

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

December 16, 2020 10:30 a.m.
ZOOM

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Hedrick called the meeting to order at 11:28 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 IT, Sue Blanchette
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
Utility Analytics Manager, Aaron Brooks
Manager Communications and Community Outreach Dan Bouges
Manager of Engineering, Randall Surprenant
Manager of Electric Operation, Vernon Page

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 available on Zoom with the information above. If you wish to address the Commission, please send written communication sent to directorsoffice@grotonutilities.com by 9 a.m. on the date of the meeting will be read during this portion of the agenda.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Zuliani moved, **Commissioner Godley** seconded a motion to approve the minutes of November 18, 2020.

Motion carried.

3. REVIEW AND ACCEPTANCE OF TREASURER’S REPORT

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

Motion carried.

4. COMMUNICATIONS AND CORRESPONDENCE

There was no Communications or Correspondence.

5. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS

Chairperson Hedrick read the Email from Sam Spano, 300 Thames Street, dated 12/15/2020 (attached).

6. REGIONAL WATER UPDATE

A. Poquetanuck Cove

General Manager Biron reported that the design for the Poquetanuck Cove Interconnection was sent to the State and will need to be reviewed by two sections of the DOT. There is no estimated date of return.

B. Drought Management update

Manager Stevens reported that the area is out of the moderate drought and the impoundage is greater than 75%. Monthly updates are being sent to the Mayor.

7. MONTHLY FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

Manager Xiang reviewed November Monthly Financials.

Electric

Total Electric Revenue for the month of November is 3.4% below budget. Sales to Residential and Sales for Resale exceeded the budget by 4.1% and 12.2% respectively. Commercial Sales and Industrial Sales are under budget by 10.5% and 4.6% respectively. For the month of November, heating degrees days are 11% less than last year and cooling degree-days were the same as last year.

Operation & Maintenance Expenses for November are 17% below budget. Net Income of the month is \$231K more than budget due to the below budget O&M Expenses.

For the month of November, customer conservation charges are \$68K and conservation expenditures are \$167K. As of November 30, 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 November is 6.4% more than budget and 8.4% more than last year. Residential Sales and Industrial Sales exceed the budget by 6.6% and 22.5% while Commercial Sales and Sales for Resale are 4.1% and 10.8% below budget.

Operation & Maintenance Expenses for November are under budget by 17.6%. Net Earnings before Drinking Water State Revolving Fund grants (DWSRF) is \$327K 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 November 2020, \$46.7M has been incurred for the Water Treatment Plant project. A total of \$46M has been received from DWSRF, including \$12.8M from grants and \$33.2M from loan. The Water Division Balance Sheet (line 28) reflects the restriction of \$3.4M in cash for the WTP upgrade as end of November 2020. Additional \$143K will be restricted for the collections for the first quarter of FY2021.

Sewer

Total Sewer Revenue for the month of November is 7.7% more than budget. Residential Sales and Industrial Sales exceed the budget by 8.4% and 10.6% while Commercial Sales are below budget by 6.3%.

Operation and Maintenance Expenses for November are 32.3% below budget. Net Income is \$130K 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 the daily statistics and said that CT has a positivity rate of 5.85%. He said the Utility continues to practice COVID cleaning, sanitizing and social distancing protocols. There have been several incidents of a contact of a contact, but no reported positive cases for the month.

Commissioner Zuliani thanked Chairperson Hedrick for sending the information from the local health district. He said he continues to follow it.

B. Customer Service, Accounts Receivable

General Manager Daniels reported a 10% delinquency which she said is consistent with this time of year. She said there is about \$98,000.00 in energy efficiency money that has not been received. Including that amount, it would bring the delinquency to about 7% which is where the Utility would normally be. Chairperson Hedrick confirmed the funds are from TVCCA. She also added that Auto Pay has been instituted and there are about 750 customers signed up. She thanked Manager of Communications and Community Outreach, Bouges and the IT Department for their help in the success of getting Auto Pay up and running and said it has been in the works for a long time.

C. Water Filtration Plant Project Commissioning Update

Manager Stevens informed the Commission the 30 day trial for the new WTP was successful. The State of Connecticut has received the data and a new punch list has been established with the contractor. The contractor has moved to Phase 4 and Phase 5 which includes demolition of the old plant and eventual construction of the secondary filters and miscellaneous site work.

