

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

June 17, 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), Robert Zuliani (via Skype)

Absent: Jeffrey Godley

Staff present:

Director of Utilities Ronald A. Gaudet (via Skype)
Executive Administrator to the Director of Utilities, Noemi Walencewicz
Executive Administrative Assistant Maureen French
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)
City Finance Director Ronald Yuhas (via Skype)
Accounting Manager Yi Xiang (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)
IT Operations Manager Donnie Niles (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 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 May 20, 2020.

Motion carried with one abstention (Commissioner Zuliani)

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 May 2020.

Motion carried.

4. COMMUNICATIONS AND CORRESPONDENCE

No Communications and Correspondence were received.

5. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS

Chairperson Hedrick read the received email communication from Sam Spano, 300 Thames Street. 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 May are 0.3% more than budget. The positive variance is driven from Residential and Industrial Non-Manufacturing Classes offset by the negative variance from Commercial Classes. FYTD total Electric Revenues are 1.8% less than budget and 3% less than the same period of last year.
- This May is colder than May of last year. Heating Degree Day requirements are 51% more than May of last year.
- Operation & Maintenance Expenses for May are 10.4% more than budget. Net performance after the effects of TVC is 37.8% less than budget for the month due to over budget O&M Expenses.
- Operation & Maintenance Expenses for the FYTD are 8.7% below budget and Net performance after the effects of TVC is 35.9% more than budget. The favorable variance is driven by the below budget O&M Expenses.
- Around \$65K in conservation funds are charged to customers in May and will be transferred to CLM Account at CMEEC. \$34K 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 May are 0.8% more than budget. The positive variance is driven the Industrial Classes offset by the negative variance from all other Classes. FYTD total Water Revenues are 1.2% more than budget and 2.4% more than the same period of last year.
- Operation & Maintenance Expenses for May are 8.7% less than budget. Net Earnings before DWSRF grant proceeds for May is 118.1% more than budget.
- Operation & Maintenance Expenses for the FYTD are 12.5% below budget. Net Earnings before the DWSRF grant proceeds for the FYTD is 163.5% 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 May 2020, \$42.7M has been incurred for the Water Treatment Plant project. Total \$41.4M has been received from Drinking State Revolving Loan Fund (DWSRF), including almost \$11.5M from grants and \$29.9M 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 May are 13.5% more than budget. The positive variance is driven by Industrial Classes. The FYTD Sewer Revenues are 11.8% more than budget and 2.6% more than the same period of last year. The positive variance is also drive by all Classes.
- Operation and Maintenance Expenses for May are 9.1% below budget. Net Income from Operations for May is \$56K more than budget due to over budget Revenue plus below budget O&M Expense.
- Operation and Maintenance Expenses for FYTD are 15.8% below budget. Net Income from Operations for FYTD is 140.3% or \$839K more than budget due to over budget Revenues plus below budget O&M Expenses.

Cash on hand combined for all three divisions is 149 days.

8. PROJECTS / INITIATIVES UPDATE

A. Operational Update – COVID 19

General Manager Biron provided an update. He said trades workers will return to normal shifts starting July 6, 2020. As of today, there are 201 patients hospitalized in Connecticut with continuously declining hospitalizations. Of the 201 patients hospitalized, only 8 are in hospitals east of the Connecticut River; Tolland, Windham, and New London Counties. He said the Utility will continue following guidelines and taking daily attendance.

B. Customer Service

1. Accounts Receivable

General Manager Daniels compared the delinquent payments from this time last year, up 7% from 2019 and said the delinquency is currently sitting at 14% - there are no service cuts to customers at this time. The customer service representatives are reaching out to all customers to make payment arrangements to avoid the beginning of cut offs in October for non-payment.

C. Water Treatment Plant (WTP) Upgrade

Manager Valentini noted that the WTP is in testing, and will continue until there are three (3) weeks, eight (8) hours a day without glitches. Currently only computer issues have arisen. Following the three weeks without any glitches, the plant won't come off line for thirty (30) days and DPH approval will need to be granted. He also mentioned that soil pile testing started today; there are thirty seven (37) samples and results will be available in one week. Once the soil is tested, four (4) feet of soil will be scraped off and then tested and then another (4) feet.

