

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

**MINUTES**

**AMENDED**

September 21, 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 and Robert Zuliani

**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  
Associate General Manager Key Accounts, Aaron Brooks  
Communications and Community Outreach Manager, Dan Bouges  
Project Management Professional, Joshua Rehrig  
Environmental Engineer, Kelsey Haughey  
Finance Director, Ron Yuhas  
Accounting Manager, Yi Xiang  
Utility Finance Analyst, Patricia Thomas  
Senior Accounting Assistant, Nicole Romanski

**2. SAFETY MOMENT**

General Manager Biron commented on battery safety; how to store them, and how to handle them. He mentioned the different types of batteries and their risks. Only charge batteries in designated charging areas, ensure safety equipment is within reach, be sure there is no smoking in the charging area, and protect large equipment. He added, that for safety, keep metallic objects away from batteries, and commented on forklift battery replacement risks, and ways to protect yourself. Lithium batteries may present a fire and/or explosion hazard. Follow manufacture instructions for use and charging. Batteries should be disposed properly through a battery recycling program.

Commissioner Scully inquired how emergency personnel approach an electric vehicle in an accident. Chairperson Hedrick will reach out to Chief Tompkins for an answer.

**3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**Commissioner Godley** moved, **Commissioner Mathanool** seconded a motion to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting on August 17, 2022.

**Motion carried.**

**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 August 2022.

**Motion carried.**

**5. COMMUNICATIONS AND CORRESPONDENCE**

- A. Annual Meeting of the Independent Consumer Advocate –October 12, 2022 at 4:00 pm via Zoom.

- B. Avalonia Ribbon Cutting Invite – Atkinson Preserve, Saturday, October 22<sup>nd</sup> in the morning
- C. Email from Ray Valentini – Commissioner Zuliani would like to see the email from Mandy Smith from DPH that Mr. Valentini refers to. Director Gaudet will forward to the Commission.
- D. Email from Sam Spano dated 09/20/2022 (Attached)
- E. Commissioner Godley commented and shared about a customer’s gratitude with response time and restoration from an event in September.

**6. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS**

- A. Susan Radway, Director of Riverfront Children’s Center, 476 Thames Street – Ms. Radway addressed the Commission and thanked Groton Utilities for their continuous, generous donations. She also thanked the staff and the Commission on the Utilities’ sponsorship for Groton City Brew Run as Riverfront Children’s Center was the beneficiary of the event. Fundraising and grants provide tuition for income restricted families. Chairperson Hedrick commented on the well-attended Groton City Brew Run event.

**7. MONTHLY FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS**

Manager Xiang reviewed August 2022 Financial Highlights:

**Electric**

August Electric revenue of \$5.4M is 9% or \$447K more than budget and 24.1% more than last August. The positive variance is driven by residential sales and industrial sales which exceeds the budget by 5.5% and 22.7% respectively.

Fiscal Year to Date (FYTD) Electric Revenue of \$10.4M is 8.6% or \$819K more than budget and 21.3% more than last FYTD. The positive variance is driven by residential sales and industrial sales which exceeds the budget by 4% and 23.1% respectively.

No heating degree days for August and FYTD. Cooling degree days are 28% more than last August and 47% more than last FYTD.

Operations and Maintenance (O&M) expenses for August are 5.4% below the budget and net income for the month is \$52K more than budget. The favorable variance of net income is driven by below budget O&M expenses.

For the month of August, customer conservation charges are \$91K and conservation expenditures are \$112K. As of August 31, 2022, \$2.3M 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**

August Water revenue of \$1.1M is 2% or \$23K below the budget but 10.7% more than last August. The negative variance is driven by industrial sales which is below the budget by 17.3%.

FYTD Water revenue of \$2.4M is 5.4% or \$120K over the budget and 11.8% more than last FYTD. The positive variance is driven by commercial sales and industrial sales which exceeds the budget by 8.6% and 7.7% respectively.

Operation & Maintenance Expenses for August are 8% below the budget and net income for the month is \$13K over the budget. The favorable variance of net income is driven by below budget O&M expenses offset by below budget O&M revenue.

Commissioner Scully inquired if the issue with an industrial customer is the same as last year.

General Manager Brooks stated that issue was rectified but other meter locations are still being investigated.

Commissioner Zuliani commented on the positive health of the Water Department budget.

### **Sewer**

August Sewer revenue of \$299K is 22% or \$84K below the budget and 4% less than last August. The negative variance is driven by the industrial sales which is 40.7% below the budget.

FYTD Sewer revenue of \$712K is on target of the budget and 4.8% more than last FYTD.

Operation and Maintenance Expenses for August are 16.6% below the budget and net income is \$37K below the budget. The unfavorable variance of net income is driven by below budget revenues offset by below budget O&M expenses.

