

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

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

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Chairperson Hedrick called the meeting to order at 10:31 a.m.

**ROLL CALL**

**Present:** Chairperson Mayor Keith Hedrick

**Commissioners:** Jeffrey Godley (via Zoom), George Scully and Robert Zuliani  
**Absent:** George Mathanool

**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 Information Technology Sue Blanchette  
General Manager Customer Service, Tina Daniels  
Associate General Manager Key Accounts, Aaron Brooks  
Communications and Community Outreach Manager, Dan Bouges  
Project Management Professional, Joshua Rehrig  
Water Foreman, Mauricio Duarte  
Environmental Engineer, Kelsey Haughey  
Finance Director, Ron Yuhas  
Accounting Manager, Yi Xiang

**2. SAFETY MOMENT**

General Manager Biron, noted the cold temperature of 33 degrees this morning and the threat of carbon monoxide as the odorless killer. He stated the multiple sources that emit carbon monoxide and can be found inside and outside of homes including vehicles. Be cautious of using items in enclosed areas and make sure items that emit carbon monoxide, inside of homes are installed and operated per operators manual. When using the fireplace inside the home, ensure the flue is in the open position. Some symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning include: headache, fatigue, shortness of breath, and dizziness.

**3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**Commissioner Scully** moved, **Commissioner Zuliani** seconded a motion to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting as amended on September 21, 2022.

Chairperson Hedrick noted the minutes were amended as annotated.

**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 September 2022.

**Motion carried.**

**5. COMMUNICATIONS AND CORRESPONDENCE**

- A. Community Speaks Out Thank You
- B. Appreciation of Support from Riverfront Children's Center
- C. Thank you from Groton Rotary Club
- D. Email from Sam Spano, 300 Thames Street, Groton, October 18, 2022 (attached)

**6. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS**

- A. Tom Olson, 188 Crosswinds Drive, Vice President of Tri Town Trails, attended the walk this past weekend with Ledyard Parks and Rec and extended a compliment to Groton Utilities, Kate with Groton Utilities and the maintenance of the trails.
- B. Joellen Anderson stated it is the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Clean Water Act. She thanked the Commission for hiring an independent consultant regarding the watershed. Many factors impact the watershed; weather pattern change, drought, and stressed the importance to protect the water we have. She reminded the Commission to attend the Avalonia ribbon cutting this Saturday and that Groton Utilities donation of over \$159K was used to assist in protection of the Watershed.

Chairperson Hedrick, noted there was an address change to 760 Long Cove Road.

**7. MONTHLY FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS**

Manager Xiang reviewed September 2022 Financial Highlights:

**Electric**

September Electric revenue of \$4.9M is 6.9% or \$314K more than budget and 14.2% more than last September. The positive variance is driven by residential sales and industrial sales which exceeds the budget by 5.3% and 12.9% respectively.

Fiscal Year to Date (FYTD) Electric Revenue of \$15.2M is 8 % or \$1.1M more than budget and 19% more than last FYTD. The positive variance is driven by residential sales and industrial sales which exceeds the budget by 4.4% and 19.7% respectively.

Commissioner Scully noted this is the second month revenues have been good and questioned if it correlated with EB's new building. General Manager Brooks confirmed EB has added load but cannot confirm this is the reason for increased revenues. Chairperson Hedrick stated the CO will not be issued until April next year.

Commissioner Zuliani complimented that Manager Xiang did a great job on the financials and that Electric is doing very well. He pointed out that cash is dropping on the balance sheet. Manager Xiang confirmed the cash balance was \$21.5M and now \$13.8M because bond fund project money has not been reimbursed into the checking account yet.

Heating degree days are 31% more than last September and equal to last FYTD. Cooling degree days are 13% more than last September and 41% more than last FYTD.

Operations and Maintenance (O&M) expenses for September are 12.7% below the budget and net income for the month is \$586K more than budget. The favorable variance of net income is driven by over budget revenue, below budget O&M expenses and the reimbursement of RGGI fund projects.

For the month of August, customer conservation charges are \$83K and conservation expenditures are \$37K. As of September 30, 2022, \$2.4M 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**

September Water revenue of \$1.1M is 5.6% or \$59K over the budget and 15.3% more than last September. The positive variance is driven by sales for resales and commercial sales which is over the budget by 12.7% and 8.4% respectively.

