

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

January 19, 2022 10:30 a.m.
Council Chambers

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Hedrick called the meeting to order at 10:30 a.m.

ROLL CALL

Present: Chairperson Mayor Keith Hedrick

Commissioners: Jeffrey Godley, George Mathanool, 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
General Manager Operations, Mark A. Biron
General Manager Projects & Planning, Bruce Kruszewski
General Manager Customer Service, Tina Daniels
General Manager Information Technology, Sue Blanchette
General Manager Key Accounts, Len Mediavilla
Associate General Manager Key Accounts, Aaron Brooks
Manager of Communications and Community Outreach, Dan Bouges
Environmental Engineer, Kelsey Haughey
Manager of Electric Engineering, Randall Surprenant
Manager of Water Engineering, Ray Valentini
Water Foreman, Mauricio Duarte
Project Manager, Joshua Rehrig
Director of Finance, Ron Yuhas
Accounting Manager, Yi Xiang
Senior Accounting Assistant, Nicole Romanski

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Godley moved, **Commissioner Zuliani** seconded a motion to approve the minutes of December 15, 2021.

Motion carried.

3. REVIEW AND ACCEPTANCE OF TREASURER'S REPORT

Commissioner Zuliani moved, **Commissioner Scully** seconded a motion to approve the Treasurer's Report for the month ending December 2021.

Motion carried.

4. COMMUNICATIONS AND CORRESPONDENCE

None received

5. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS

A. Tom Olson – Vice President of Tri Town Trails Association (email attached). Mr. Olson, on behalf of the Tri Town Trails Association, is requesting access to Groton Utilities property by means of a crossing to the Copp property, and not access to the reservoir. Chairperson Hedrick stressed that the Commission members are stewards of the watershed; not only for protection of the water, but also liability if the reservoir accessible to the public. Utility Representatives will be reaching out to Tri Town Trails to have a clear understanding of the request.

- B. Email from Sam Spano, 300 Thames Street – received January 18, 2022 (attached)
Chairperson Hedrick read the minutes from the last meeting to clarify. He reviewed the complaint process and reminded Manager Valentini not to take Mr. Spano’s phone calls. He explained that complaints coming in need to come into customer service to follow the process that is in place. Customer service will contact the manager on call.

6. REGIONAL WATER UPDATE

- A. Poquetanuck Cove Interconnection – Manager Valentini noted submittals from the contractor have been received and are being reviewed. The project is moving forward.

7. MONTHLY FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

Manager Xiang reviewed December Monthly Financials.

Electric

Total Electric Revenue for the month of December is 2.1% more than budget, slightly less than last December. The positive variance is driven by Industrial Sales which exceeds the budget by 9.1%.

Operation & Maintenance Expenses for December are 11.2% below budget. Net Income for the month is \$261K more than budget. The favorable variance of Net Income is driven by over budget Revenue plus below budget O&M Expenses.

For the month of December, customer conservation charges are \$75K and conservation expenditures are \$78K. As of December 31, 2021, \$2.1M remaining funds are available in the CLM Account.

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

The balance of the Rate Stabilization Fund is \$16.2M at the end of November 2021, due to CMEEC not closing their December books yet. CMEEC sold the 80MW Pierce generating station located in Wallingford, CT on December 31, 2021 at a loss. GU’s preliminary estimated portion is \$2.7M. The final cost will be determined by the end of March 2022 and will be reflected as a reduction to the GU rate stabilization fund held at CMEEC.

Director Gaudet stated the Pierce Plant was a peaking plant and was sold at a loss. He further explained that over the next 10 years CMEEC would have lost more. Chairperson Hedrick clarified the Rate Stabilization Fund and explained that this sale will not have a direct impact on rate payers.

Water

Total Water Revenue for the month of December is 29% more than budget and 3.1% less than last year. The positive variance is driven by Residential Sales and Sales for Resales which exceeds the budget by 5.3% and 11.8% respectively.

Operation & Maintenance Expenses for December are 1.1% over budget and Depreciation Expense is 50.2% below the budget due to the delay of the WTP project. Net Earnings before Drinking Water State Revolving Fund grants (DWSRF) is \$175K more than budget. The favorable variance is driven by over budget Revenues and the delay of Water Treatment Plant project.

