

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

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

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Chairperson Hedrick called the meeting to order at 10:32 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  
Accounting Manager Yi Xiang  
Director of Finance Ron Yuhas  
General Manager-Operations Mark A. Biron (via Zoom)  
General Manager-Key Accounts Leonard J. Mediavilla (via Zoom)  
General Manager-Information Technology Sue Blanchette (via Zoom)  
General Manager- Customer Service Tina Daniels (via Zoom)  
General Manager Projects and Planning Bruce Kruszewski (via Zoom)  
Manager Water Division Rick Stevens (via Zoom)  
Manager Electric Operations Vernon Page (via Zoom)  
Engineering Manager Randall Surprenant (via Zoom)  
Manager of Communications and Community Outreach Dan Bouges (via Zoom)  
Utility Analytics Manager Aaron Brooks (via Zoom)

**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 Zuliani** moved, **Commissioner Duarte** seconded a motion to approve the minutes of July 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 July 2020.

**Motion carried.**

**4. COMMUNICATIONS AND CORRESPONDENCE**

Chairperson Hedrick mentioned the email received from Chief Spellman praising Groton Utilities for Storm Isaias response. It was noted that there was positive feedback posted on social media for the prompt restoration of power by Utility crews.

General Manager Biron gave a summary of storm outages and reported on the conditions in both the Groton and Bozrah territories.

Commissioner Zuliani said he was aware there were many compliments and asked if there were complaints. General Manager Daniels said there were a few, but responses were overwhelmingly for support.

General Manager Biron said that a Post Storm Assessment is done following major storms to identify how to minimize potential outages. He said GU is known for efficiency and quick response, and customers are not used to having a long delay in restoration. Manager of Community and Communications, Dan Bouges was complimented for excellent communication regarding notifications and updates to customers during the storm.

**5. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS**

Chairperson Hedrick read the received email communication from Sam Spano, 300 Thames Street. Please see attached. This item was addressed later in the meeting; see Agenda Item #9.

**6. REGIONAL WATER UPDATE**

Manager Stevens reported that a Contractor on Eastern Point Road had pulled up a Water Main affecting a few customers in that area.

He also reported that there is currently a moderate drought. Although there was some rain over the weekend, the reservoir is at 84% capacity. He said additionally, this summer, customers are taking more water. There was a major flushing at Mohegan Sun Casino, which increased consumption.

Plans for Poquetanuck Cove Interconnection were sent to Norwich Public Utilities. Draft plans were sent to Aquarion's consultant and are being considered.

There was complaint of discolored water at Navy Housing which was caused by excessive flushing.

Manager Stevens also spoke to the email received from Mr. Spano regarding sediment in discoloration of his filter. GU went out, changed the filter and tested the water. The water was not outside of specification. It was observed that Mr. Spano has a brass service which can accelerate corrosion, and this was explained to him.

**7. MONTHLY FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS**

Manager Xiang reviewed the Fiscal Year 2020 and August Monthly Financials.

## **June 2020**

### **Electric**

Total Electric Revenue for the month of June is 0.9% over budget. Residential Sales and Industrial Non-Manufacturing Sales exceeded the budget by 9.1% and 12.4% respectively. Commercial sales are under budget by 12.8%.

Annual Electric Revenue of \$47M is 1.6% or \$754K under budget and 2.5% less than last year. Residential Sales and Commercial Sales are under budget by 1.1% and 5.9% respectively. Industrial Manufacturing and Non-Manufacturing Sales are over budget by 1.1% and 2.1% respectively.

For the month of June, Cooling Degrees Days are 29% less than June of last year, while Heating Degrees Days are 47% more than June of last year. Annual Heating and Cooling Degrees Days are less than last year by 4% and 9% respectively.

Operation & Maintenance Expenses for June are 26.6% more than budget. Net Income is 228.4% under budget for the month. Annual Operation & Maintenance Expenses are 5.7% below budget and Net Income is 26.1% or \$703K more than budget. The favorable variance is driven by the below budget O&M Expenses.

Total customer conservation charges are \$68K for the month and \$906K for the year. Total conservation expenditures incurred are \$27K for the month and \$602K for the year. As of June 30, 2020, \$1.4M remaining funds are available on CL&M Account.

