

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

November 18, 2020 10:30 a.m.
City of Groton Municipal Building
Zoom

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Hedrick called the meeting to order at 10:30 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
General Manager Customer Service, Tina Daniels
General Manager Projects and Planning, Bruce Kruszewski
General Manager Key Accounts, Len Mediavilla
Water Division Manager, Rick Stevens
Electric Operations Manager, Vern Page
Manager Communications and Community Outreach Dan Bouges

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 Statues”, 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 Godley moved, Commissioner Duarte seconded a motion to approve the minutes of October 21, 2020.

Motion carried with one abstention (Commissioner Scully)

3. REVIEW AND ACCEPTANCE OF TREASURER’S REPORT

Commissioner Duarte moved, Commissioner Zuliani seconded a motion to approve the Treasurer’s Report for the month ending October 2020.

Motion carried.

4. COMMUNICATIONS AND CORRESPONDENCE

A. Letter received from Groton Utilities’ Retiree, Michael Fedors

- B. Safety Award Letter to Turello Construction
- C. Thank you from Thames River Heritage Park
- D. Letter received from Marc DiBella -2020 Legislative Session

5. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS

- A. Chairperson Hedrick read the email submitted by Sam Spano, 300 Thames St.; please see attached.
- B. Chairperson Hedrick read the email submitted by Grant Weaver, 60 Tyler Ave., The Water Planet Company; please see attached.
- C. Marc DiBella, Lobbyist with Medici, updated the Commission on this year's Legislation. The Legislation stopped March 2020 and since it was not a budget year, the Legislature was able to let it ride until 2021. There were two streamlined special sessions, July and September. There was an expected leadership shakeup in the senate but the expectation is the building will remain closed until first quarter. It is a budget year so the Legislature is expected to be in session, remotely. Terms of the opening of the building are still being worked on. Medici, LLC is working on areas of interest that effect Groton Utilities.
Commissioner Godley inquired if there was anything in the pipeline that would effect CMEEC and then effect Groton Utilities.
Mr. DiBella noted that is a possibility, as Municipally Owned Utilities are on the defensive in the Legislature. The Municipally Owned Utilities response to the storms in August 2020 bodes well in the Legislature for CMEEC and its members.

6. REGIONAL WATER UPDATE

- A. Poquetanuck Cove Interconnection – General Manager Biron updated the Commission, GU has received the final designs from Engineering Firm, and the designs have been revised and are now sitting with DOT for review.
Manager Stevens noted that Groton Utilities has been able to meet the needs of the Regional Water supply.
Commissioner Duarte questioned if we supply water to Norwich. Manager Stevens stated our supply goes to Montville and Mohegan Tribe under the Thames River and not Norwich, but we would make up for Norwich's supply if required to Mohegan Tribe.
- B. Drought Management update – Manager Stevens receives weekly updates from the State. This week we are at 68% on our water inventory. We are on track for normal rainfall for the month of November.

7. MONTHLY FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

Manager Xiang reviewed October Monthly Financials.

Electric

Total Electric Revenue for the month of October is 6% below budget. Sales to Residential and Sales for Resale exceeded the budget by 4.2% and 14.2% respectively. Commercial Sales and Industrial Sales are under budget by 12.9% and 9% respectively. For the month of October, heating degrees days are 21% more than last year and cooling degree-days were 100% more.

Operation & Maintenance Expenses for October are 17.7% below budget. Net Income of the month is 68.9% more than budget due to the below budget Revenue offset by the below budget O&M Expenses.

For the month of October, customer conservation charges are \$67K and conservation expenditures are \$25K. As of October 31, 2020, \$1.6M remaining funds are available in the CLM Account.

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

Commissioner Duarte requested clarification of Sales for Resale. Manager Xiang stated it is sales to Fishers Island.

Water

Water rates were increased by 4% effective October 1, 2020 as the first of a three-year approved rate increase.

