

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

May 20, 2020 10:30 a.m.  
City of Groton Municipal Building  
Council Chambers

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Chairperson Hedrick called the meeting to order at 10:34 a.m.

**ROLL CALL**

**Present:** Chairperson Mayor Keith Hedrick (via Skype)

**Commissioners:** Paul Duarte (via Skype), George Scully (via Skype), Jeffrey Godley

**Absent:** Robert Zuliani

**Staff present:**

Director of Utilities Ronald A. Gaudet (via Skype)  
Executive Administrator to the Director of Utilities, Noemi Walencewicz  
Executive Administrative Assistant Maureen French (via Skype)  
General Manager-Operations Mark A. Biron (via Skype)  
General Manager-Projects & Planning Bruce Kruszewski (via Skype)  
General Manager-Key Accounts Leonard J. Mediavilla (via Skype)  
General Manager-Information Technology Sue Blanchette (via Skype)  
General Manager- Customer Service Tina Daniels (via Skype)  
Manager Water Operations Ray Valentini (via Skype)  
Manager Water Division Rick Stevens (via Skype)  
City Finance Director Ronald Yuhas (via Skype)  
Accounting Manager Yi Xiang (via Skype)  
Manager of Electric Engineering Randall Surprenant (via Skype)  
Manager of Electric Operations Vernon Page (via Skype)  
Utility Analytics Manager Aaron Brooks (via Skype)  
Manager of Communications and Community Outreach Dan Bouges (via Skype)  
Junior Electrical Engineer Santhosh Suresh (via Skype)

**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 Statutes”, 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 televised in real time on Groton Municipal Television Channel 2 and online. If you wish to address the Commission, please call 860-446-4130 during the Public Communications part of the agenda. In addition, written communication sent to [directorsoffice@grotonutilities.com](mailto:directorsoffice@grotonutilities.com) by 9am on the date of the meeting will be read during this portion of the agenda.**

**2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

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

**Motion carried.**

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

**Commissioner Scully** moved, **Commissioner Duarte** seconded a motion to approve the Treasurer’s Report for the month ending April 2020.

**Motion carried.**

**4. COMMUNICATIONS AND CORRESPONDENCE**

- A. Thank you from Groton Public Schools
- B. Thank you from Timothy Meehan
- C. Email from Sam Spano

**5. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS**

Chairperson Hedrick read the additional, recent communication submitted by Sam Spano, 300 Thames Street, Groton. Please see attached.

**6. REGIONAL WATER UPDATE**

There was no update.

**7. MONTHLY FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS**

Accounting Manager Xiang presented

***Electric***

- Total Electric Revenues presented for the month of April are 3.8% less than budget. The negative variance is driven by Commercial Classes. FYTD total Electric Revenues are 2% less than budget and 3.4% less than the same period of last year.
- This April is warmer than April of last year. Heating Degree Day requirements are 19% less than April of last year.
- Operation & Maintenance Expenses for April are 6.5% less than budget. Net performance after the effects of TVC is almost 8% less than budget for the month due to below budget O&M Expenses and below budget Power Cost.
- Operation & Maintenance Expenses for the FYTD are 10.6% below budget and Net performance after the effects of TVC is 39.3% more than budget. The favorable variance is driven by the below budget O&M Expenses.
- Around \$69K in conservation funds are charged to customers in April and will be transferred to CLM Account at CMEEC. \$22K in conservation expenditures are incurred for the month and will be reimbursed by the fund.

\*The current CLM Rate of \$0.0025 has not changed since January 1, 2011.

***Water***

- Total Water Revenues presented for the month of April are 13.6% more than budget. The positive variance is driven by Residential and Industrial Classes. FYTD total Water Revenues are 1.2% more than budget and 2.6% more than the same period of last year.
- Operation & Maintenance Expenses for April are 13.3% less than budget. Net Earnings before DWSRF grant proceeds for April is 129% or \$321K more than budget.
- Operation & Maintenance Expenses for the FYTD are 12.9% below budget. Net Earnings before the DWSRF grant proceeds for the FYTD is 169.9% or \$1.9M more than budget due to over budget Revenue plus below budget O&M Expenses and delay of the DPH Consent Agreement projects.
- As end of April 2020, \$41.4M has been incurred for the Water Treatment Plant project. Total \$40.6M has been received from Drinking State Revolving Loan Fund (DWSRF), including almost \$11.3M from grants and \$29.3M from loan.