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

### **Water**

Total Water Revenue for the month of June is 3.8% more than budget. Residential Sales and Industrial Sales exceeded the budget by 6.9% and 57.5% respectively while Commercial Sales are 46.7% below budget.

Annual Water Revenue of \$10.7M is 1.4% or \$150K more than budget and 3.7% more than last year. Residential and Hydrants are on target with budget, Industrial Sales are 16.8% over budget, Commercial and Sales for Resale are under budget by 10.3% and 7.9% respectively.

Operation & Maintenance Expenses for June are 21.8% more than budget. Net Earnings before Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) grants is 3.8% under budget. The negative variance is driven by the over budget O&M Expenses offset by the over budget Revenue plus the delay of the DPH Consent Agreement projects.

Annual Operation & Maintenance Expenses are 9.6% below budget. Net Earnings before DWSRF grants is 168.9% or \$2M over budget. The favorable variance is driven by over budget Revenue plus below budget O&M Expenses and the delay of the DPH Consent Agreement projects.

At end of June 2020, \$43.4M has been incurred for the Water Treatment Plant project. Total \$42.7M has been received from DWSRF, including \$11.9M from grants and \$30.8M from loan.

The Water Division Balance Sheet (line 26) reflects the restriction of \$3.4M in cash for the WTP upgrade with the collections through June 2020.

### **Sewer**

Total Sewer Revenue for the month of June is 113.3% more than budget. Residential, Commercial and Industrial Sales exceeded the budget by 9.3%, 31.9% and 222% respectively.

Annual Sewer Revenue of \$4.6M is 18.9% or \$732K greater than budget and 7% more than last year. Residential, Commercial and Industrial Sales exceeded the budget by 1.7%, 5.4% and 32.1% respectively.

Operation and Maintenance Expenses for June are 20.9% over budget. Net Income from Operations is \$367K more than budget due to over budget Revenue offset by over budget O&M Expenses.

Annual Operation and Maintenance Expenses are 12.7% below budget. Net Income from Operations for the year is 202.7 % or \$1.2M more than budget due to over budget Revenues plus below budget O&M Expenses.

### **July 2020**

#### **Electric**

Total Electric Revenue for the month of July is 4.2% over budget. Residential Sales and Industrial Non-Manufacturing Sales exceeded the budget by 10.2% and 25.8% respectively. Commercial Sales are 11.2% below budget. For the month of July, cooling degrees days are 13% less than last July.

Operation & Maintenance Expenses for July are 13.6% below budget. Net Income of the month is 255.2% more than budget due to the below budget O&M Expenses.

For the month of July, customer conservation charges are \$80K and conservation expenditures are \$49K. As of July 31, 2020, \$1.5M remaining funds are available in the CLM Account.

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

#### **Water**

Total Water Revenue for the month of July is 1.8% more than budget. Residential Sales and Industrial Sales exceeded the budget by 5.9% and 13.4% respectively while Commercial Sales and Sales for Resale are below budget by 11.9% and 8% respectively.

Operation & Maintenance Expenses for July are 14.6% under the budget. Net Earnings before Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) is \$244K more than budget. The favorable variance is driven by the over budget Revenue and under budget O&M Expenses and the delay of the DPH Consent Agreement projects.

At the end of July 2020, \$43.9M has been incurred for the Water Treatment Plant project. A total of \$43.4M has been received from DWSRF, including \$12.1M from grants and \$31.3M from loan. The Water Division Balance Sheet (line 26) reflects the restriction of \$3.4M in cash for the WTP upgrade with the collections through June 2020.

### **Sewer**

Total Sewer Revenue for the month of July is 28.7% more than budget. Residential and Industrial Sales exceeded the budget by 7.7% and 49.7% respectively while Commercial Sales are 1.9% under budget.

Operation and Maintenance Expenses for July are 36.4% below budget. Net Income is \$208K more than budget due to the over budget Revenue plus the under budget O&M Expenses.