Total Water Revenue for the month of October is 6.3% more than budget and 11% more than last year. Industrial Sales exceed the budget by 25.7% while Commercial Sales are 5.5% below budget and Residential sales are within the budget for the month.

Operation & Maintenance Expenses for October are under budget by 5.8%. Net Earnings before Drinking Water State Revolving Fund grants (DWSRF) is \$193K more than budget. The favorable variance is driven by the over budget Revenue plus below budget O&M Expenses and the delay of the DPH Consent Agreement projects.

At the end of October 2020, \$46M has been incurred for the Water Treatment Plant project. A total of \$45.3M has been received from DWSRF, including \$12.6M from grants and \$32.7M from loan. The Water Division Balance Sheet (line 28) reflects the restriction of \$3.4M in cash for the WTP upgrade as end of October 2020. Additional \$143K will be restricted for the collections for the first quarter of FY2021.

Sewer

Total Sewer Revenue for the month of October is 17.3% more than budget. Industrial Sales exceed the budget by 45.6% while Residential and Commercial Sales are below budget by 8.9% and 12.7% respectively.

Operation and Maintenance Expenses for October are 20.8% below budget. Net Income is \$125K more than budget due to the over budget Revenue plus the under budget O&M Expenses.

8. PROJECTS / INITIATIVES UPDATE

A. COVID-19 Update – General Manager Biron, reviewed today’s statistics at 5.16% infectivity rate. In the three counties east of the CT River there are 49 patients hospitalized. We have had one employee test positive but was on vacation prior to testing positive. The employee has been cleared by doctor to return to work, but Groton Utilities has requested the individual stay home due to the persistent cough. The employee plans to come back on Monday. Three other personnel are awaiting results, they were direct contacts and expecting results shortly.

The Electric Department assisted with providing power to a new State testing facility on Pleasant Valley Road.

The Connecticut mortality rate continues to decline even though testing has increased, the doctor on the Governor’s task force feels that CT will continue to decrease numbers.

Groton Utilities has a meeting scheduled later this week with three bargaining units to hear their concerns.

GU continues to reinforce actions; wearing masks, cleaning vehicles, daily work space cleaning and building deep cleaning.

An inquiry survey from DPH, the department responsible for vaccination distribution in Connecticut was completed for GU two weeks ago.

General Manager Biron said the Utility employees are essential workers he is hopeful vaccinations might be available around February.

Commissioner Zuliani asked if we have access to information specifically on the town or city of Groton and on Lawrence and Memorial Hospitalizations. General Manager Biron noted the information by County and Town is on the Connecticut website but doesn't believe that specific data is available. Chairperson Hedrick noted LedgeLight reports weekly and data for Groton Town and City is combined. The threshold is 15% to be considered a Hot Spot Town and we are currently at 16%. Documentation regarding Phase 2.1 changes will be sent to the Commission from the Mayor's office.

- B.** Customer Service, Accounts Receivable – GU is currently sitting at 8% over 31 days past due. This is a normal high which lasts until February because of the winter moratorium. There is a significant amount of money from TVCCA that has not been received yet. We are 3% higher than last year on accounts receivable balances.
- C.** Water Filtration Plant Project Commissioning Update - General Manager Biron and Manager Stevens noted we are on Day 18 of the startup sequence and have maintained excellent water quality. The Water Treatment Plant survived its 2nd attack of eels without shut down. There has been a lot of corrective actions taken and staff is working off punch list items during start up. Two operators per shift are on site for quality training. A few chemical pump and feed system issues have been reported. Additionally, PCB remediation continues and is on track with The Phase 2 Draft Plan to submit by the end of the year to EPA. There is a State Department of Health online meeting November 30th.

Chairperson Hedrick questioned if development of SOPs for operation of the plant are being done. Manager Stevens said the department is getting maintenance manuals, receiving trainings that include video-taping, and transferring materials to SOP format for training.

