

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

March 16, 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 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 Water/Wastewater, Richard Stevens  
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. SAFETY MOMENT**

General Manager Mark Biron identified noise control and hearing loss as a safety issue in the workplace. He explained the noise levels associated with different types of equipment and added that for any noise over 85db, hearing protection is needed. He said hearing protection should be wearable (and should be worn properly) by the individual, convenient for use, and equipment should never be improvised. Two layers of protection may be needed if noise levels are extremely dangerous.

**3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**Commissioner Godley** moved, **Commissioner Scully** seconded a motion to approve the minutes of February 16, 2022.

**Motion carried.**

**4. 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 February 2022.

**Motion carried.**

**5. COMMUNICATIONS AND CORRESPONDENCE**

A. Thank you from Native Plant Trust

**6. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS**

**A.** Sam Spano – 300 Thames Street, Groton, CT - Email dated March 15, 2022, is attached.

**B.** Joellen Anderson – 215 Plant Street Groton, CT – Addressed the Commission and reminded them World Water Day is next week. She also said that National Water Week is coming up in May, and the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Clean Water Act is coming up in October. She said she is involved with organizations that will support people getting out to appreciate the Water. She shared a brochure on the Tri Town Trail that she said she happen to pick up at the library that Chairperson Hedrick said would be addressed later in the meeting.

**7. REGIONAL WATER UPDATE**

**A.** Poquetanuck Cove Interconnection- Manager Valentini said there has not been a lot of progress, submittals are still coming in and getting piping and materials will be a ways out.

**8. MONTHLY FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS**

Manager Xiang noted that Electric highlights will be last due to a follow up presentation from Mark Beauchamp regarding the Purchased Power Adjustment.

**Water**

Total Water Revenue for the month of February is 8.3% less than budget and 4.2% less than last year. The negative variance is driven by Industrial Sales and Sales for Resales which is below budget by 3.1% and 7.5% respectively.

Operation & Maintenance Expenses for February are 11.8% below the budget and Depreciation Expense is 50.6% below the budget due to the delay of the WTP project. Net Earnings before Drinking Water State Revolving Fund grants (DWSRF) is \$210K more than budget. The favorable variance is driven by below budget O&M Expenses and the delay of the WTP project offset by below budget Revenues.

The Water Treatment Plant Project was completed and closed February 2022. The Project Loan Obligation was closed at \$39M with 2% interest for 20 years starting February 28, 2022.

**Sewer**

Total Sewer Revenue for the month of February is 16.3% below the budget and \$3K more than last February. The negative variance is driven by Industrial Sales which is 251% less than the budget.

Operation and Maintenance Expenses for February are 26.9% below the budget and Net Income is \$10K more than the budget. The favorable variance of Net Income is driven by below O&M Expenses offset by below budget Revenues.

**Electric**

Total Electric Revenue for the month of February is 12% more than budget, but less than last February by 1%. The positive variance is driven by Residential and Industrial Sales which exceeds the budget by 12.7% and 18.7% respectively.

Operation & Maintenance Expenses for February are 9.5% below budget. Net Income for the month is \$423K more than budget. The favorable variance of Net Income is driven by over budget Revenues plus below budget O&M Expenses.

For the month of February, customer conservation charges are \$88K and conservation expenditures are \$45K. As of February 28, 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.

Utility Finance Consultant, Mark Beauchamp presented slides to the Commission that explained the Purchased Power Adjustment (PPA). He said due to the increase in the wholesale cost, the electric market price has increased 22%, with a projected increase of 15%. The current PPA is \$76.99 per MWh and the proposal is to increase the PPA to \$100.59 (the average cost of an entire year). He said the figures are based on the CMEEC forecast for the Electric Market, and added the cost increase would impact the average customer resulting in about a \$19.00, or 17% increase in their monthly bill. He said this is beyond the Utility's control and the situation is impacting the entire country – it is primarily driven by demand.

In the past, the cost was adjusted monthly, but that was changed about four years ago and is currently adjusted once a year in April. He said any variation would either be added to or drawn from the Rate Stabilization Fund (RSF). He said even with the increase to the customers, it will still draw the RSF to a minimum, but without the increase, the RSF would be drawn to fall below minimum by January 2023 and fall to negative by June 2023. The increases in cost are contributed to several factors which are putting pressure on Electric costs, including the pandemic, which resulted in an increased demand for electricity.

Commissioner Mathanool asked where on the scale Groton would be compared to other Utilities. Associate Manager Brooks responded that it would still keep Groton at 28.5% below other utilities. General Manager Daniels shared a flyer that will be included in customers' bills. She said the goal is to ensure that all stakeholders understand what is driving the increase. The increase will go into effect in April based on March's usage; and General Manager Daniels reminded the Commission that there is an additional increase for the planned rate change that will take place as well.

Commissioner Godley suggested rewording verbiage of regional benchmark to ensure customers have a good understanding of what is meant.

Associate Manager Brooks said he wanted to be sure that the Commission understands there should be a sense of pride. The Utility has been able to hold off until the spring when the increase to customers' bills will be less impactful. Additionally, he reminded the Commission of the robust conservation projects and rebate initiatives that were initiated by the Utility. He said the Utility is working very hard to mitigate impact to its customers.