- The Water Division Balance Sheet (line 26) reflects the restriction of \$3.2M in cash for the WTP upgrade and reflects transfers for collections through March 2020.

### *Sewer*

- Total Sewer Revenues presented for April are 54.9% more than budget. The positive variance is driven by all Classes. The FYTD Sewer Revenues are 11.7% more than budget and 4.6% more than the same period of last year. The positive variance is also drive by all Classes.
- Operation and Maintenance Expenses for April are 10.8% below budget. Net Income from Operations for April is \$179K more than budget due to over budget Revenue plus below budget O&M Expense.
- Operation and Maintenance Expenses for FYTD are 16.5% below budget. Net Income from Operations for FYTD is 128.9% or \$783K more than budget due to over budget Revenues plus below budget O&M Expenses.

Commissioner Godly questioned if a customer has a break in a main if they can ask for a rebate. General Manager Daniels said there is no forgiveness for water, but forgiveness is possible for sewer. She said with appropriate paperwork, forgiveness could be granted for under \$5,000.00. If the forgiveness is over \$5,000.00 it would come before the Commission.

## **8. PROJECTS / INITIATIVES UPDATE**

### **A. Operational Update – COVID 19**

General Manager Mark Biron updated the Commission on the status of the precautions enforced at the Utility and said that today, May 20<sup>th</sup>, is the day the Governor slated to reopen parts of Connecticut. For the past 6-7 weeks, Groton Utilities has had approximately 50% of their staff present and the remaining on standby at home. Management met this morning with the Unions and informed the Unions the plan is to resume regular working practices effective 5/26/2020. The Utility has practiced precautions and will continue to enforce social distancing; PPE will be made available and required when appropriate and scheduled cleaning of the buildings will be increased. Safety Consultant Jim Healey has been asked to complete the State Self Certification Process to be sure the Utility is in compliance. To date no one in GU has contracted COVID19. Daily reconciliation of employees' absences has been in place since March and will continue.

### **B. Customer Service**

#### **1. Updated Customer Service Hours**

General Manager Tina Daniels said that her department determined a need to adjust the hours of the Customer Service availability. She said the hours had previously been 6am-6pm with Customer Service remaining open later on Thursday until 7pm. It was evident that more support was needed during the afternoon hours, so the hours were adjusted to meet that need and are now 7am to 5:30pm Monday through Friday. The 8am-12pm on Saturday remains unchanged.

Commissioner Duarte questioned if the problem with the Certificate that occurred over the weekend was solved. General Manager Daniels said she would look into it and get back to him.

2. Accounts Receivable – Aging Accounts Update

General Manager Daniels explained that she is tracking A/R closely and running daily reports; she reminded the Commission that there can be a vast fluctuation from day to day. There are 12 different billing cycles and some cycles are larger than others, and some include more commercial customers than residential. She said today's reports are showing 22% of A/R (31 - over 90 days) are delinquent; and yesterday it was at 12%. She said that overall, there is only a 2% fluctuation between April and May. She said most of the small general and medium general accounts include most of the hotels and smaller businesses such as hair salons and gyms, and the largest delinquency remains with the stores that have been unable to open. Customer Service has been calling businesses to check in to see if they are open or closed, if they need payment arrangements, or if their security deposit can be used. She said this will be an area that the Utility will struggle with for the next few months. On the residential side, she said it is what it is. General Manager Daniels has reached out to TVCCA and Groton Social Services to see if there are customers that have applied for assistance and not received it yet. She has also reached out to other area municipalities as well as APPA and said that they are experiencing financial similarities. If customers don't have an income, they won't pay their utilities.

9. **OLD BUSINESS**

A. PAF odor update

General Manager Mark Biron reported on the progress with the bioxide at the PAF and directed his response to address the concerns sent in by Mr. Spano. He said there has been some difficulty with the vendors due to COVID 19, but work is on track for completion by the end of June. The bioxide has been installed, the new pumps and piping will be delivered today for the Plant Street Pump Station and Evoqua technicians will install by the end of May. There was a delivery problem with the excess gas burner, but it has been delivered. A PO has been issued, and New England Pump and Valve will install the new digester. The sludge odor control technical evaluation has been completed but results have not come in yet. The biannual maintenance of Tank #4 was completed on 5/11/2020, and the Chlorine Tank was cleaned on 5/18/2020. Additionally, final aeration maintenance will start and the goal is to have it completed by summer. Processes are being reviewed and Management is following recommendations from Kevin Cini.