Commissioner Scully wanted clarification and asked if filtered water is going into the system.

Manager Stevens replied that water was back pumped for 30 days and with approval water is going directly to the system. A lot of work went into verifying the water quality before pumping into the system. We are in the third phase of the commissioning, once we are comfortable with the processing then the demolition of the old plant will be the next phase.

Three consulting firms for engineering work and best approach to rectify eel problem for the Low Lift Pump Station have been brought in. The goal is to have the Low Lift Pump Station online by September 2021 because of the eel's migration.

9. OLD BUSINESS

- A.** WWTP odor update – General Manager Biron updated the Commission regarding continued improvements during the month. The roofing contractor is finishing the seal tomorrow. A weather station has been installed and will be operational but is awaiting the SCADA connection. Chief Plant Operator Pratt has confirmed there have been no increased hydrogen sulfide levels. CPO Pratt worked with Pfizer, and it was determined that they were not using the volume of water that they previously used to push the sewage to us. They increased the volume and that has dropped the hydrogen sulfide readings. He is working with EB on the same issue, they will allow us to install the monitors and access to their facility. Additionally, there is an evaluation of increasing pipe cleaning.

Commissioner Zuliani completed a walk thru with CPO Pratt on October 30, 2020, thanked him for his time and the details of the plant workings. He noted there are four sludge settling tanks but only one is being used is because of the decreased volume and feels confident that the PAF team is doing everything possible to remediate the odor issue.

Manager Stevens mentioned that in the package next month there will be a report from DEEP, WWTPs main regulatory agency. They have four parameters that improve the water quality in

Long Island Sound. All four of those parameter over the last two years we scored high and show excellent regulatory compliance and we are better than required.

10. NEW BUSINESS

None

11. ACTION ITEMS

- A. GUC-WPCA 20-11-41** Consideration of and action to authorize Groton Utilities management to purchase annual maintenance and support of the NorthStar Billing System and add-on modules used for Groton Utilities Electric, Water and Sewer utility billing and Bozrah Light and Power Company Electric utility billing from Harris Computer Systems, Incorporated, 62133 Collections Center Drive, Chicago, Illinois for an amount not to exceed Seventy Thousand Five Hundred Seventy-Eight Dollars and Twenty Cents (\$70,578.20) to be paid from funds available in the approved fiscal year 2021 Customer Service budget and that the City Council be apprised of this action with the recommendation that it concur

Commissioner Duarte moved, **Commissioner Zuliani** seconded that the Groton Utilities Commission / Water Pollution Control Authority approve Action Item GUC-WPCA 20-11-41.

General Manager Daniels confirmed this is routine service maintenance and is standard annual contract.

Motion Carried.

- B. GUC-WPCA 20-11-42** Consideration of and action to authorize Groton Utilities Management to retain the lobbying services of Medici, LLC, 1 Gold Street, Hartford, Connecticut for lobbying services pertaining to electric, water, wastewater and any other utility matters as necessary in an amount not to exceed One Hundred Eight Thousand Dollars and No Cents (\$108,000.00) to be paid from the Professional Services – Lobbying account in the approved Fiscal Year 2020-2021 and proposed Fiscal Year 2021-2022 Utilities Department budgets, and that the Director of Utilities be authorized to execute, and furthermore that the City Council be apprised of this action with recommendation that it concur

Commissioner Duarte moved, **Commissioner Scully** seconded that the Groton Utilities Commission / Water Pollution Control Authority approve Action Item GUC-WPCA 20-11-42.

Director Gaudet stated the annual contract being renewed at same price.

Motion Carried.