Commissioner Scully inquired where the filtered water goes. Manager Valentini stated it goes into the lagoons and pumped into reservoirs and ends up in a small pond across the street from the plant.

D. Water Rate Increase Update

Director Gaudet announced that the Water Rate Increase was approved by the Commission at the GUC-WPCA Special Meeting on June 15, 2020. It has been forwarded to the Committee of the Whole meeting on June 22, 2020.

9. OLD BUSINESS

A. PAF odor update

General Manager Biron said he was happy to report there are action items dealing with remediation. The Evoqua bioxide injection pumps and tanks, one the East Slope and one on the West Slope, have been commissioned and are operational. Most of the plan has been completed. Management consulted with odor control experts, Hazen and Sawyer. Their findings are that the plant is in good shape and is being operated correctly. A written report will be received by Friday and there will be follow up investigation on their suggestions. Chairperson Hedrick confirmed Management is continuing to work with Sam Spano to address concerns regarding odor issues.

10. NEW BUSINESS

No new business.

11. ACTION ITEMS

A. GUC-WPCA-20-06-24 Consideration of and action to authorize Groton Utilities Management to purchase one (1) year of safety consulting services from A/Z Corporation, 46 Norwich-Westerly Road, North Stonington, CT in an amount not to exceed One Hundred Thirty Eight Thousand Two Hundred Fifty Dollars and Twenty Four Cents (\$138,250.24) to be paid from funds available in the approved Fiscal Year 2021 Utilities Finance and Accounting budget, and furthermore that the City Council be apprised of this action with the recommendation that it concur

Commissioner Scully moved, **Commissioner Duarte** seconded that the Groton Utilities Commission / Water Pollution Control Authority approve Action Item GUC-WPCA-20-06-24.

Director Gaudet stated that this is the last year of a 5 year award for Jim Healey with A/Z Corp. The Utility Safety Committee will put out a bid later this year.

Commissioner Scully wanted clarification that all departments pay for the contract. Director Gaudet confirmed.

Motion Carried.

B. GUC-WPCA-20-06-25 Consideration of and action to authorize Groton Utilities Management to purchase annual maintenance and support for the period from July 1, 2020, through June 30, 2021, for the Springbrook financial accounting system as used by the City of Groton, Groton Utilities and Bozrah Light and Power Company; from the Sole Source Provider Springbrook Holding Company, LLC, 1000 SW Broadway, Suite 1900, Portland, OR, for an amount not to exceed Fifty-Nine Thousand Sixty Seven Dollars and No Cents (\$59,067.00) to be paid from funds available in the approved Fiscal Year 2021 Utilities Finance and Accounting budget and 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-20-26-25.

Director Gaudet clarified that this is for the financial accounting system used by all departments. Commissioner Zuliani asked if other companies have been looked into. General Manager Blanchette stated the original contract started in January 2005 and upgraded in May 2011. In the process of researching options for replacement, but due to COVID-19 it has been delayed.

Motion carried.

- C. GUC-WPCA-20-06-26** Consideration of and action to approve the Groton Utilities / Bozrah Light and Power Company Rules and Regulations as presented by Management

Commissioner Duarte moved, **Commissioner Zuliani** seconded that the Groton Utilities Commission / Water Pollution Control Authority approve Action Item GUC-WPCA-20-06-26.

General Manager Daniels identified the only change to the Rules and Regulations is the removal of the word “unmetered” in section 9.4 for secondary water meters.

Motion carried.

- D. GUC-WPCA-20-06-27** Consideration of and action to authorize Groton Utilities Management to secure services for Polychlorinated Biphenyl (PCB) related consulting from Environmental Partners, 213 Court Street, Middletown, CT, to address current Water Filtration issues for an amount not to exceed Two Hundred Six Thousand Five Hundred Dollars and No Cents (\$206,500.00) as a non-budgeted item to be paid from retained earnings in the Approved Fiscal Year 2020 Water Budget, and furthermore that the City Council be apprised of this action with the recommendation it concur

Commissioner Duarte moved, **Commissioner Zuliani** seconded that the Groton Utilities Commission / Water Pollution Control Authority approve Action Item GUC-WPCA-20-06-27.