Commissioner Zuliani asked when the Water Treatment Plant will be capitalized. Manager Xiang stated when the project is closed and the plant is fully put into service, it will be capitalized; and depreciation will begin.

At the end of December 2021, \$51.7M has been incurred for the Water Treatment Plant project. A total of \$51.6M has been received from DWSRF, including \$14.4M from grants and \$37.2M from loan.

Sewer

Total Sewer Revenue for the month of December is 13.7% below budget and 21% less than last December. The negative variance is driven by Industrial Sales which is 25% below the budget.

Operation and Maintenance Expenses for December are 2.6% below the budget and Net Income is \$42K less than the budget. The unfavorable variance of Net Income is driven by the under budget Revenues.

Commissioner Scully pointed out the fluctuation of the cash flow. General Manager Daniels explained the fluctuation can be explained by how payments are applied. If a customer doesn't pay the full amount, the funds are allocated to Electric first, then water and lastly sewer.

8. PROJECTS / INITIATIVES UPDATE

- A. COVID-19 Update – General Manager Biron updated the Commission on the State of Connecticut COVID-19 statistics. In the last 24 hours, there have been over 23,000 tests and 4,264 more positive cases. The positivity rate is 18.44%, declining since January 11th. There are 1,819 hospitalized, with 8.6% of hospitalizations in the three counties east of the Connecticut River. 70% of all hospitalized with COVID across the country are not fully vaccinated. As of this morning, there are four GU employees with COVID. COVID protocols and mask wearing when unable to social distance continue to be in place. Attendance is monitored and reconciled daily to determine if the absence is COVID related or not. Managers are following the required procedure to ask questions of employees calling in sick.
- B. Customer Service, Accounts Receivable – General Manager Daniels stated the overall delinquency is about 12%. This number is a little bit higher than normal but not unusual for this time of year, considering the December Holidays.
- C. Water Filtration Plant Project Commissioning Update – Manager Valentini informed the Commission that the plant is moving along. There is current testing the Manganese filters, and backwashing will start tomorrow. The contractor is outside installing metal and the roofer is putting up trim. The internal doors have installed. The punch list of items are being worked on. Phase II of PCB blasting and coating rooms is 99.9% completed.

Chairperson Hedrick explained the logic behind the close out document, which will lock in the cost and assign obligation for all items on the punch list to be completed.

- D. ISO-New England – Director Gaudet gave an overview of the article that was included in the Director's package that was sent to the Commission. There is a need for another natural gas supply line up the East Coast, but the New England states have not approved. When there are multiple cold days, there is a need for more natural gas. If it were to be cold for an extended amount of time, there may not be enough electricity which could force rolling black outs. Director Gaudet, General Manager Biron, and Manager Surprenant, informed the Commissioners that the information is nebulous and action for such will be decided and announced by the Governor's office.
- E. Projects Update
Transmission – Manager Surprenant stated the 200' wide Right of Way is cleared to its fullest extent on the entire 1.7 miles of transmission lines. Trees between the lines are being removed. Civil is laying down roads and building pads. Poles have been ordered and are expected to be delivered in March with a possible construction start in May/June. Weekly meetings continue to be held.

Fuel Cell Update – Manager Surprenant commented there is a delay due to air leaks on MMH2 and expecting completion in February.

9. OLD BUSINESS

- A. WWTF Odor Update – General Manager Biron stated the facility is continuing to operate in accordance with all the standard operating procedures and following all regulatory requirements. The priority is odor control. The availability of equipment is delaying the replacement of the scrubber with granulated activated carbon.
- B. Tri Town Trail Association – Director Gaudet stated a PO has been issued to SLR with the first initial meeting on Friday. Mr. Olson will be informed of the outcome of the meeting.
- C. Proposed changes to the Purchasing Policy – General Manager Blanchette provided the Commission an outline of the proposed Purchasing Policy changes per the directives from the last Commission meeting. There have been 385 Purchase Orders issued since July 1, 2021. Less than 30 POs were over \$200K. The majority of purchase orders were under \$50K which included approved standard annual expenses. The intent is to update the Commission with project dashboards. Changing the approval levels would reduce time needed for items during this meeting. Director Gaudet would like to reduce the administrative time on procurement and focus Commission meetings on being informative and educational, as well as having the opportunity to provide more strategic updates. General Manger Blanchette recommends re-writing the policy which will include removing procedural aspects to appendices to more easily update them. Consensus from the Commissioners is to bring the proposed changes to the Purchasing Policy to the Committee of the Whole and ensure Charter language is being followed.