- C. GUC-WPCA 20-11-43** Consideration of and action to authorize Groton Utilities management to provisionally approve Change Order No. 20 from R. H. White Construction Company, Incorporated, 41 Central Street, Auburn, Massachusetts 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, pending final approval by the State of Connecticut, Department of Public Health (DPH) in an amount not to exceed Thirteen Thousand Two Hundred Twenty One Dollars and Eighty One Cents (\$13,221.81), 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. 20 upon final approval by the State of Connecticut DPH

Commissioner Duarte moved, **Commissioner Scully** seconded that the Groton Utilities Commission / Water Pollution Control Authority approve Action Item GUC-WPCA 20-11-43.

Manager Stevens mentioned this Change Order incorporates several changes. The decision was made to eliminate the lime system for the safety of our operators. Groton Utilities built their own PH system. Some changes are lumped together and related to the electrical where the design didn't fit with contractor purchased equipment, the geothermal from reservoir and adding a strainer to system.

Motion Carried.

- D. GUC-WPCA 20-11-44** Consideration of and action to authorize Groton Utilities Management to provisionally approve **Engineering Agreement Amendment No. 4** from Stantec Consulting Service, Incorporated, 5 Burlington Woods Drive, Suite 210 Burlington, Massachusetts, to extend contract from June 30, 2020 to April 9, 2021 with no additional contract cost as part of the State of Connecticut, Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) Project No. 2013-0140 with such revisions as required by Groton Utilities management and the State of Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) 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 **Engineering Agreement Amendment No. 4** upon final approval by the State of Connecticut Department of Health

Commissioner Duarte moved, **Commissioner Godley** seconded that the Groton Utilities Commission / Water Pollution Control Authority approve Action Item GUC-WPCA 20-11-44.

Commissioner Zuliani asked what the original contract cost was. Director Gaudet noted around \$4M but this is just a change to the engineering contract to note the new finish date of April 9, 2021. RH White has released a preliminary Change Order. Stantec's original contract expired in September and we did not expend the full amount of the original engineering contract. There is no increase to the contract amount but extending the service date. Manager Stevens expressed that Stantec has designed the limited number of Manganese Contact Systems in the US and we require their expertise.

Motion Carried.

- E. GUC-WPCA 20-11-45** Consideration of and Action to authorize Management to approve the applicable bid and issue one purchase order to James A. Kiley Co., of 15 Linwood Street, Somerville, Massachusetts for the purchase of one (1) 2021 4x2 Freightliner M2 106 outfitted boom truck with Terex Telect HRX55 Boom in the quoted amount of Two Hundred Forty Two Thousand Four Hundred Ninety Three Dollars and No Cents (\$242,493.00) to be paid from funds available in the approved Fiscal Year 2021 Electric Division Non Bonded Capital funds, and furthermore, that the City Council be apprised of this action with the recommendation that it concur

Commissioner Zuliani moved, **Commissioner Scully** seconded that the Groton Utilities Commission / Water Pollution Control Authority approve Action Item GUC-WPCA 20-11-45.

Manager Page explained that the working height of the boom is 60 feet. General Manager Biron stated this is part of our fleet obsoleting program, planned change out with a trade in of 72E. Commissioner Scully wanted clarification if this was the second bucket truck replaced this year. Chairperson Hedrick confirmed that it is, and reminded the Commissioners that there is about an 8-10 month lead time to receive the truck. Commissioner Zuliani asked if the truck comes with updated communications or we do add after. General Manager Biron stated we have to add and has been planned and accounted for.

Motion Carried.

12. STRATEGIC PLANNING

- A. Final Draft of Strategic Plan – Director Gaudet stated that the plan to have the final plan to the commission by the January Commission meeting. He reviewed the highlighted changes from October’s meeting and the Commissioners were satisfied with the changes and are ready to move ahead to final Strategic plan

13. EXECUTIVE SESSION

None

14. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, at 11:48 a.m., **Commissioner Godley** moved, **Commissioner Duarte** seconded a motion to adjourn.

Motion Carried.

Attest:

Paul Duarte
Clerk

Sam Spano 300 Thames St

There has been one odor day since the last UC meeting on October 21 2020. On the surface this looks an improvement. However, I believe this is only due to the shift towards colder fall weather rather than any effort on the part of GU part to resolve the odor issues.

