

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

August 17, 2022 10:30 a.m.
Council Chambers

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Hedrick called the meeting to order at 10:32 a.m.

ROLL CALL

Present: Chairperson Mayor Keith Hedrick

Commissioners: Jeffrey Godley, George Mathanool, George Scully and Robert Zuliani (10:34)

Staff present: Director of Utilities, Ronald A. Gaudet
Executive Administrator, Noemi Walencewicz
Executive Administrative Assistant, Maureen French
General Manager Operations, Mark A. Biron
General Manager Projects & Planning, Bruce Kruszewski
General Manager Customer Service, Tina Daniels
General Manager Information Technology, Sue Blanchette
Associate General Manager Key Accounts, Aaron Brooks
Project Manager, Joshua Rehrig
Finance Director, Ron Yuhas
Accounting Manager, Yi Xiang
Utility Finance Analyst, Patricia Thomas
Senior Accounting Assistant, Nicole Romanski

2. SAFETY MOMENT

General Manager Biron provided a seasonal safety moment on insect bites and stings. He said insect bites and stings should be taken as seriously as any other hazard in the workforce. He provided examples to avoid bites and stings and offered some suggestions to treat if one is incurred. If employees have a serious allergic reaction, it is encouraged to wear a medical bracelet and to notify their co-workers of their allergy.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Godley moved, **Commissioner Scully** seconded a motion to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting on June 15, 2022.

Motion carried.

Commissioner Godley moved, **Commissioner Scully** seconded a motion to approve the minutes of the Special Meeting on July 1, 2022.

Motion passed with four ayes and one abstention (Commissioner Zuliani).

4. REVIEW AND ACCEPTANCE OF TREASURER'S REPORT

Commissioner Zuliani moved, **Commissioner Godley** seconded a motion to approve the Treasurer's Report for the month ending June 2022.

Motion carried.

Commissioner Zuliani moved, **Commissioner Godley** seconded a motion to approve the Treasurer's Report for the month ending July 2022.

Motion carried.

5. COMMUNICATIONS AND CORRESPONDENCE

- A. Thank you from Always Home
- B. Thank you from Fairview
- C. Letter from Ledyard Conservation Commission –Director Gaudet summarized the letter and noted a drafted response that would come from the Commission. Chairperson Hedrick further commented it is consistent with the MOU with Avalonia. All Commissioners agree send out the response letter.
- D. Email from Grant Weaver July 13, 2022
- E. Email from Sam Spano July 20, 2022
- F. Email from Sam Spano July 22, 2022
- G. Email from Sam Spano July 25, 2022
- H. Email from Grant Weaver August 10, 2022
- I. Email from Sam Spano August 16, 2022 (attached)

6. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS

- A. Tom Olsen, 188 Crosswinds Drive, Groton and Vice President of Tri Town Trails expressed thanks for the support of the Ledyard Conservation Commission and support from consultant regarding the watershed survey.
- B. Joellen Anderson, 215 Plant Street, Groton – Thanked the Commission for the in-depth tour of the Water Treatment Plant and continuous water supply to her home. She inquired on the status of the report being developed by the Consultant regarding opening our watershed for Tri Town Trail Association. Chairperson Hedrick noted the report has not been received yet and needs to be reviewed prior to going public. Ms. Anderson congratulated the retirees from Water Management.

7. MONTHLY FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

Manager Xiang reviewed the Fiscal Year 2022 Financial Highlights:

Electric

Fiscal Year to Date (FYTD) Electric Revenue of \$50.7M including PPA/TCA revenue of \$1.9M is 8.6% or \$4M more than budget and 3.8% more than last FYTD. Total kWh sold for FYTD is slightly less than last FYTD by 0.1%.

Heating degree days are 48% less than last June and almost the same as last FYTD. Cooling degree days are 21% less than last June and 14% less than last FYTD.

Operations and Maintenance (O&M) expenses FYTD are 7.1% below the budget and net income is \$1.6M more than budget. The favorable variance of net income is driven by over budget revenues plus below budget O&M expenses.

Commissioner Zuliani reviewed the close of the year. Soft close per Manager Xiang. He complimented Manager Xiang on her highlights. He reviews the variance and actuals and pointed out the good year the Utility had. He further complimented Management for doing a good job.