Director Gaudet said there would be a presentation coming to the Commission outlining the success of the recent Conservation Projects.

## **9. PROJECTS / INITIATIVES UPDATE**

- A. Water Filtration Plant Project Closeout Update - Manager Stevens reported that staff is working on getting the punch list completed. The manganese contactors are cleaned and are operational. Permission must be granted by DPH for operations, so all water quality data will be sent to DPH. This is the last step in the process. Once permission is granted, all processes will have been approved.  
Chairperson Hedrick said he understood that tanks will be moved. General Manager Biron explained a problem with ice in the tanks, and they cannot be drained, but the weather is warming up and the ice will soon melt.
- B. Project Tracking - Project Manager Rehrig reported that the project track doesn't look much different from what the Commission received last month. Last month the track was reported for the GUC meeting. The decision was made to track month to month, with the close at the end of the month. There is only one addition to this; a purchase order for Phasor for \$158,000.00 that was approved at last month's meeting.

Commissioner Zuliani asked for an additional column to reflect project date of completion, it was confirmed that would be added.

C. Projects Update

**Transmission-** Manager Surprenant said dates are being locked for construction to begin in June, 2022. It will be the first pole replacement for 1280 line; 17 structures will be put in and it should take about 1.5 weeks. In July, the 400 and 1410 lines will be done and should be completed by the end of that month. Relay changes are happening and testing will be done along the way. The existing structure will be demolished. A big outage of the terminal at Buddington will begin at the end of July and will continue into February.

Commissioner Scully said he walked the ROW and said it was very impressive. Director Gaudet reminded the Commissioners that appointments can be made for them to be taken on a driving tour of the ROW.

**EB South Yard Assembly-** LIG is completing documents for relays and standard operations. Terminals will now be 3 point terminals and will be live to that station within the next few weeks; once documents are finalized and procedures are done, switching will be written. It is expected to be energized in the next few weeks. It is uncertain when EB plans on using the power.

**Walker Hill Pump Station-** General Manger Kruszewski reported the startup is planned for the first few weeks in April. The restoration will happen when the weather breaks.

**10. OLD BUSINESS**

A. WWTF Odor Update- General Manager Biron reported there were a couple of odor complaints received. At least one complaint correlated with grit chamber cleaning that would cause some odor. There was no correlation with the other complaints. Wright Pierce is on sight this week to meet with staff to learn about processes and talk about design ideas. Chairperson Hedrick asked if there are odor control measures when pumping from pump station. Manager Stevens said he would check into that.

B. Tri Town Trail Association- Manager Stevens said he hopes to have a draft of the consultant's report included for the next meeting. He expressed appreciation for Joellen Anderson's input, and said the Utility has continued educational opportunities for the community through Pequotsepos. He said a four hour hike had recently been arranged with a scientist associated with Pequotsepos. Some mapping was done, and they found some interesting structures within the watershed. Manager Stevens said that additionally, Manager of Communications and Community Outreach, Bouges is working to promote Water events with National Water Week approaching. He said a tour has been arranged for 55 middle-school students. Manager Stevens added that the Library has requested a presentation of the Water System, similar to the one given several years back, and said he would like to do another to put it out to the public. Chairperson Hedrick was in agreement. Director Gaudet said the Utility is looking to schedule a Ribbon Cutting for the Water Treatment Plant; the Utility will start working with the State to plan, with a preliminary target date of the last week of May with a goal to have a tour set up.

Chairperson Hedrick said a member of the Tri-Town Trails has reached out to the Commissioners. The Commission agreed that they would like communication as a group. Commissioner Zuliani said he would like to wait for the Consultant's report before addressing any questions. Commissioner Scully agreed with Commissioner Zuliani. Director Gaudet said he was aware that the request had gone to the Commissioners. He informed the Tri-Town Trails representative that any meeting with two or more Commissioners would need to be public and noticed. It was decided once the report comes out, a tour of the watershed would be discussed.

C. Purchasing Policy- General Manger Blanchette indicated the highlighted changes were sent to the Commission. She said a lot of procedural supporting documents will be moved to the Appendix and reported that there was a high level discussion regarding the purchasing policy at

the Committee of the Whole. She said it was a mixed discussion with some indication that the City Council may want a joint session with the Utility Commission. General Manager Blanchette said the full proposal comparison would come to the Utility Commission next month. Chairperson Hedrick said the Council was split regarding the changes to the Purchasing Policy. He said it is important that the Utility Commission fully understand the policy and the changes, as they are the governing body for the Utility. Commissioner Zuliani said he had spoken to one of the Councilors. He agreed that a joint meeting would be beneficial.

## **11. NEW BUSINESS**

None.