B. PCB Update

General Manager Biron informed the Commission that Management has been in continual contact with Kim Tisa at the EPA for clarification and answers to be sure to obtain the approval needed to continue. Recent information was sent and Management hopes to converse by Friday. She indicated she would like to review the next phase of the 5-10 year plan as well as the procedures for the soil. The soil will go out Friday for testing.

C. Electric Vehicle Charging Stations

Director Gaudet said a few chargers have been ordered and the intent is to put them in Washington Park.

**D. Public Hearing – Revised Schedule**

The Public Hearing that was scheduled to take place in April in accordance with the water rate increase requirement, was postponed due to the pandemic. A revised water rate increase schedule was presented with the intent to proceed with the scheduled water rate increase. Commissioner Scully voiced his concerns about raising rates at this time and said it is his opinion that it should be pushed back. Discussion continued and it is understood that this rate has been planned because the previous rate will have timed out. Commissioner Duarte asked for clarification that the rate increase will go toward the new Water Treatment Plant. Accounting Manager Yi Xiang confirmed. Chairperson Hedrick reminded the Commission that the 4% increase has been projected for a long time to avoid rate shock to Groton Utility Customers. The Commission agreed on the June 15, 2020 Public Hearing date and concurred that the concerns of the public would be heard and considered at that time.

**E. Strategic Plan Development – Revised Schedule**

The Utility is working with CMEEC to coordinate schedules and shared travel costs for Tim Blodgett, the consultant who will lead the strategic plan. Director Gaudet said this has been a challenge due to the pandemic. Tim believes the meetings should be done in person and is not sure if managing the meeting via Zoom would be effective. The revised schedule indicates meetings starting in July. Commissioner Hedrick said there is no additional guidance from the Governor regarding public meetings, and nothing has been announced for plans beyond May or June. It was decided that Management will monitor public circumstances and see how things progress. The Director will revisit next month and provide an update in the June meeting.

**10. NEW BUSINESS**

No new business.

**11. ACTION ITEMS**

**A. GUC-WPCA-2020-05-17** Consideration and action to authorize Groton Utilities Management to approve the low bid and enter into a three-year Sludge Management Contract beginning July 1, 2020, with Harry H. Stone and Son, Inc., 313 Main Street, North Southbury, CT and issue a purchase order in the amount not to exceed One Hundred Twenty Thousand Dollars and No Cents (\$120,000.00) for transportation and disposal of liquid sewage sludge and scum at the Wastewater Treatment Plant to be paid from funds available in the proposed FY 2020-2021 Sewer Operating Budget and furthermore that the City Council be apprised of this action with the recommendation that it concur

**Commissioner Duarte** moved, **Commissioner Godley** seconded that the Groton Utilities Commission / Water Pollution Control Authority approve Action Item GUC-WPCA-20-05-17.

Manager Valentini said this item went out to bid. Harry H. Stone and Son, Inc. is covering other area towns for sludge removal, and is confident they will do a good job.

**Motion Carried.**

- B. GUC-WPCA-20-05-18** Consideration of and action to authorize Groton Utilities Management to approve the low bid and issue a purchase order to Gervais Ford, 5 Littleton Road, Ayer, Massachusetts for the purchase of one (1) 2020 FORD F-350 Super Duty 4x4 Dual Wheel Regular Cab in the quoted amount not to exceed Forty Seven Thousand, Nine Hundred Ninety Seven Dollars and No Cents (\$47,997.00) to be paid from available funds in the sewage account and furthermore, that the City Council be apprised of this action with the recommendation that it concur.

**Commissioner Duarte** moved, **Commissioner Scully** seconded that the Groton Utilities Commission / Water Pollution Control Authority approve Action Item GUC-WPCA-20-05-18.

Commissioner Scully asked if this truck is complete with the boom installed for this price. Manager Valentini confirmed. Commissioner Scully voiced that in his opinion the Utility received an excellent price.