Commissioner Zuliani asked for clarification regarding retained earnings. Director Gaudet said that this item was not budgeted and will show up as unfavorable in the actual column. Environmental Partners has been instrumental working with DEEP, DPH, and EPA to get Groton Utilities through the PCB issue. He said remediation in plant and the soil pile needs to be completed. Groton Utilities needs Environmental Partners to continue; this is the estimate that was received. Chairperson Hedrick explained that because this was unbudgeted the funding was written as retained earnings because the line item assigned needed to be identified. Commissioner Scully questioned if this is a renewal from the contract initiated in January, and General Manager Biron confirmed this contract will allow for continued progress. Manager Valentini said there would be over 100 tests that need to be performed related to the paint. Chairperson Hedrick asked if this is part of the Water Treatment Plant Project, or part of the Remediation Project. Director Gaudet explained that this is outside of the scope of the Water Treatment Project; this agreement with Environmental Partners is not in the contract.

Motion carried.

- E. GUC-WPCA-20-06-28** Consideration of and action to grant Groton Utilities Management project approval to proceed with a capital project for tank removal and installation of underground storage tanks at the East Slope and West Side Pump Stations in an amount not to exceed One Hundred Fifty Thousand Dollars and No Cents (\$150,000.00), which will include issuing a purchase order to state approved vendor, Service Station Equipment, Inc., 20 Murphy Road, North Franklin, CT, not to exceed One Hundred Twenty Four Thousand Seven Hundred Ten Dollars and Thirteen Cents (\$124,710.13) for the cost of the tanks; and the remainder to cover inspections and contingency to be paid from available cash in the approved Fiscal Year 2020 Sewer Budget 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-20-06-28.

Director Gaudet reminded the Commission that there were no non- bonded capital projects included in the budget last year. Manager Valentini explained that tanks are over 20 years old and need to be removed and replaced with above ground tanks. Commissioner Scully asked if the price includes the new above ground tanks, and Manager Valentini said the tanks are included.

Motion carried.

12. EXECUTIVE SESSION

None

13. RECESS

Chairperson Hedrick called for a recess at 11:22 a.m. for lunch and the GUC/WPCA meeting proceeded at 12:30 p.m.

14. STRATEGIC PLANNING

The first session of the 2020 Strategic Plan with outside consultant, Tim Blodgett, of Hometown Connections, and GU Staff took place for the remainder of the meeting. The following staff were present: Commissioners Hedrick, Duarte, Scully and Zuliani; Directors Gaudet and Yuhas; General Managers Biron, Blanchette, Daniels, Kruszewski and Mediavilla; Managers Xiang, Ouimet, Fleury, Niles, Brooks, Bouges, Stevens, Dietrich, Page, Valentini, and Surprenant; and Executive Admins French and Walencewicz.

15. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, at 4:16 p.m., **Commissioner Duarte** moved, **Commissioner Zuliani** seconded a motion to adjourn.

Motion Carried.

Attest:

Paul Duarte
Clerk

06/16/2020 1:04 PM

Sam Spano 300 Thames St

Unfortunately there has been little improvement in the odor situation at the WPCA since the May 20 UC meeting. Since that meeting there have been four bad odor days- Mon 6/8, Fri 6/12, Sat 6/13 and Sun 6/14. Complaints were called in all four days. On Monday 6/8 I talked directly to the current Chief Plant Operator.

In reviewing the odor days for May and comparing them to June I am beginning to see a pattern evolve- Odor days for May were 5/8, 5/9, 5/10 and 5/14. As can be seen, the dates for May and June are almost identical. I am wondering if some routine mid-monthly maintenance is not being done at the plant?

On a more positive note- After almost 18 months of neglect it appears that some tank cleaning has finally begun.. For one the Chlorine Contact tank was cleaned. I am being told that there is now a schedule in place to routinely clean all the tanks.

So here we are more than 11 months after the odor problems began on July 8, 2019 and again facing the heat of summer. I had sincerely hoped that maybe we had turned the corner. I am now however not convinced of this based on this past weeks issues and I would like an explanation as to what happened?

Again, I Thank the Commissioners for your Help in Advance.