For the month of June, customer conservation charges are \$71K and conservation expenditures are \$43K. As of June 30, 2022, \$2.2M remaining funds are available in the conservation account.

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

Water

FYTD Water Revenue of \$11.2M is 1.5% or \$168K below than budget and 2.8% less than last FYTD. The negative variance is driven by industrial sales and sales for resales which are below the budget by 4.3% and 2.7% respectively.

Operation & Maintenance Expenses for FYTD are 4.1% below the budget and net income before DWSRF grants are \$1.4M more than the budget. The favorable variance of net income is driven by below budget O&M expenses, below budget depreciation and interest expense due to the delay of the WTP project.

Commissioner Scully inquired if the water revenue was down due to the issue with the large customer that was previously brought to the Commission. Manager Xiang explained the situation with the customer that started in April was figured out in July.

Commissioner Zuliani commented on the budget and actuals and commented that although revenue was down, expense was also down, which when comparing actual figures, there is a gain of 6%. He again complemented Management for a job well done.

Sewer

FYTD Sewer Revenue of \$3.8M is 11% or \$468K below the budget and 16.7% less than last FYTD. The negative variance is driven by Industrial Sales which is 19.8% below the budget.

Operation and Maintenance Expenses for FYTD are 9.6% below the budget and net income is \$90K below the budget. The unfavorable variance of net income is driven by below budget revenues offset by below budget O&M expenses.

Commissioner Zuliani commented the net income was a gain by a half of a percent.

Chairperson Hedrick stated this is year four of the Sewer being in an enterprise account and the Utility now has the ability to obtain grants. He is satisfied with the positive direction the Sewer department is moving. Director Gaudet said there is a grant request going through the approval process currently with DPH for the Wastewater Facility Study.

All commissioners agreed to skip the July monthly financial highlights.

8. PROJECTS / INITIATIVES UPDATE

A. Projects Update

Transmission – Project Manager Rehrig stated the 1280 line is complete except for the optimal ground wire (OPGW) pole due to issues with obtaining fiber. He clarified that the 400 line is becoming the 1911 line but are used interchangeably.

Military Highway – The contractor will be complete with the project by middle of next week. Bare wire is replaced with tree wire.

323 Line – The aerial ground is being replaced and is about 95% completed. There are 17 condemned poles being replaced from Pleasant Valley Substation to Pleasant Valley Rd.

Chairperson Hedrick suggested the Commissioners to drive by the Buddington Substation to see the progress.

Midway Oval Water Main Replacement – General Manager Kruszewski noted about \$500K per year is budgeted for water main replacement. About 1,300 linear feet have been replaced,

completed in house. Midway Oval has been put in service and in the process of reconnecting from the old main to the new main. The project is on scope and on budget.

Chairperson Hedrick noted the tremendous project due to older line and susceptible to breaks. The project is expected to take about seven years to complete dependent on budget and should not require replacement for another 50 years.

Commissioner Zuliani asked what percentage has been completed. General Manager Kruszewski noted about 35% has been completed and will provide a conceptual drawing to the next meeting. Commissioner Scully asked if the pipe is being abated and if there are outside contractors. General Manager Kruszewski stated the pipe is abated and there are two outside contractors one for excavating and one for trucking.

9. OLD BUSINESS

A. Wastewater Treatment Facility Update – General Manager Biron provided an update in response to Mr. Spano’s operation inquiry. The plant is operated as designed and meeting all regulatory requirements. Mr. Spano has asked who authorized the removal of the micro filter. The micro filter removal was a team decision as it was a high school student’s experimental project and not part of the plant design. Recently the equipment to remove the odor has been repaired.

Chairperson Hedrick noted the high school students experiment and was not a permanent fix.

General Manager Biron stated Wright Pierce has completed the facility plan. To control odor right away; the recommended VITM activated charcoal scrubbing unit is being installed and the operations team bought Fogmaster to assist with odor. The will eliminate the odor in the air and runs every 15 minutes of every hour.

If there is a known evolution that will create an odor the operators will contact Mr. Spano to notify him.