10. NEW BUSINESS

None

11. ACTION ITEMS

- A. **GUC-WPCA 22-01-01** Consideration of and action to authorize Groton Utilities Management to provisionally approve the following **Change Orders Nos. 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, and 29** from R.H. White Construction Company, Incorporated, 41 Central Street, Auburn, Massachusetts 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) for indicated amounts:

Change Order No. 23 for additional smoke detectors, generator service, heat exchanger investigation, pilot testing for Mn conditioning, contactor disinfection, interior door modifications, boiler emergency stops, interior door replacement, chemical flow transmitters, and additional siding for an amount not to exceed Ninety Three Thousand Six Hundred Ninety Two Dollars and Fifty Five Cents (\$93,692.55);

Change Order No. 24 for eel screens for an amount not to exceed Ninety Two Thousand Four Hundred Seventy Dollars and Forty Nine Cents (\$92,470.49);

Change Order No. 25 for generator isolation valves and startup delay for an amount not to exceed Forty Nine Thousand Eight Hundred Eighty Seven Dollars and Ninety Seven Cents (\$49,887.97);

Change Order No. 26 for DAF environmental improvements for an amount not to exceed Seventy One Thousand Six Hundred Ninety Four Dollars and Thirty Cents (\$71,694.30);

Change Order No. 27 for supplemental HVAC (administrative areas) for an amount not to exceed Sixty Thousand Five Hundred Forty Six Dollars and Nine Cents (\$60,546.09);

Change Order No. 28 for supplemental HVAC (main electrical room) for an amount not to exceed Eighty One Thousand Three Hundred Sixty Eight Dollars and Fifty Four Cents (\$81,368.54);

Change Order No. 29 for project delays for an amount not to exceed Seventy Five Thousand Dollars and No Cents (\$75,000.00);

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 **Change Orders Nos. 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, and 29** upon final approval by the State of Connecticut, Department of Public Health

Commissioner Zuliani moved, **Commissioner Mathanool** seconded that the Groton Utilities Commission / Water Pollution Control Authority approve Action Item GUC-WPCA 22-01-01

Commissioners and Groton Utilities staff discussed at length the design of the old plant compared to the new plant and the location of the eel screens. Commissioner Scully inquired if the existing HVAC system will still be used and Manager Valentini confirmed and explained the design of the new units.

Motion Carried.

- B. **GUC-WPCA 22-01-02** Consideration of and action to authorize Groton Utilities Management to issue a purchase order to Wright-Pierce Engineers, 169 Main Street, 700 Plaza Middlesex, Middletown, Connecticut, for an amount not to exceed One Hundred Thirty One Thousand Nine Hundred Fifty Three Dollars and No Cents (\$131,953.00) including a ten percent (10%) contingency, for Engineering Services of preliminary and final design of Odor Control and HVAC Systems Upgrades to be paid from funds in the Wastewater Bond Fund, 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 22-01-02.

Manager Valentini stated this will assist with the odor complaints from the customer. He confirmed Commissioner Zuliani's inquiry that this spend is only for the design.

Motion Carried.

- C. **GUC-WPCA 22-01-03** Consideration of and action to authorize Groton Utilities Management to issue a purchase order to Minsait Advanced Control Systems, 2755 Northwoods Parkway, Peachtree Corners, Georgia, as a Sole Source Provider, for an amount not to exceed One Hundred Sixty Nine Thousand Seven Hundred Thirty Three Dollars and Thirty Cents (\$169,733.30) to secure services and equipment for the Electric SCADA system, to be paid from Electric Non-Bonded Capital Budget 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 22-01-03.