FYTD Water revenue of \$3.5M is 5.4% or \$179K over the budget and 12.9% more than last FYTD. The positive variance is driven by the sales from all classes.

Operation & Maintenance Expenses for September are 7.2% over the budget and net income for the month is \$26K below the budget. The unfavorable variance of net income is driven by over budget O&M expenses.

Commissioner Zuliani commented the month is down and cash is reduced considerably. Manager Xiang stated it is the same reason as electric, waiting on bond fund project reimbursement.

### **Sewer**

August Sewer revenue of \$291K is 14% or \$48K below the budget and 1.5% less than last September. The negative variance is driven by the industrial sales which is 31.1% below the budget.

FYTD Sewer revenue of \$1M is 4.3% or \$45K below the budget and 2.9% more than last FYTD. The negative variance is driven by industrial sales which is 9.6% below the budget.

Operation and Maintenance Expenses for September are 15.9% below the budget and net income is \$4K below the budget. The unfavorable variance of net income is driven by below budget revenues offset by below budget O&M expenses.

Commissioner Zuliani stated that this month is breaking even although Year to Date is up but again the cash balance is low. Manager Xiang provided the same explanation, waiting on bond fund project reimbursement.

## **8. PROJECTS / INITIATIVES UPDATE**

### **A. Projects Update**

**HVAC Bid** – Project Manager Rehrig stated that prior to going to bid a public hearing needs to be held, certified letters will be mailed to abutters 200’ of the Wastewater Treatment Facility and signs need to be posted outside seven days prior to the public hearing.

**Transmission** – Project Manager Rehrig stated the 400 line construction started today and expected completion date is before the next UC meeting.

**Buddington Substation** – Project Manager Rehrig commented on the tremendous progress being made. There are mountains of backfill on site and the old “A” frames are down. Chairperson Hedrick encouraged Commissioners to observe the large scale progress. He further commended the substation crew for their recent preventive maintenance outage that only lasted 2 minutes and 10 seconds to prevent any potential unplanned outages.

## **9. OLD BUSINESS**

A. Wastewater Treatment Facility Update - General Manager Kruszewski commented that the engineering firm is addressing comments returned from DEEP. Chairperson Hedrick asked the commission for permission to remove update from monthly agenda. The Commission agreed to quarterly periodicity.

B. Tri Town Trails Association – Director Gaudet stated a group attended a meeting with Weston and Sampson and Chairperson Hedrick to review the extensive draft report that included regulatory requirements of GU owned land, survey respondents and considerations Groton Utilities needs to make. Scott Bighinatti is gathering additional information from the Groton Utilities team and will present to the Groton Utilities Commission at a meeting in the near future. The Commission would prefer to receive the final report prior to the presentation.

C. Drought Status – General Manager Biron noted the Groton Utilities reservoirs are at 88%. The Interagency Drought Committee stated it is in a less severe status as of October 6<sup>th</sup>. Chairperson Hedrick commented that the Utilities are continuously drought resistant.

D. PPA/TCA – Six Month Review – Chairperson Hedrick reminded the Commission of the November moratorium and the real impacts of increasing costs. The PPA was increased in the beginning of the year and this is the six month review. He stated that the General Manager of Customer Service will discuss increase communications on conservation and programs for energy assistance.

General Manager Brooks reminded the Commission that the electric cost of service rate case and the three year rate track with variable rate increases (PPA) was done winter 2021. The Purchased Power Adjustment (PPA) impacts all customers. There is no relief in the short term for whole sale markets as they increased 23% in 2023 and projected to increase an additional 23.5% this Fiscal Year. A team reviewed two options: not raise the PPA and draw down the Rate Stabilization Fund (RSF) or raise the PPA.

Option one: Drawing down the RSF would bring the balance below the three month minimum balance. Commissioner Scully questioned how the minimum balance of the RSF is \$12M but six months ago it was \$8M. General Manager Brooks noted the increase of Groton Utilities power bills therefore the increase of the three month reserve. Commissioner Scully inquired why capital funds are continued to be drawn out of the RSF and if the projects need to be completed so the funds can stay in the RSF. General Manager Brooks noted the drawn down of funds for capital projects was part of the rate design and unrelated to purchase power.