Commissioner Zuliani asked if the reduction of sewer was a result of the reduction of water. Manager Xiang confirmed.

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

### **A. Projects Update**

**Transmission** – Project Management Professional Rehrig informed the Commission that there is an outage scheduled for tomorrow to bring down the 400 line across the street from Buddington Substation to the first structure. Staging of the 400/1410 sites will begin. 400 line installation will begin in early October and the 1410 line will follow, based upon outage availability.

Commissioner Scully confirmed that even with the 400 line off line the two other lines remain in service.

**Buddington Substation** – PMP Rehrig continued that most of the major materials have been received and civil work is scheduled to start in three weeks dependent on approval of shop drawings.

**Poquetanuck Cove Interconnection** – General Manager Kruszewski stated materials are still on order. B&W Paving Company is doing a field verification today and tomorrow.

**Midway Oval Water Main Replacement** – General Manager Kruszewski reported that all the 8” and 6” ductile iron pipe has been installed, inspected, and is in service; and 50% has been connected to the water mains.

Commissioner Zuliani said he drove around Midway Oval and noted the roads look like they need to be paved where they had been dug up. General Manager Kruszewski stated the utility will patch the roads where the work was done, but the Town would be responsible for paving. He is unaware of the Town’s paving schedule. Chairperson Hedrick said he will survey the area.

**IGSA** – General Manager Brooks provided a status update regarding an agreement that has been in the works for a few years. Upon the Navy’s execution of the Agreement, Groton Utilities would provide water services to the Navy to include hydrant flushing, drinking water sampling and testing, as well as other water distribution services.

Director Gaudet added this falls under our Strategic Plan.

Commissioner Scully inquired if this also covers the Base or if it just covers Navy housing. General Manager Brooks stated it is for both.

**Washington Park EV Charger** – General Manager Daniels reported on the usage for the Washington Park EV Charger and informed the Commission the charger was installed in August, 2020. Usage from August to December of 2020 was 1,500 kWh. 10,000 kWh in 2021 and so

far, in 2022, it is averaging 1,500 kWh a month. Charging is currently a free service, costing the Utility an average of \$429 a month.

Chairperson Hedrick stated that two chargers will be installed at the Municipal Building and will re-engage the Eastern Point Historic District about approving a charger at Eastern Point Beach. Commissioner Zuliani would like the public to know this is another free service the Utility provides to the Community.

General Manager Daniels noted that at the Groton City Brew Run at least three participants asked if there were charging stations at Eastern Point Beach. Director Gaudet saw at least eight electric vehicles in the parking lot at the event, so the need for an EV charger at Eastern Point is warranted.

Commissioner Scully inquired if the Town charges the public to use their EV chargers. Chairperson Hedrick is not aware.

## **9. OLD BUSINESS**

A. Wastewater Treatment Facility Update - Odor Control and HVAC Project - General Manager Biron stated there were five odor complaints in the month of August and two odor complaints to date for September. Every time there is an odor complaint, WWTF personnel are dispatched. For the recent events, no odor was detected. The WWTF continues to operate as designed and meets all regulatory requirements. Current projects to assist odor control are: the hypochlorite system, foggers were added to aid in combating odor, and roofing materials are on order.

Chairperson Hedrick reiterated that every time there is an odor complaint, personnel are sent to investigate and rarely is an odor detected. Personnel will continue to be sent for every odor complaint but he reminded that there is a cost associated. General Manager Biron estimated that \$5,000 in overtime has already been spent, but recent months have not been included. He said this figure is just the cost of overtime and does not include the cost of any of the improvements made. Chairperson Hedrick responded to Mr. Spano's reference in his correspondence about the foggers adding additional chemicals into the atmosphere, and said the SDS sheet for the chemical was reviewed; and the chemical is safe for consumption.

Commissioner Godley confirmed that the facility is operated in accordance with correct procedures and there is nothing further at this point to do, other than scheduled maintenance.

General Manager Biron stated that in October 2019 when the odor complaints first began, an odor study was implemented. All recommended items from the study were completed. The executive summary (report dated July 6, 2020) states: "overall, the Groton WPAF appears to be a well operated, clean, and well-maintained treatment plant. Any odor release was deemed more likely a limitation of existing infrastructure, rather than related to current operating procedures." Additionally, management asked the DEEP to review the Waste Water Treatment Facility, and it received a clean bill of health (report dated September 14, 2020). The facility is operating in accordance with all operating procedures and within all regulatory guidelines. In fact, the WWTF is way under most of the release criteria. A new digester mixing pump, excess gas waste burner, two return activated sludge pumps in the blower building, and hydrogen sulfite monitors in sewer holes have all been installed. The sludge tank was sealed and smoke testing was completed to ensure all leaks were detected.