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

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

General Manager Biron updated the Commission with the Utility's continued response to COVID 19. He stated Connecticut is still below 1% of infectivity rate. Groton Utilities continues to monitor daily absenteeism, and he is holding a weekly update call. He added that testing is available to any employee as an essential worker. There is continued, enhanced cleaning in the buildings. Chairperson Hedrick said the City would soon decide when to re-open the Municipal Building to the public and when employees working offsite due to the pandemic can return. He said electronic pay, phone pay and drop box will be implemented to limit the handling of items. The City Clerk has reached out to other municipalities regarding their re-opening process.

### **B. Customer Service, Accounts Receivable**

General Manager Daniels reported on the Accounts Receivable for Groton Utilities. She said there has been an uptick of about 3%. Customer Service Representatives are continuing to call customers to offer payment arrangements. She said the Utility cannot interrupt service for non-payment until October 1. Customers receiving any type of social assistance or have life threatening or serious medical conditions cannot have their service interrupted for non-payment until May 1, 2021; and no interruptions can happen when the temperature reaches below 45 degrees. She said the Receivables are sitting at about 10% (31+ days), which is good compared to other municipalities, but it is high for Groton Utilities. She added the receivables are mostly due to the hotel and restaurant accounts.

### **C. PFAS Action Plan**

Manager Stevens explained that the Federal Government through the State Government Health Agencies have directed testing of polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). The Utility has been working on the regulatory requirement, and the Commission packet included a narrative and an action plan. He said the Utility Commission was previously informed, and the Utility is looking to have the Commission approve the plan to go forward in final submittal to the health agencies, DPH and LedgeLight; with a following step to go forward with the one page handout to GU Customers. He said the information is all good news. The health agencies have seen results and have made some comments on amendments which have been integrated into the draft that the Commission was given. Manager Stevens said to sum it up, the plan will be sent to DPH, and LedgeLight and he would coordinate with General Manager Daniels and Communication and Community Outreach Manager, Dan Bouges to put the information on the web site and to advise customers. He said results will be continually monitored to ensure low results are maintained. Analysis is producing results of traces of PFAS in parts per trillion which he said one part per trillion would be equal to a single drop of water in 20 Olympic size swimming pools. The action level of results is 35, and the results of the Utility are less than five. Commissioner Zuliani asked

if the Utility has its own clean room to test, and Manager Stevens said Groton Utilities employees follow strict protocols. For example employees can't have eaten fast food, microwave popcorn or pizza; and can't wear fire protective clothing do the collection, but samples are sent out.

**9. OLD BUSINESS**

**A. PAF odor update**

General Manger Biron said air is monitored from the stack two times a day and the team is working on a solution to monitor air 24/7. He said the Utility has not been able to correlate results with any of the odor complaints from Mr. Spano. He said results have been negative for hydrogen sulfide, and that it has been non-detectable in intermittent checks. He said the Evoqua system does read 24/7 with alarm level detection and there have been no issues to date. Additionally, the scrubber is now the focus; management is taking the issue seriously and will continue to investigate.

Commissioner Godley asked if there have been other complaints; and there have not. Commissioner Duarte asked when bioxide was started, and General Manager Biron reported that it was about six weeks ago. Chairperson Hedrick asked if an air monitor would be installed, and was informed that Management is currently working with an electrician to get a continual readout. Commissioner Zuliani asked how often the scrubber readout is done; General Manager Biron said it could be done anytime. Commissioner Hedrick asked that all of the information discussed be communicated to Mr. Spano.

**B. PCB Update**

General Manager Biron reported that the soil pile is down to around 20 cubic yards (cy) from 3,500 cy of soil. He estimates about 22 cy of contaminated soil needs to be disposed of which will be a savings of about \$300,000.00 less consultant fees. He complimented Manager Valentini and Environmental Partners for their work through the issue. He said the PCB issue still exists inside the plant, but overall the issue is concluding. The demolition of Unit 2 will begin on Monday. He said the area has been analyzed. The Commission commented that there is finally some good news.