Option two: Raise the PPA starting January 2023, about \$11.00 or 9% increase on the average monthly residential customer bill. This aligns with Eversource’s increases while GU still stands to be one of the lowest electric providers in the state. Energy insecurity is real and the need to conserve is the reason for encouraging the Energy Conservation program. Regardless of how a Groton Utilities customer heats their home; either with oil or electricity, the Home Energy Savings (HES) Program is a great resource. This year, GU and BLP has helped 94 families insulate their homes for free with the HES program. Another great energy conservation rebate is the heat pump HVAC system. Groton Utilities also collaborates with TVCCA, Untied Way and Groton Social Services.

General Manager Daniels mentioned that TVCCA is receiving less funding this year but is collaborating with GU to get an insert pulled together to apply for their services. She will be reaching out to Groton Social Services and additional donations from GU to them to directly help GU customers with energy assistance. Envelops will be added to bills for customers to donate.

Commissioner Scully asked if there will be an increase in the TCA monthly charge. General Manager Brooks stated that there are no increases to the TCA at this time.

Commissioner Godley mentioned an article in the Wall Street Journal. Executive Administrator Walencewicz will forward to all Commissioners.

Commissioner Zuliani showed the email he received regarding the GU PPA increase. General Manager Daniels confirmed an email was sent to the email address on file, there was a website post, and a Facebook post.

## **10. NEW BUSINESS**

None.

## **11. ACTION ITEMS**

A. **GUC-WPCA 22-10-41** Consideration of and action to authorize Groton Utilities Management to issue a purchase order to Integrated Security Group, 19 Tuttle Place, Middletown, Connecticut, a preferred vendor, not to exceed One Hundred Six Thousand Nine Hundred Eighty Dollars and No Cents (\$106,980.00) for the purchase and installation of security video cameras and physical access controls at the Wastewater Treatment Facility located at 311 Thames Street, Groton to be paid from funds available in the Sewer Division 2022 - 2023 Approved Non-Bonded Capital for

Sewer Treatment Facility Technology & Security, 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 22-10-41.

General Manager Blanchette stated that this is similar to the work at the WTP for physical security protection per the Infrastructure Act though it is not mandatory it will become mandatory. This is the same vendor the City uses for all facilities.

Commissioner Zuliani noted the large amount of cameras. General Manager Blanchette explained all the parts and pieces of the quote.

Commissioner Scully questioned if the doors have security access now. General Manager Blanchette stated they do not.

**Motion carried.**

**B. GUC-WPCA 22-10-42** Consideration of and action to authorize Groton Utilities Management to issue a purchase order to Barnhart Crane, 25 Mill Street, Middletown, Connecticut, not to exceed Eighty One Thousand Eight Hundred Eighteen Dollars and No Cents (\$81,818.00) including a ten percent (10%) contingency for the relocation of the 1X spare transformer from the Operations Complex to the Buddington Substation to be paid from 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 Scully** moved, **Commissioner Zuliani** seconded that the Groton Utilities Commission / Water Pollution Control Authority approve Action Item GUC-WPCA 22-10-42.

Project Manager Rehrig stated the transformer is currently housed at the Operations complex and determined the best, cheapest and appropriate transformer for Buddington.

**Motion carried.**

**C. GUC-WPCA 22-10-43** Consideration of and action to authorize Groton Utilities Management to issue a purchase order to 3Phase Line Construction, 35E Industrial Way, Suite 202, Rochester, New Hampshire for an amount not to exceed Two Hundred Six Thousand Five Hundred Sixty Six Dollars and Sixty Three Cents (\$206,566.63) including a twenty-five percent (25%) contingency to purchase high side steel for the Buddington Substation construction as part of the Eastern Connecticut Transmission Project to be paid from 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 Scully** moved, **Commissioner Godley** seconded that the Groton Utilities Commission / Water Pollution Control Authority approve Action Item GUC-WPCA 22-10-43.

Project Manager Rehrig stated the company that was currently contracted could not meet the deadline. Eversource recommended this new company and they are able to meet the supply needs and deadline. Chairperson Hedrick informed the Commission that the funds from the previous contractor are being reallocated towards purchase order.

Project Manager Rehrig stated the importance for high side steel supply with the deadline.