Manager Surprenant explained the need for the replacement of the equipment due to the age of the existing equipment (2012). Mainsait ACS provides all software and is a Sole Source Provider for all services and equipment needed.

Motion Carried.

12. EXECUTIVE SESSION

None

13. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, at 12:15 p.m. **Commissioner Godley** moved, **Commissioner Scully** seconded a motion to adjourn.

Motion carried.

Attest:

Keith Hedrick
Chairperson

January 19, 2022

To: Members of the City of Groton Utilities Commission

From: Thomas Olson

Tri Town Trail Association, Vice President for Groton

188 Crosswinds Drive, Groton, CT 06340

I would like to share with the Commission some observations after reading the commission's recent meeting minutes, as related to the old business item for the Tri Town Trail (TTT).

The October, November and December 2021 Groton Utilities (GU) Commission minutes noted a consultant is being sought out to complete a review and determine cost. We're grateful that the Commission is willing to expend funds for a study, but we're concerned that TTT hasn't been part of the process to determine the scope and intent of the study. While the idea of a study was discussed the last time representatives of the TTT and GU met on October 2nd, we are concerned there is not a clear understanding about the scope of the trail to be reviewed, which then puts into question the validity of any cost evaluation. The TTT requests to be a contributor to the inputs, prior to the review process.

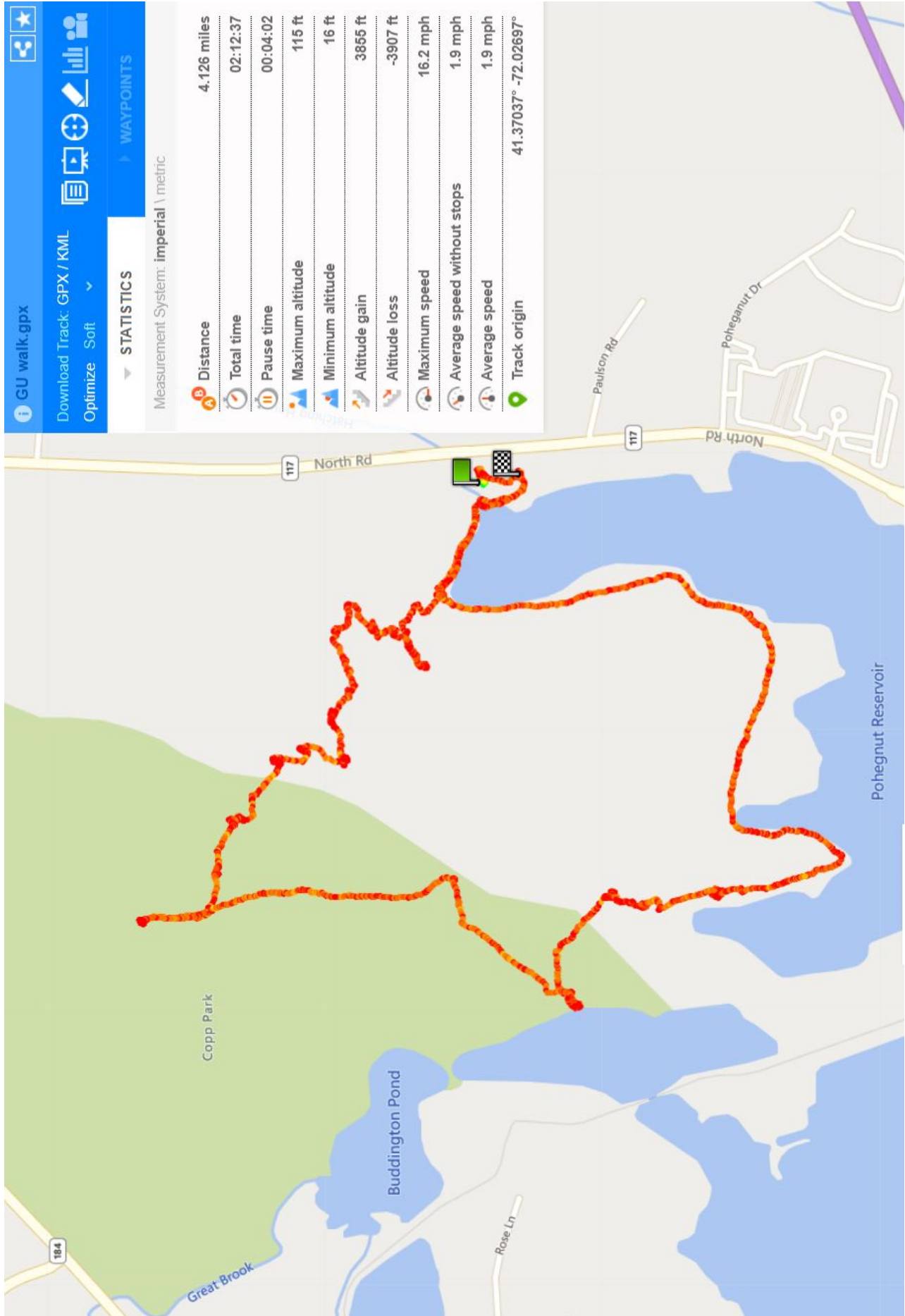
Secondly, I want to clearly state that the TTT Association continues in its desire to partner with the City of Groton Utilities Commission in a region-wide effort to provide a fair weather, low impact, publicly accessible, narrow hiking trail from Groton to Preston. We fully recognize that our Master Plan, as originally written, envisions a grand, fully accessible, wide, all-weather hiking and biking path. We understand that the initial size and scope of the Master Plan was a non-starter for the Commission. As requested by the Commission, we have revised our goal to simply build a "Recreational Trail". We are fully committed to implementing this regional resource.