Commissioner Mathanool inquired how much the odor control equipment cost. General Manager Biron stated about \$4K upfront but there will be ongoing cost to continue to operate. General Manager Biron commented on the odor event on July 19th due to a malfunction of check valve to the feed line of digester. Disposal wipes clogged the check valve and caused an odor. It took about 24 hours to identify and repair to get back into service.

B. Wastewater Treatment Facility – Facility Plan – Director Gaudet referenced Mr. Grant Weaver’s note. Wright Pierce produced a hefty report and sections to convert WWTF to a pump station and installing a discharge line from the plant to the town’s wastewater plant. That run of pipe and the conversion to a pump station was estimated to cost \$20M plus. Chris Pierce, owner of Wright Pierce, reviewed the entire report and said Wright Pierce is standing by their report with the given numbers as published. Director Gaudet explained there is a State Statue on borrowing limitations for the Wastewater Treatment Facility. Chairperson Hedrick explained the benefits of pulling the Sewer out of tax base.

The Commission was informed of the value of maintaining the Wastewater Treatment Facility. Mr. Weaver was contacted and was invited to have a tour of the plant and declined. Commissioner Godley expressed his opinion of being in favor of relying on the experts hired.

C. Rules and Regulations – There are no Management recommended changes as it is reviewed annually.

D. Tri Town Trails – Director Gaudet stated the consultant hired by the Utility has worked with multiple entities and has sent a fairly comprehensive survey to CT water companies.

Director Gaudet reviewed the details of the survey per Commissioner Godley’s inquiry. The survey questions ask if those being surveyed have opened their watershed to the public; and if so, what the hurdles, issues, cost, and problems that have presented, and if the decision would be made to do it again. If the Utility does not open the watershed, there has been a plan presented

to Tri Town Trails to achieve their objective without going into the watershed from outside the fence. The survey is currently in progress.

10. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Drought Status – General Manager Biron stated that as of this morning, Connecticut is in a Stage 2 drought. Groton Utilities is not limiting water consumption. There is about 85% of available water and have roughly 312 days of water on hand if it never rains. The Interagency Drought Committee is meeting tomorrow to reevaluate the drought stage. If our reservoirs were to drop below 50%, we would implement a drought plan.

Chairperson Hedrick provided some historical data of our robust reservoirs. Commissioner Godley noted our regional supply as well.

Commissioner Scully would like a safe yield number. Director Gaudet stated we will provide to the Commission.

11. ACTION ITEMS

- A. **GUC-WPCA 22-08-29** Consideration of and action to authorize Groton Utilities Management to issue a purchase order to AAIS Corporation, 8002 Boston Post Road, West Haven, Connecticut, not to exceed Thirty Eight Thousand Nine Hundred Thirty Four Dollars and No Cents (\$38,934.00), including a twenty percent (20%) contingency to provide removal of polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) and PCB materials at the Water Treatment Plant to be paid from Water available cash as a non – bonded capital expense, and furthermore, that the City Council be apprised of this action with the recommendation that it concur

Commissioner Godley moved, **Commissioner Mathanool** seconded that the Groton Utilities Commission / Water Pollution Control Authority approve Action Item GUC-WPCA 22-08-29.

General Manager Biron stated this would wrap up the PCB removal at the Water Treatment Plant completed by contracts as it was not part of the WTP project. It was clarified that that this action was not a budgeted expense.

Motion carried.

- B. **GUC-WPCA 22-08-30** Consideration of and action to authorize Groton Utilities Management to issue a purchase order to Keltic Painting, LLC, 189 Hill Road, Thompson, Connecticut, a preferred vendor, not to exceed One Hundred Eight Thousand Eight Hundred Eighty Four Dollars and Eighty Eight Cents (\$108,884.88) including a twenty percent (20%) contingency, for painting services at the Water Treatment Plant to be paid from Water available cash as a non - bonded capital expense, and furthermore that the City Council be apprised of this action with the recommendation that it concur

Commissioner Godley moved, **Commissioner Scully** seconded that the Groton Utilities Commission / Water Pollution Control Authority approve Action Item GUC-WPCA 22-08-30.

No additional discussion.

Motion carried.

