrubber adding hypochlorite tablets. In order to keep Mr. Spano informed, he and Mr. Cini will be meeting. General Manager Biron concluded that there will be some warnings of potential odors, and operations of the plant will continue with process and communication updates. He added that the engineering assessment for the scrubber is pending.
- B.** PCB Update – This will be addressed during discussion of Action Item GUC-WPCA 20-03-08.
- C.** Electric Vehicle Charging Stations – no update
- D.** Capital Bonding Financial Plan – This will be addressed during discussion of Action Item GUC-WPCA 20-03-09.
- E.** Public Hearing held March 16, 2020- This meeting was postponed. – Since rate increase is in October, Management will reevaluate when to reschedule.

11. NEW BUSINESS

- A.** Strategic Plan Development – CMEEC is using Tim Blodgett, Hometown Connections – worked in tandem with CMEEC and review of the schedule will happen at later date due to current pandemic.
- B.** Budget Special Meeting – April 8, 2020 at 9:00 am (Council Chambers) – This meeting is a requirement but will depend on City schedule. This meeting has been held a week prior to regular Utility Commission for discussion and to address all questions regarding the proposed budget. The plan would be to have the proposed budget approved by the Commission in the Regular April meeting then approved by City Council by the end of April.

12. ACTION ITEMS

- A. GUC-WPCA 20-03-06** Consideration of and action to authorize Groton Utilities' Management to exercise a one (1) year contract renewal option for lawn and ground maintenance for the 2020-2021 season to ACK Services, 515 Cow Hill Road, Mystic, CT for a contract amount of Sixty Seven Thousand, Two Hundred Dollars and No Cents (\$67,200.00) for Groton Utilities' properties, Sixty Thousand, Four Hundred Eighty Dollars and No Cents (\$60,480.00) to be paid by the Water Division, and Six Thousand, Seven Hundred Twenty Dollars (\$6,720.00) to be paid by the Electric Division, 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-20-03-06.

Manager Valentini indicated that this is routine renewal according to the procurement policy and exercising their one year renewal.

Commissioner Godley asked if the Utility is satisfied with their service and Manager Valentini confirmed.

Motion Carried.

- B. GUC-WPCA 20-03-07** Consideration of and action to authorize Groton Utilities Management to approve Change Order No. 13A 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 an amount not to exceed Eighty Nine Thousand, Three Hundred Ninety Seven Dollars and Forty Six Cents (\$89,397.46), 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. 13A

Commissioner Duarte moved, **Commissioner Zuliani** second that the Groton Utilities Commission / Water Pollution Control Authority approve Action Item GUC-WPCA-20-03-07.

Director Gaudet reported that this is a routine change order; it has already been approved by DPH, and includes multiple items.

Motion carried.

C. GUC-WPCA 20-03-08 Consideration of and action to authorize Groton Utilities Management to provisionally approve Change Order No. 16 from R. H. White Construction Company, Incorporated, 41 Central Street, Auburn, Massachusetts for approximately Ninety Percent (90%) of the remaining PCB abatement and encapsulation 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 One Million, Eight Hundred, Twenty Thousand Two Hundred Sixty Five Dollars (\$1,820,265.00), 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. 16 upon final approval by the State of Connecticut DPH

Commissioner Duarte moved, **Commissioner Zuliani** second that the Groton Utilities Commission / Water Pollution Control Authority approve Action Item GUC-WPCA-20-03-08.

Manager Valentini informed the Commission that three bids were received to redo the PCB abatement after the visit from the EPA. This is for the lowest bid, and will complete 90% of work. It includes a Master plan of the whole plant and includes areas that are not critical at this time. After this contract is completed the remaining PCB abatement will be put out for bid. Environmental Partners continues to be consulted.

Commissioner Zuliani asked if the EPA has given final approval. Manager Valentini stated the approach is risk based action and management is following guidelines.

Commissioner Duarte asked if the 10% that is left is the existing sand pile. Manger Valentini said the remaining 10% are rooms inside that have been identified as non-critical including the basement, the Fluoride Room, and Rapid Mix Room.

Motion carried.

D. GUC-WPCA 20-03-09 Consideration of and Action to approve the Proposed Bond Fund Improvements in the total amount of Twenty Nine Million, Seven Hundred Seventeen Thousand, Three Hundred Dollars (\$29,717,300) as presented by Management, and furthermore that the Proposed Bond Fund Improvements be forward to City Council prior to consideration by the City Freeman

E.

Commissioner Zulani moved, **Commissioner Duarte** second that the Groton Utilities Commission / Water Pollution Control Authority approve Action Item GUC-WPCA-20-03-09.

Director Gaudet pointed out the tables included in the Commission Package. He explained the action to approve the proposed bond funding will move from the GUC/WPCA to the Freeman then to City Council. General Manager Biron explained that the highest priority work has been identified. Putting this together has been an incredible team effort. He reported that Bruce Kruszewski was promoted to fill the position of the New General Manager of Projects and Planning. General Manager Kruszewski will assist with execution and completion of projects identified. Additionally, Electric has settled on two vendors for a Master Service Agreement which will be presented next month, and that the projects will follow the budgets in order of priority as detailed on the budget sheets.

Chairperson Hedrick indicated that large infrastructure projects in each department have been identified to maintain reliability and high quality service to customers.

Commissioner Godley asked how long it will take to secure the bonding because the interest rates are favorable right now. City Finance Director Yuhas said there are challenges with the coordination of the freeman meeting due to the executive order. Normally the schedule is a month and issuing debt is about 3-4 months.

Chairperson Hedrick said he has contacted state officials to inquire if it's possible to have a freeman meeting in small numbers and then cast a written vote. He is working with state officials to determine how to execute that plan.

Motion carried.

13. EXECUTIVE SESSION

There was no Executive Session.

-

14. ADJOURNMENT

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

Motion Carried.

Attest:

Paul Duarte
Clerk