**Motion carried.**

- C. GUC-WPCA-20-05-19** Consideration of and action to authorize Groton Utilities Management to approve the lowest bid that meets specification and authorize a purchase order to James A. Kiley Co., 15 Linwood Street, Somerville, Massachusetts for one (1) 2021 Freightliner M2 106 boom truck outfitted with Terex Boom in the quoted amount not to exceed Two Hundred Sixty Four Thousand, Nine Hundred Seventy Seven Dollars and No Cents (\$264,977.00) to be paid from funds available in Electric Division vehicle replacement fund, and furthermore, that the City Council be apprised of this action with the recommendation that it concur

**Commissioner Duarte** moved, **Commissioner Scully** seconded that the Groton Utilities Commission / Water Pollution Control Authority approve Action Item GUC-WPCA-20-05-19.

General Manager Mark Biron introduced new Manager of Operations, Vernon Page to speak to this action item. Manager Page said the decision was made to purchase a Terex boom due to previous issues experienced with Altec. Commissioner Scully said he has dealt with James Kiley Co. and has had great success.

**Motion carried.**

- D. GUC-WPCA 20-05-20** Consideration of and action to authorize Groton Utilities Management to enter into Memorandum of Understanding with Eversource, for the ISO required upgrade on the Groton owned Transmission facilities, in order to coordinate efforts so as to minimize costs and time to implement improvements to the 1280, 1410 and 400 Lines including associated equipment in the Buddington Sub-station, and furthermore that the City Council be apprised of this action with the recommendation that it concur and the Director of Utilities be authorized to execute the Memorandum of Understanding once approved by Eversource and Groton Utilities

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

Utilities Director Gaudet took the opportunity to congratulate Randall Surprenant on his promotion to Engineering Manager. Manager Surprenant shared a presentation prepared for the Commission that explained the upgrade of the 1280, 1410 and 400 Lines. He said this was a project that former Engineering Manager, Brian Roche, had been advocating for years. He said the project is a requirement and will need to be completed because the Utility is monitored by NERC and FERC. He said it will also be advantageous for the Utility to own a transmission facility and even after the borrowing and investing, the Utility can expect an 8% return. Director Gaudet explained that the MOU will allow the Utility to partner with Eversource and coordinate engineering and construction firms and will be able to leverage for cost savings. Commissioner Scully asked if steel poles will be used and Manager Surprenant confirmed. He said they are working through a plan and it will go to final approval today. Commissioner Scully agreed that this is a great project with opportunity to earn returns. Director Gaudet directed the Commission to the memo from Robin Kipnis, Legal Counsel for CMEEC that was sent to them in their package. He pointed out that we would be subject to large fines from NERC and FERC if we do not move forward with the project. Manager Surprenant explained that any site work inside the substations that has to do with the Utility transformer is not a covered cost of the project, but that any site work inside the substation needed to accommodate to the 115kV upgrade is covered. Commissioner Duarte asked who determined the \$15.2M. Manager Surprenant explained that Eversource presented the estimate, and the \$15.2M represents the high end of possible cost. He then asked if there is any possibility of PCBs, and voiced his concern regarding possible financial impact and inquired if the \$15.2M includes a contingency. He asked if the 400 bus area would need to be replaced and Manager Surprenant confirmed and further explained that assessment would be done at that time, and the Utility would probably put in containment. He said it would require a new site plan, that he would get some numbers together and will update the Commission. In order to upgrade the bus and the breakers, etc. to protect the transmission system, all work is included in the \$15.2M. Any site work inside the substation that has to do with the Utility transformer would be the responsibility of Groton Utilities. Commissioner Scully clarified that there would be investment required by Groton Utilities that would not be refundable from ISO for work inside the substation. Manager Surprenant said that anything that has to be done inside the substation for the line to upgrade from 69kV to 15kV is covered. Manager Surprenant said he will look through the report and see what is indicated for environmental impact and get more information for the Commission.

**Motion carried.**

- E. GUC-WPCA 20-05-21** Consideration of and action to approve the proposed Bond for the ISO required upgrade on the Groton owned Transmission Facilities for improvements to the 1280, 1410 and 400 Lines including associated equipment in the Buddington Substation for the total amount not to exceed Fifteen Million Two Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$15,200,000) and furthermore that the Proposed Bond Fund Improvement be forwarded to the City Council prior to consideration by the City Freeman

**Commissioner Godley** moved, **Commissioner Scully** seconded that the Groton Utilities Commission / Water Pollution Control Authority approve Action Item GUC-WPCA-20-05-21.