**Motion carried.**

**D. GUC-WPCA 22-10-44** Consideration of and action to authorize Groton Utilities Management to issue a purchase order to Mountain LLC, 52 Farm View Drive, Suite 201, New Gloucester, Maine, a preferred vendor, for an amount not to exceed Two Hundred Ninety Thousand Four Hundred Dollars and No Cents (\$290,400.00) including a ten percent (10%) contingency to support Groton Utilities in engineering of pole attachments, pending Groton Utilities' receipt of application and payment for such work to be paid by the customer, 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 22-10-44.

Project Manager Rehrig stated this is to authorize writing a Purchase Order but not issue it until the customer submits an application and pays the fee.

Chairperson Hedrick stated a customer (under NDA) approached the Utility to use the pole structure. They will pay an attachment fee and sub out the work for the attachments. Due to time frame constraints and capacity of the Utility, a third party is completing the engineering study. Mountain will also perform a survey of pole attachments that align with the applications only. Commissioner Zuliani inquired who established the price and what the contingency is for. PMP Rehrig stated it is a price per pole through Mountain. It is not costing Groton Utilities any money and the contingency is for customer pole change requests.

**Motion carried.**

**E. GUC-WPCA 22-10-45** Consideration of and action to approve a Schedule of Meetings for Calendar Year 2023 as presented by Management

**Commissioner Zuliani** moved, **Commissioner Scully** seconded that the Groton Utilities Commission / Water Pollution Control Authority approve Action Item GUC-WPCA 22-10-45.

**Motion carried.**

## **12. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

**Commissioner Zuliani** moved, **Commissioner Scully** seconded that the Groton Utilities Commission enter into Executive Session Pursuant to General Statutes sections 1-200(6)(D) and 1-210(b)(7): Discuss real estate to include all Commissioners, Director Gaudet, Director Yuhas, General Manager Kruszewski, General Manager Blanchette and Manager Xiang.

**Motion Carried.**

Executive Session began at 11:40 a.m. and ended at 12:29 p.m.

## **13. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, at 12:30 p.m., **Commissioner Zuliani** moved, **Commissioner Scully** seconded a motion to adjourn.

**Motion carried.**

Attest:

Keith Hedrick  
Chairperson

City of Groton Utilities Commission  
Meeting Minutes  
October 19, 2022

**From:** sam spano <syclonesam@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, October 18, 2022 2:29 PM  
**To:** Director's Office <directorsoffice@grotonutilities.com>  
**Subject:** UC Meeting 10/19/22

Sam Spano 300 Thames St

There have been nine odor days since the last UC meeting on 9/21/22. Please Note: I also am including in this total an event that happened Tues 9/20/22 in the late afternoon, since this happened after I had already turned in my report to the GU Directors Office for the 9/21/22 meeting and thus was not included.

So these are Tues 9/20 PM, Sun 9/25 PM, Mon 9/26 AM/PM, Tues 9/27 AM/PM, Wed 9/28 AM/PM, Thurs 10/6 PM, Sun 10/9 PM, Sat 10/15 PM, Sun 10/16 PM. These were all called into customer service

There were also two of other odor days. These were Fri 10/7 PM and Wed 10/12 PM. I am not including these in the total because I did not report them to customer service since they were intermittent due to shifting wind direction.

Again, I am certain there were more odor days but it depends on wind direction. Also, I was away Sept 21-24.

This compares to six odor days for the same time period in 2021.

The recent Sat 10/15 PM and Sunday 10/16 PM events were particularly bad. My guess is there was some sort of significant malfunction at the plant. I would like to know what the on call operator found?

I did not see anyone at the plant for the Sat 10/15 AM shift. I was awoken Sunday 10/16 at approx 5:30 AM by a back up alarm on a GU pickup. I got up and saw a white GU pickup backing up in front of the plant main gate. I am guessing that the operator had decided to come in very early Sunday, probably also on Sat, and was now leaving the plant. In any case it was still dark;

I would like to know -What and How Many Hours are the Saturday and Sunday AM shifts supposed to be? Since there were odor problems later on both days requiring a second trip perhaps it would be better to do these AM weekend shifts when it is daylight and the operator can see. My understanding is this has always been the case before this weekend.

So here we are more than 3 years and 3 months since the odor problems began on 7/08/19. Things are not any better and in fact are worse.

Again, I Thank the Commissioners for Your Help in Advance