## **12. ACTION ITEMS**

- A. **GUC-WPCA 22-03-06** Consideration of and action to authorize Groton Utilities Management to approve a three (3) year Standard Rental Service Agreement with a two (2) year renewal option, and issue a purchase order not to exceed Twenty Nine Thousand Two Hundred Dollars and No Cents (\$29,200.00) for each of the next three (3) years, to Cintas, Post Office Box 630921, Cincinnati, Ohio, for Water and Wastewater Uniform rental to be paid from the approved Water and Wastewater FY 2022 Operating Budget, and furthermore 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 22-03-06.

Director Gaudet explained that Cintas has not increased its prices. The agreement needs to be renewed and they are also an approved vendor with US Communities which allows competitive price. They provide uniforms to the Water and Wastewater divisions. The reason it needs approval is because the three year total exceeds \$50,000.00.

**Motion carried.**

- B. **GUC-WPCA-22-03-07** Consideration of and action to amend Action Item GUC-WPCA 21-12-61 to change the approved purchase order from One Hundred Thirty Seven Thousand Four Hundred Dollars and No Cents (\$137,400.00) to One Hundred Sixty One Thousand Two Hundred Thirty One Dollars and No Cents (\$161,231.00), submitted to Nutmeg International Trucks, Incorporated, 130 Brainard Road, Hartford, Connecticut, for the 2024 International HV507 Dump Truck with Cummins Diesel due to vendor's inability to honor the original quoted price due to drastic increases in the materials needed for the aftermarket truck bed to be installed, to be paid from the Water Division Vehicle Replacement Fund and furthermore that the City Council be apprised of this action with the recommendation that it concur

**Commissioner Scully** moved, **Commissioner Godley** seconded that the Groton Utilities Commission / Water Pollution Control Authority approve Action Item GUC-WPCA 22-03-07.

Director Gaudet explained that the Commission had approved the truck already; the provider of the body contacted the supplemental vendor and was informed of the price increase. The Dealer was notified of the increase and asked the Utility if they wanted to pass or except the increase. The Utility is still in need of the truck. A decision was made to move forward with the purchase.

Commissioner Scully asked to confirm that the Commission is just authorizing the increase in price of \$23,831.00, and asked why the action was not for that amount. Chairperson Hedrick confirmed, and explained this is the process that has to be followed when a change is made to a previously approved item.

**Motion carried.**

- C. **GUC-WPCA 22-03-08** Consideration of to authorize Groton Utilities Management to issue a purchase order not to exceed One Hundred Eighty Nine Thousand Six Hundred Ninety Nine Dollars and No Cents (\$189,699.00) which includes a ten percent (10%) contingency, to Wesco Receivables Corporation, 15 Executive Boulevard, Orange, Connecticut, a preferred vendor, for purchase of three (3) switchgears required to replace existing, aging equipment to be paid from the approved Electric FY 2022 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 Zuliani** seconded that the Groton Utilities Commission / Water Pollution Control Authority approve Action Item GUC-WPCA 22-03-08.

Manager Surprenant explained the plan has been to replace the switchgear. He said the existing equipment is aging and the goal is to get the system back to reliability.

**Motion carried.**

- D. **GUC-WPCA 22-03-09** Consideration of and action to authorize a purchase order change for a total amount not to exceed One Million Ninety Six Thousand Four Hundred Twenty Eight Dollars and No Cents (\$1,096,428.00) which includes a ten percent (10%) contingency to cover any additional charges, to Sabre Industries, 8653 East Highway 67, Alavardo, Texas, the increase due to design changes made by Liedos in agreement by Groton Utilities Engineering, to be paid by the Transmission Lines 1410/1280/400 Buddington Substation FY 2022 Bond Fund Project and furthermore 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 22-03-09.

Manager Surprenant explained that due to design changes made by Liedos increasing the pole height, the price adjustment is needed.

Commissioner Scully asked if the price increase was due to design change only, and not a material change. Manager Surprenant answered and said it is the design change that drove the price up on the material.

**Motion carried.**

**13. EXECUTIVE SESSION**  
None

**14. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, at 12:06 p.m. **Commissioner Scully** moved, **Commissioner Godley** seconded a motion to adjourn.

**Motion carried.**

Attest:

Keith Hedrick  
Chairperson

City of Groton Utilities Commission  
Meeting Minutes  
March 16, 2022

**From:** sam spano <syclonesam@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 15, 2022 2:44 PM  
**To:** Director's Office <directorsoffice@grotonutilities.com>  
**Subject:** UC Meeting 3/16/22

Sam Spano 300 Thames St

There have been three odor days since the last UC meeting on 2/16/22. These were Sat 2/26/22 PM, Friday 3/4/22 PM and Monday 3/14/22 PM. All three incidents were called into customer service. In each case the wind was from the SW coming from over the plant and blowing towards my house.

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

For reference purposes there was one odor day in the same time period a year ago.

This winter has been particularly bad as far as odor events. This is very concerning since usually during the cold winter months things are better and there is some sort of a temporary break from the odor problems. This does not forebode well for the upcoming warm spring and hot summer months!.

So here we are more than 32 months since the odor problems began on July 8, 2019 and the only potential relief in sight that I am aware of is the proposed new scrubber system. This currently is only in the early design stages. Projected time frame to have it online is not until June 2023.

Again, I Thank the Commissioners for Your Help in Advance