**10. NEW BUSINESS**

**A. Storm Isaias Performance Review**

General Manager Biron reported and overview of the Utility response to Storm Isaias. He said the storm reached 50 MPH winds and at the peak of the storm there were 2,182 customers without power. All power was restored in about 6.5 hours. He said Bozrah had 1,335 customers out and it took 96 hours / 4 days to get to less than 1% of customer outages. He said Groton's progress was ahead of other utility companies. Work crews were fed which saved 3 hours of productivity time. Congressman Joe Courtney said that Groton Utilities "hit it out of the park". General Manager Biron indicated that believed the union contract was followed. There was no need for mutual aid; Groton Utilities actually provided mutual aid to Eversource for three days. Commissioner Godley asked if anything was learned that will help with prevention in the future. General Manger Biron said a post storm critique was conducted and attributes much of the success with restoration and damage amount to aggressive tree trimming and pole inspections. Director Gaudet said that what we spend per customer on tree trimming pays off. Accounting Manger Xiang said that as of August 18, 2020 the cost of Storm Isaias in the Groton territory was

\$24,000.00 with 385 person-hours; Bozrah territory was \$157,000.00 with 1,250 person-hours and is hopeful for FEMA reimbursement for a percentage of the cost.

## 11. ACTION ITEMS

- A. GUC-WPCA 20-08-30** Consideration of and action to waive the bidding requirement of Policy #1004, Policy and Procedures Governing the Purchase Practices of Groton Utilities, and authorize Groton Utilities Management to purchase a Data Storage Array, related hardware components, and three (3) years maintenance and support, from Gotham Technology Group, LLC, 5 Paragon Drive, Suite 103, Montvale, New Jersey, the manufacturer's Value Added Reseller, for an amount not to exceed One Hundred Sixty Thousand Four Hundred Seventy-Seven Dollars and Thirty-Five Cents (\$160,477.35), to be paid from funds available in the 2020-2021 IT Department Approved Non-Bonded Capital Projects and that the City Council be apprised of this action with the recommendation that it concur

**Commissioner Zuliani** moved, **Commissioner Godley** seconded that the Groton Utilities Commission / Water Pollution Control Authority approve Action Item GUC-WPCA 20-08-30.

General Manger Blanchette explained that the sister system for the Operations Building was purchased in October, 2019. Commissioner Scully asked if the two units will back each other up and General Manager Blanchette confirmed. Commissioner Zuliani asked for clarification why this item is not going to bid and General Manger Blanchette replied that this is the primary vendor and manufacturers reseller, Once your technology is selected, there is restriction to purchase technology through value added reseller. Commissioner Scully asked what the life expectancy of the unit is and General Manager Blanchette said it is expected to be about ten (10) years and that the cost for maintenance will be significantly lower.

**Motion Carried.**

- B. GUC-WPCA 20-08-31** Consideration of and action to authorize Groton Utilities management to approve Change Order No. 18 from R. H. White Construction Company, Incorporated, 41 Central Street, Auburn, Massachusetts for which includes a credit and revisions to the existing plan as part of the State of Connecticut, Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) Project No. 2013-0140, which has been approved by the State of Connecticut, Department of Public Health (DPH) in an amount not to exceed Seventy Seven Thousand Five Hundred Fifty Nine Dollars and Fifty Eight Cents (\$77,559.58) 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. 18

**Commissioner Duarte** moved, **Commissioner Scully** seconded that the Groton Utilities Commission / Water Pollution Control Authority approve Action Item GUC-WPCA 20-08-31.

Manager Stevens said that this Change Order is a consolidation of updates that was vetted through the engineers and the Water Department and includes a credit for dehumidification, cost for piping of the main floor and replacement of breakers that did not auto-reset and installation of a water system in the backwash station. Commissioner Duarte asked what the impact of removing the dehumidification would be. Manager Stevens said when the value engineering consultation was

done, there was a question why it would be needed given the stainless piping and there was no concern that humidity would condense and drip. It was determined it was not needed in the one location.

**Motion Carried.**

- C. GUC-WPCA 20-08-32** Consideration of and action to authorize Groton Utilities Management to award the Walker Hill Prefabricated Pump Station Contract to United Concrete Products, Inc., 173 Church Street, Yalesville, Connecticut in an amount not to exceed Eight Hundred Eleven Thousand Five Hundred Forty One Dollars and No Cents (\$811,541.00) based on their bid in the amount of Seven Hundred Sixty Two Thousand Eight Hundred Ninety Six Dollars and No Cents (\$762,896.00), to include inspections, and an additional Forty Eight Thousand Six Hundred Forty Five Dollars and No Cents (\$48,645.00) for a five percent contingency, to be paid from the approved 2012 and 2016 Water Bond Fund Program and that furthermore that the City Council be appraised of this action with the recommendation that it concur and Mayor Keith Hedrick be authorized to then execute the contract documents and the City Clerk to affix the City Seal thereto

**Commissioner Duarte** moved, **Commissioner Godley** seconded that the Groton Utilities Commission / Water Pollution Control Authority approve Action Item GUC-WPCA 20-08-32.