- C. **GUC-WPCA 22-08-31** Consideration of and action to authorize Groton Utilities Management to issue a purchase order to ChargePoint, Incorporated, 240 East Hacienda Avenue, Campbell, California, for a total amount not to exceed Twenty Six Thousand Four Hundred Dollars and No

Cents (\$26,400.00) including a ten percent (10%) contingency for a five year lease contract for Electric Vehicle Chargers at the Municipal Building to be paid from Connecticut Municipal Electric Energy Cooperative (CMEEC) Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) Funds and furthermore that the City Council be apprised of this action with the recommendation that it concur

Commissioner Godley moved, **Commissioner Mathanool** seconded that the Groton Utilities Commission / Water Pollution Control Authority approve Action Item GUC-WPCA 22-08-31.

Project Manager Rehrig reiterated that this is a lease agreement versus a purchase because 25% of electric vehicle chargers deployed are currently broken. This price for all five years and includes the hardware and maintenance. Wiring will be completed by internal staff. A lengthy discussion ensued. During the next meeting a usage report on the current EV charger at Washington Park will be presented.

Motion carried.

D. **GUC-WPCA 22-08-32** Consideration of and action to authorize Groton Utilities Management to issue a purchase order to S&C Electric Company, C/O E.L. Flowers, 113 Main Street, Sturbridge, Massachusetts, not to exceed One Hundred Seventy Thousand Five Hundred Forty Eight Dollars and Fifty Cents (\$170,548.50) including a twenty percent (20%) contingency to be paid from FY 23 Electric non-bonded capital and furthermore that the City Council be apprised of this action with the recommendation that it concur

Commissioner Godley moved, **Commissioner Mathanool** seconded that the Groton Utilities Commission / Water Pollution Control Authority approve Action Item GUC-WPCA 22-08-32.

Project Manager Rehrig stated this is for switchgear at Wyman Gorman Substation to feed customers until they upgrade their facilities. It is about a 62 week lead time.

Motion carried.

E. **GUC-WPCA 22-08-33** Consideration of and action to authorize Groton Utilities Management to issue a purchase order to Burns and McDonnell, 108 Legius Road, Building A, Suite 1100, Wallingford, Connecticut, not to exceed Two Hundred Seventy Two Thousand Nine Hundred Eighty Seven Dollars and Fifty Cents (\$272,987.50) including a twenty five percent (25%) contingency, to provide construction oversight for Buddington Substation and the transmission lines, to be paid by the Transmission Lines 1410/1280/400/Buddington Substation Bond Fund Project, and furthermore that the City Council be apprised of this action with the recommendation that it concur

Commissioner Godley moved, **Commissioner Mathanool** seconded that the Groton Utilities Commission / Water Pollution Control Authority approve Action Item GUC-WPCA 22-08-33.

Project Manager Rehrig stated the construction manager has significant insight. He will work 40 hours per week and will be a liaison between contractors and employees for the duration of the project. There is a 25% contingency due to the risk of overrun. The quote was for 40 hours per week but there may be overtime.

Motion carried.

- F. **GUC-WPCA 22-08-34** Consideration of and action to authorize Groton Utilities Management to issue a purchase order to Howard Industries, PO Box 1588, Laurel, Missouri, not to exceed Six Hundred Fourteen Thousand Six Hundred Twenty Eight Dollars and Thirty Cents (\$614,628.30) including a ten percent (10%) contingency for pad mount and overhead transformers to be placed in stock, to be paid from funds available in the FY 23 Electric non bonded capital and furthermore that the City Council be apprised of this action with the recommendation that it concur

Commissioner Godley moved, **Commissioner Scully** seconded that the Groton Utilities Commission / Water Pollution Control Authority approve Action Item GUC-WPCA 22-08-34.

General Manager Biron explained this is a bulk transformer purchase of 73 transformers. Lead time is about 60 weeks and prices are changing dramatically. Currently transformers are being repaired and reused. There is a limited inventory on hand.

Motion carried.