D. WWTF Facility Study

General Manager Biron informed the Commission that there is a related action item that will be addressed as Management is asking that Wright-Pierce Environmental Engineering Firm be recognized as a preferred vendor. Wright – Pierce is working on getting a price for the facility study to have options for the WWTF and pumping stations which will include the suggestions of Sam Spano and Grant Weaver.

E. Low Lift Pump Station Eel Control

General Manager Kruszewski said three engineering proposals are being evaluated and will be coming before the Commission for eel control and possibly traveling screens for planned construction to begin in September 2021.

F. Transmission Project

General Manager Kruszewski said public comments ended on November 27th, none were received by the siting council. Management is moving forward for the approval process for the siting council which is expected between January and July. VHB has been hired to start staking of the right of way. Manager Surprenant said the team is working on the eleven interrogatories that were received and will have comments compiled to send back by the end of the week.

9. OLD BUSINESS

A. WWTF odor update

In the last month, progress includes sealing of the roof of the thickener building and replacing the rotted dumpster that had localized odor issues. Chief Plant Operator, Joe Pratt worked with both EB and Pfizer to identify any issues that might be contributing to the odor problem on Thames Street. Pfizer has installed an Evoqua Injection System for bioxide. They are trying to get below the 10ppm hydrogen sulfide threshold. Evoqua did not recommend the bioxide for EB, but rather use of caustic to clean pipes to work on odor control. Once the WWTF facility study is done, it will hopefully generate more ideas for processes, procedures and equipment to work on to continue to reduce odors.

10. NEW BUSINESS

A. Electric Cost of Service Study Presentation – presented by Mark Beauchamp, UFS

Mr. Beauchamp shared his presentation for the Groton Rate Redesign. He said overall, it is very positive. With a five year projection, he determines a 1.3% rate reduction. The intent is to move the classes closer to the Cost of Service (COS) slowly over time.

Commissioner Zuliani asked for clarification and pointed out that customer charge shows to be increased. Mr. Beauchamp explained the increase is substantially more than 3%, but the lowered energy rate would offset that cost.

Commissioner Scully questioned the proposal for the Large General Service increase. Mark Beauchamp explained that it would be done over time, but would see an overall reduction due to reduction of energy cost. He explained the customer charge is higher is because metering costs are substantially more expensive.

B. Draft Electric Rate Implementation Schedule

Director Gaudet said the recommendation would be for the Rate Redesign to go to Public Hearing on January 4, 2021 in order to put the ordinance for February, and explained it is a rate reduction across the board.

Commissioner Zuliani said he understands from the presentation that there won't be a lot of changes with the rates and doesn't expect there will be opposition from customers. Commissioner Scully said there is an increase in the monthly service charge but Mark Beauchamp said that charge will be offset by other parts of the bill.

Director Gaudet asked if the Commission was good with the schedule. The Commission accepted the schedule as presented.

11. ACTION ITEMS

- A. **GUC-WPCA 20-12-46** Consideration of and action to authorize Groton Utilities Management to enter into a Master Service Agreement with Wright - Pierce, 169 Main Street, 700 Plaza, Middletown, Connecticut for a 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 Zuliani** seconded that the Groton Utilities Commission / Water Pollution Control Authority approve Action Item GUC-WPCA 20-12-46.

Commissioner Scully said the action item was vague, and said the action should have more detail. Director Gaudet explained the action is just a commercial agreement to approve the engineering firm as a preferred vendor. General Manager Biron further clarified further.

Motion Carried.

- B. GUC-WPCA 20-12-47** Consideration of and Action to authorize Groton Utilities Management to issue a purchase order to Woodard & Curran, 35 Broad Street, One Weybosset Hill, Floor 7, Providence, Rhode Island for an amount not to exceed Sixty Nine Thousand Dollars and No Cents (\$69,000.00) for the SCADA System Upgrades at the Water Treatment Plant to be paid from funds available in the 2020-2021 Water Division Approved Non-Bonded Capital Budget, and that the City Council be apprised of this action with the recommendation that it concur

Commissioner Godley moved, **Commissioner Duarte** seconded that the Groton Utilities Commission / Water Pollution Control Authority approve Action Item GUC-WPCA 20-12-47.