The odor day was Thurs Nov 5. Interestingly this event occurred on the first day of the unseasonably warm trend we experienced in early November. So as in the past we can expect to experience less odor days due to the up coming colder weather. However I fear as soon as the warm weather of spring 2021 comes along the problems will pick up again as they have over the past 16 months

The General Mgr of Operations indicated at the last meeting that the large Sludge Thickening Tank near the the SW corner of the plant had finally been smoke tested but that it had been reported that were only minor leaks with the roof seal. He also indicated that they do not know if and do not believe that this contributes to the odor issue. However, these leaks are scheduled to be repaired.

I do not agree with this analysis. This tank holds particularly Noxious smelling sludge. I remember about 15 years ago we had an odor problem with it due to the roof seal leaking. This problem was identified by the previous administration, fixed and the odor went away.

Also, it should be noted that it is also high up in the plant and located where a wind from the SW would pick up these odors and carry them over the plant to my location. As a result I believe there is a Very High likely hood of this being a Major odor culprit. I would like to know the date when the roof will actually will be sealed?

Another Thing. It is my understanding that a proposal has been submitted by Grant Weaver of "The Water Planet." This proposal is to eliminate and then tear down the existing WPCA. It would be then replaced by a pump only station. The sewage that is currently processed at the WPCA would then be pumped to the Groton Town plant which has more than sufficient capacity and is currently under utilized.

There is already an established right of way for the existing pipe line carrying the processed effluent being pumped thru the city for discharge into the Thames River. The new incoming sewage pipe could be run right along beside the outgoing pipe. Also there are already several pump stations around the city and these can also be used to provide more direct waste flow streams to the town plant.

The current WPCA location could then be turned into a large Water Front Park to compliment the current Fort Griswold Park to the North and Thames View Park to the South of the plant. This would greatly Enhance any Thames St development plans.

City of Groton Utilities Commission
Meeting Minutes
November 18, 2020

This proposal seems like a Great Idea to me and a Win Win situation for the city. I am wondering why this proposal has not yet been brought up to the Utilities Commission? I would like to see it seriously addressed.

Again I Thank the Commissioners for your Help in Advance

From: Grant Weaver <g.weaver@cleanwaterops.com>
Sent: Sunday, September 13, 2020 10:36 AM
Subject: Wastewater Treatment Facility Planning - a win-win opportunity

Groton Utilities Director Ron Gaudet, Groton City Mayor Hedrick, Groton Town Manager Mark Haddad, and cc's:

I am writing regarding the "facility planning" that is soon to be undertaken for the City of Groton wastewater treatment facility.

Specifically, I am writing to ask that the following be included as a work element in the upcoming facility planning study: an evaluation of the conversion of the City's Thames Street facility to a sewage pumping station with wastewater conveyed to the Town of Groton facility on Gary Court for treatment.

Such an evaluation to include costs and benefits (financial and other).

Consolidating treatment of the City and Town wastewater flows at the Town's wastewater treatment facility is a win-win for the City and Town.

The **City** will trade a neighborhood liability for waterfront park space.

The **Town** will expand its customer base, thereby gaining revenues and economy of scale that will provide Town residents with more cost-effective wastewater service.

The City's cost of converting its wastewater treatment facility to a pumping station will, I'm confident, prove competitive with the cost of maintaining full wastewater operations at the Thames Street facility for the long term.

The Town's wastewater treatment facility – even after accepting the City's flow – will retain the capacity to properly treat and dispose of double the Town's current wastewater flow.

Thank you for considering my request.

I am a Groton City resident with extensive knowledge and expertise in the design and operation of municipal wastewater treatment facilities.

Grant Weaver
60 Tyler Ave.
Groton, CT 06340

**Grant Weaver, PE & Wastewater Operator
President**



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