Manager Stevens said the four bids were received, and this was the lowest. He added that this company did the Holmberg Pump Station and did an excellent job. He said there will be room for three pumps at the new station, but two will be installed. The station will be modular construction, is currently in final design and will be a great improvement. Commissioner Duarte asked if this will eliminate the Long Hill Pump Station and Manager Stevens clarified that one pump would remain to keep water fresh and utilized for backup in the event of an emergency. Commissioner Scully asked if the price is all inclusive. Manager Stevens said that it was, as it includes a 5% contingency and inspections.

**Motion Carried.**

- D. GUC-WPCA 20-08-33** Consideration of and action to authorize Groton Utilities Management to purchase a substation multifunction test set from Omicron Electronics Corporation, Incorporated, 3550 Willowbend Boulevard, Houston, Texas as a Sole Source Provider, for an amount not to exceed the quoted amount of Ninety Thousand Eight Hundred Sixty Three Dollars and No Cents (\$90,863.00) to be paid from funds available in the 2020 2021 Electric Department Approved Non-Bonded Capital Budget and that the City Council be appraised 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 20-08-33.

Manager Surprenant explained this purchase would have interface, which will allow the Utility to test re-closers. Interface mimics what the Utility has and will save time and money. He added that this will also help with some of the new NERC requirements. Commissioner Scully asked if



this is a Transformer Turns Radio (TTR), and Manager Surprenant confirmed. He added that the Test Person had been sent for training at the Omicron training facility.

**Motion Carried.**

**12. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

None

**13. RECESS**

Chairperson Hedrick called for a recess at 12:15 p.m. for lunch and the GUC/WPCA meeting proceeded at 12:40 p.m.

**14. STRATEGIC PLANNING**

The fifth session of the 2020 Strategic Plan with outside consultant, Tim Blodgett, of Hometown Connections, Groton Utility Commissioners and GU Staff took place for the remainder of the meeting. The following staff were present: Commissioners Hedrick, Duarte, Godley, Scully and Zuliani; Director Gaudet; General Managers Biron, Blanchette, Daniels and Mediavilla; Managers Xiang, Ouimet, Fleury, Bouges, Stevens and Surprenant; and Executive Admins French and Walencewicz.

**15. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, at 2:20 p.m., **Commissioner Godley** moved, **Commissioner Scully** seconded a motion to adjourn.

**Motion Carried.**

Attest:

Paul Duarte  
Clerk

Sam Spano 300 Thames St

There has been no improvement in the odor situation at the WPCA since the July 15 2020 UC meeting.

Odor days since the 7/15 meeting. Sat 7/18, Sat 7/25, Sun 7/26, Mon 7/27, Mon 8/3, Tues 8/4, Tues 8/11, Mon 8/17. I suspect there may have been more odor days than those documented above but it depends on the wind direction. Also due to the heat wave I have been running AC quite a bit so my house has been closed up. In addition I have been away for some time both in late July and in August.

I am disappointed to find out that the permanent air monitor for the top of the scrubber stack has still not been installed. Without this the scrubber can not be eliminated as a potential source for the odors.

Also I have not heard anything as to whether GU management has determined if there is any pattern to the odor days for May, June and July and now Aug? Maybe this can be addressed at this meeting?.

Another thing that should be noted. The primary backup pump which originally was scheduled for installation in Dec 2019 has still not been installed. While I understand the lack of this pump has no bearing what so ever on the odor situation it would be nice to have the additional backup if there is a failure of pump #1 or #2.

We are now at more than 13 months since the odor problems began on 7/8/19. To say that I am unhappy that things have not improved is an major understatement.

Again, I Thank the Commissioners for Your Help in Advance