General Manager Biron said the radio system used to send signals through SCADA for the WTP and the WWTF. This will upgrade the system to an Ethernet system which is more effective and faster. This is a budgeted item and will include the purchase of 21 new radios; 19 installed leaving two spares. Old system is obsolete.

Motion Carried.

12. EXECUTIVE SESSION

- A.** Pursuant to General Statutes section 1-200(6)(E) and 1-201(b)(5)(A) for a discussion of the Electric Boat Corp. customer contract.

Chairperson Hedrick asked for a motion to enter into Executive Session pursuant to General Statutes section 1-200(6)(E) and 1-201(b)(5)(A) for a discussion of the Electric Boat Corp. customer contract to include: The Commissioners, Aaron Brooks, Ron Gaudet, Len Mediavilla, Ron Yuhas, Yi Xiang, and Mark Beauchamp

Commissioner Scully moved, **Commissioner Zuliani** seconded that the Groton Utilities Commission / Water Pollution Control Authority enter into Executive Session pursuant to General Statutes section 1-200(6)(E) and 1-201(b)(5)(A) for a discussion of the Electric Boat Corp. customer contract.

Motion Carried. Executive Session began at 12:29 pm and ended at 12:37 pm.

13. Action Item

- C. GUC-WPCA 20-12-48** Consideration of and action to authorize Groton Utilities Management to approve the terms of The First Amendment to the Market Price Power Supply Agreement between the City of Groton, Department of Utilities and Electric Boat Corp., as presented to the Commission, together with such revisions, clarification and amendments as the Director of Utilities shall deem appropriate, and to execute and deliver the same on behalf of Groton Utilities

Commissioner Godley moved, **Commissioner Duarte** seconded that the Groton Utilities Commission / Water Pollution Control Authority approve Action Item GUC-WPCA 20-12-48.

Commissioner Zuliani asked if once the contract is signed when rates would start. Utility Analytics Manager Brooks said no increases are being assumed, but this would be a contract extension through December 2023.

Commissioner Godley asked that it be put in the record that his wife is an employee of General Dynamics / Electric Boat and did not believe there would be any conflict with his voting.

14. **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, at 12:29 p.m. **Commissioner Godley** moved, **Commissioner Duarte** seconded a motion to adjourn.

Motion Carried.

Attest:

Paul Duarte
Clerk

Email sent 12/15/2020

Sam Spano 300 Thames St

There have been two odor days since the last UC meeting. These were Friday 11/20 and Sunday 12/13. Both were unseasonably warm days with the wind from the SW blowing towards my house. As I stated in my comments for the November meeting, I believe the current reduction in odor days is due to the colder weather. The same pattern happened in the late fall/ winter the past two years. When the weather is warm the odors come back.

I have been informed that the sludge settling tank roof has now been sealed and re-smoke tested.

During his presentation at the 11/18/20 meeting the GU General Manager of Operations made the following comments. They were working "to make sure we can eventually reduce as much as possible any odor emissions." "I don't think we'll ever fully eliminate-because it is a pollution control facility".

I am very disappointed to hear and take exception to this analysis having lived across from the plant for 26 years. This plant, prior to the last 18 months, used to be odor free. This was of course with the exception of isolated events such as the buckled primary tank covers several years ago which were replaced.

This notion of it somehow being in the nature of pollution control facilities to always have some sort of residual odor that cannot be fully eliminated is nothing but a Myth. I am tired of hearing this Fallacy. A well run modern waste water facility can and should be Odor Free. Just take a look at the the New London plant which processes much more waste, coming from multiple towns, than the Groton WPCA. For that matter drive by the Foxwoods plant at the R214 entrance to the casino. You would not even know it is there if it wasn't for the sign.

Both of these plants are located where their neighbors certainly would not tolerate the type of odors we have been experiencing here on Thames St for the past a year and a half. Maybe GU management should send a team over to each of these plants to see how they run them?

If in fact the WPCA, which is apparently only running at 25 percent capacity, cannot be made fully odor free again then it is now time for a major change. Perhaps the solution is to tear it down, pump the waste to the Groton town plant and make this location into a water front park!

Again I Thank the Commissioners for Your Help in Advance