In the last year the TTT has, at no cost to any land owners: built two miles of recreational trail at the northern terminus in Ledyard, received DEEP approval to utilize and sign trails in Bluff Point for the TTT, received Town of Groton approval to utilize and sign the Poquonnock River Boardwalk for the TTT, and received approval from the Copp Board of Directors to allow the TTT to utilize the Copp Property trails. Moving forward, the TTT Association is NOT requesting that GU "open the reservoir for public use." Rather, as our representatives have been requesting in the prior meetings, is a partnership, to allow access and development of a linkage trail, across GU property, to the Copp Property Park as a first step.

Lastly, On September 8th, 2021, I was one of the TTT and GU representatives who walked the proposed connection and found it to be easily passible – please see the attached GPS track of our hike. At the September 15th Commission meeting, it was recorded in the minutes that "it has been determined that there is no possible way to have a trail from the Copp property to Pohegnut Reservoir due to the topography." This statement is incorrect. At the TTT – GU meeting on Oct 2nd TTT representatives requested the Commission minutes be corrected, which they have not; so today I am correcting the record with this statement.

We look forward to additional conversations with the Commission on these important issues, including supporting your initiative with the Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments. Thank you for your attention on these matters.

Thomas Olson



From: sam spano <syclonesam@yahoo.com>
Sent: Tuesday, January 18, 2022 1:26 PM
To: Director's Office <directorsoffice@grotonutilities.com>
Subject: Fw: UC Meeting 1/19/22

There have been three odor days since the last UC meeting on 12/20/21. These were Wed 1/20/21 PM, Tues 1/04/22 PM and Wed 1/12/22 PM. The Wed 12/20/21 event was later in the afternoon on the same same day as the last UC meeting. It was a faint raw sewage odor and not called in. The Tues 1/04/22 event was a Very Strong raw sewage odor and was called in to Mgr. Valentini. The Wed 1/12/22 event was again a faint raw sewage odor similar to the 12/20/21 event and not called in. The wind was from the SW coming from over the plant in each case.

Again there may have been more odor days but I can only smell it at my house with a SW wind.

It is disappointing to me to still be having any odor events at all this time of year due to the now cold winter weather. I compared this same Dec /Jan time period to a year ago. There were zero odor events during that same time period.

So here we are more than 30 months since the odor problems began on on July 8, 2019. Clearly things are not any better if anything they are worse.

Take Heart: Per the last UC meeting minutes- Groton Utilities is promising a new scrubber to be online in another year and a half!!

Again, I Thank the Commissioners for Your Help in Advance