- G. **GUC-WPCA 22-08-35** Consideration of and action to authorize Groton Utilities Management to issue a purchase order to Three Phase Line Construction, Incorporated, 35 East Industrial Way, Suite 202, Rochester, New Hampshire, not to exceed Two Million Five Hundred Eighty Three Thousand Seven Hundred Ninety Nine Dollars and Twenty Cents (\$2,583,799.20) including a twenty percent (20%) contingency for Buddington Substation construction a part of the Eastern Connecticut Transmission (ECT) Project to be paid by the Transmission Lines 1410/1280/400/Buddington Substation FY 2023 Bond Fund Project, and furthermore that the City Council be apprised of this action with the recommendation that it concur

Commissioner Godley moved, **Commissioner Zuliani** seconded that the Groton Utilities Commission / Water Pollution Control Authority approve Action Item GUC-WPCA 22-08-35.

Project Manager Rehrig noted this is PTF reimbursable and includes civil and actual construction.

The Commission was encouraged to visit the substation in groups to include a maximum of two Commissioners each.

Motion carried.

- H. **GUC-WPCA 22-08-36** Consideration of and action to authorize Groton Utilities Management to issue a purchase order to Three Phase Line Construction, Incorporated, 35 East Industrial Way, Suite 202, Rochester, New Hampshire, not to exceed One Million Three Hundred Forty Five Thousand Sixty Nine Dollars and Ten Cents (\$1,345,069.10) including a twenty percent (20%) contingency for transmission line construction as part of the Eastern Connecticut Transmission (ECT) Project to be paid by the Transmission Lines 1410/1280/400/Buddington Substation Bond Fund Project, and furthermore that the City Council be apprised of this action with the recommendation that it concur

Commissioner Godley moved, **Commissioner Mathanool** seconded that the Groton Utilities Commission / Water Pollution Control Authority approve Action Item GUC-WPCA 22-08-36.

Project Manager Rehrig informed the Commission that this would convert a current PO to PAR to Three Phase Line Construction, Inc. because PAR is no longer the contractor. The remaining funds on PAR's PO will be shifted to Three Phase Line Construction, Inc.

Motion carried.

12. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, at 12:38 p.m. **Commissioner Godley** moved, **Commissioner Zuliani** seconded a motion to adjourn.

Motion carried.

Attest:

Keith Hedrick
Chairperson

From: sam spano <syclonesam@yahoo.com>
Sent: Tuesday, August 16, 2022 12:48 PM
To: Director's Office <directorsoffice@grotonutilities.com>
Subject: August 17 2022 UC Meeting

Sam Spano 300 Thames St Groton Ct

Ref email- Spano Gaudet 7/20/22

Ref email- Spano Biron 7/22/22

Ref email- Spano Gaudet 7/25/22

There have been Eight odor days since the Cancelled 7/20/22 UC meeting. These were Fri 7/22 PM, Mon 7/25 PM, Tues 7/26 PM, Tue 8/2 AM,PM, Fri 8/5 AM,PM Sat 8/6 PM, Mon 8/8 PM and Sunday 8/14 PM. These were all called into Customer Service. Two calls were placed on 8/2 and 8/5 as these were long lasting events.

The Sun 8/14 event was particularly bad and lasted several hours. It was a very strong pungent odor that made my eyes sting in addition to causing me respiratory distress. I have been told there were some high/ low flow issues at the plant that day. I do not believe this explanation would have caused an odor event of this magnitude. This event should further investigated

Again, I am certain there were more odor days but it depends on wind direction. Also, I was away for several days in July.

Please Note: That there were also Twelve odor days In the time frame between the last 6/15/22 UC meeting and the Cancelled- 7/20/22 UC meeting. These are documented in my email to Director Gaudet dated 7/20/22 (ref above)

Also there were other two major odor events: One on Tues 7/19 and one on Fri 7/22 documented in my emails to Gen. Mgr. Biron 7/22 and Director Gaudet 7/25. (ref above). The commissioners should have rec'd copies of these three emails.

Three important topics need to be discussed at this current meeting.

- 1) A report on the Three Bio Mini Scrubbers that were removed from the facility and scrapped in 2020 and 2021. Why were they removed? Also who specifically was it in GU management that authorized their removal and disposal?
- 2) A presentation of the Wright Pierce odor study done on the WWTF earlier this year.
- 3) A report on the on the Digester Check Valve Failure which took place on 7/19/22.

We are now well Past the Three Year Anniversary of when the odor problems began on 7/8/19.

The Problems are Worse than Ever!

Again, I Thank the Commissioners for Your Help in Advance