Director Gaudet said this is the permission to borrow to proceed with the upgrade. Chairperson Hedrick said this would have to wait to go to bond council and there would be a delay because bond councils are only looking at short term projects or capital projects related to COVID 19. Director Gaudet said he understood but this could move forward in preparation. Commissioner Duarte again expressed his disappointment that the Commission does not know about potential costs inside the substation. Director Gaudet explained that the agreement to join with ISO does not require any updates internally. Commissioner Scully agreed that it could be done, but it would be wise to do some work at that time. Commissioner Hedrick confirmed that any additional work would come to the Commission separately.

**Motion carried.**

- F. GUC-WPCA 20-05-22** Consideration of and action to authorize Groton Utilities Management to enter into a Master Service Agreement with BHI Energy, 500 Columbia Drive, Suite 100, West Palm Beach, Florida for a five (5) year contract, and that this company be recognized as a preferred vendor to avoid future bid process at agreed on prices for services, with consideration given to approval of future purchase order amounts per Policy No. 1004 Policy and Procedures Governing the Purchasing Practices of Groton Utilities, and furthermore that the City Council be apprised of this action with the recommendation that it concur and the Director of Utilities be authorized to execute the agreement

**Commissioner Godley** moved, **Commissioner Duarte** seconded that the Groton Utilities Commission / Water Pollution Control Authority approve Action Item GUC-WPCA-20-05-22.

General Manager Biron explained that this would help projected projects move along much smoother, and will help with the large projects that the Utility has planned. Four bids were received on time and BHI Energy submitted the best rates and can do engineering, procurement, and construction. He said BHI would get 90% plus of the work. He said the contract is under review the attorney for the Utility, Steve Studer.

**Motion passed with 3 Ayes and 1 abstention (Commissioner Scully).**

- G. GUC-WPCA 20-05-23** Consideration of and action to authorize Groton Utilities Management to enter into a Master Service Agreement with LIG Engineering, 510 Chapman Street, Suite 202, Canton, Massachusetts for a five (5) year contract, and that this company be recognized as a preferred vendor to avoid future bid process at agreed on prices for services, with consideration given to approval of future purchase order amounts per Policy No. 1004 Policy and Procedures Governing the Purchasing Practices of Groton Utilities, and furthermore that the City Council be apprised of this action with the recommendation that it concur and the Director of Utilities be authorized to execute the agreement

**Commissioner Duarte** moved, **Commissioner Scully** seconded that the Groton Utilities Commission / Water Pollution Control Authority approve Action Item GUC-WPCA-20-05-23.

General Manager Biron explained that two companies were selected as a result of the bid. LIG has vast institutional knowledge regarding Groton Utility substations and he would like to have them on board. Commissioner Scully agreed that LIG has history working with the Utility and agreed that this would be a positive move.

**Motion carried.**

**12. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

There was no Executive Session.

**13. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, at 12:08 p.m., **Commissioner Duarte** moved, **Commissioner Scully** seconded a motion to adjourn.

**Motion Carried.**

Attest:

Paul Duarte  
Clerk

---

**Sent:**

Tuesday, May 19, 2020 1:52 PM

Sam Spano 300 Thames St

There has been little or no improvement in the odor situation at the WPCA since the April 15th meeting. Since that meeting there have been four bad odor days. These were Friday 5/8, Sat 5/9, Sunday 5/10 and Thursday 5/14. I called in complaints three out of the four days. The odor on 5/14 was particularly bad. I wish to thank Steve Scarpa at the plant for jumping right on the problem on Thursday 5/14 and rectifying it

Here we are going on almost a year later since the odor problems began on 7/8/19. I see little forward progress to correct the situation. For example I still do not believe the tanks are being cleaned on the correct regularly scheduled basis. Prior to January 2019, I used to be called by Kevin Cini every time these were going to done. I also do not believe the new methane burner has been completely installed? The mini Bio-scrubbers that were scrapped have not been replaced. In addition while not directly related to the odor issues the new primary backup pump still is not installed.

The current odor situation prompted me to write directly to the Director of Groton Utilities on 5/12. I believe that correspondence may also be read at this meeting.

The warm weather of summer is nearly here. I ask the commissions help to straighten out the problems.