Management has met with EB, and continues to meet with them, due to their new facilities online adding about 600,000 gallons more a day.

Groton Utilities has been very aggressive in its approach to address the odor complaints. In addition to Hazen's odor report, Management contracted with Wright-Pierce in September of 2021. They went through the entire facility and created a plan which is the plan management is working off of now (draft report dated June 2022). The odor control recommendations are the priority. The recommendation of changing the HVAC system to a granulated activated carbon system is being designed. . The hypochlorite system is being built by staff. These upgrades are costly, and millions of dollars are being invested into the plant.

Director Gaudet reminded the Commission of the Wright Pierce facility study, specifically, the appendix on odor control.

Commissioner Scully said he thought one recommendation was a taller stack with a stronger ventilation system. General Manager Biron noted that the engineer changed the recommendation to change the fan motors to a higher velocity without raising the stack. This has not been completed due to unavailable parts.

Director Gaudet said the engineering design for an odor control project will be out for bid in a few months, estimating a cost of about \$2.2M.

Chairperson Hedrick referred back to the executive summary from Hazen, and the review from DEEP. He said the plant is being operated at 100% of the capabilities of the physical plant. Capital plans address issues to improve the operability of the plant and should address some of the issues.

The employees are working very hard to get the most out of the plant, and have a commitment to improve the plant to get better operability.

General Manager Biron reminded the Commission the plant does not have any notices of violations or noncompliance.

Commissioner Zuliani stated that Mr. Spano has been reaching out to the commission for three years now, but there is no question the department hasn't gone above and beyond. It was suggested that a one page fact sheet for customers be created. Chairperson Hedrick will review internally.

Chairperson Hedrick stated Groton Utilities is diligently working to resolve odor complaints at the WWTF. A methodical approach has been taken by bringing in experts. He further stated that while driving by EB, there was a smell, and noted their tanks needed to be pumped. He provided the Commission with the flow process of EB's waste collection and holding until it gets to the plant.

General Manager Biron added that the ppm of Hydrogen Sulfide and other materials coming out of the plant stack is continuously monitored.

Commissioner Zuliani inquired if the plant is aware when EB is discharging to the plant.

General Manager Biron said there are issues over the weekend of EB not pumping, allowing waste collection to ferment and would like them to pump more often. Director Gaudet said there is an odor problem because of the monitors in the sewer system. Bioxide is added into the sewer pipes to neutralize the influent before it hits the plant. General Manager Biron stated that monitors were installed closer to EB to detect the increase of Hydrogen Sulfide but the Utility is unsure of their exact pump schedule.

Commissioner Scully asked if EB has holding tanks, dumping all at once. General Manager Biron confirmed. He said he would like to see them continuously dump versus hold. High Hydrogen Sulfide in the air has been detected closer to EB compared to the non-detectable levels of Hydrogen Sulfide coming from the plant.

- B. Tri Town Trails Association – Director Gaudet stated there is a team of water department employees set to review the results from the survey. There is a copy of the survey in the meeting package that went out to twenty four (24) Connecticut water utilities. As of September 9, 2022, fifteen (15) survey responses have been returned. Once the responses are tabulated and a report from the consultant is received, Chairperson Hedrick will review. Director Gaudet has asked the consultant to reach out to Tri Town Trails Association to ensure they address their concerns. Commissioner Godley mentioned a letter to the editor in the paper about a water company that opens part of their watershed that is not a direct flow into their system. Director Gaudet will have the consultant review the letter to the editor but explained how our reservoirs have direct flow into our system.

- C. Drought Status – General Manager Biron said New London County is still in a stage 3 drought; however, our reservoirs are improving. Currently at 87% capacity and were never in danger. There are weekly drought meetings until the Governor declares we are out of the drought. Chairperson Hedrick stated our reservoirs have several billion gallons of water available, over a years’ worth of water supply. They are aquifer fed and there is a natural slope which makes it easy to collect rain water. Commissioner Zuliani stated The Day paper addressed several towns, but did not inquire about Groton. Chairperson Hedrick reminded the Commission that the new plant was designed and built to meet water quality specifications that are not even established yet. There are very few complaints from customers throughout all our divisions. The men and women that work for Groton Utilities are forward thinking.

**10. NEW BUSINESS**

- A. Annual Report – Commissioner Scully had some questions regarding the Annual Report that was sent in the packet to the Commission. Management will review, and forward responses to the Commission prior to forwarding to the City Council.

**11. ACTION ITEMS**

- A. **GUC-WPCA 22-09-37** Consideration of and action to authorize Groton Utilities management to contribute up to One Hundred Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$150,000.00) to the Neighborhood Assistance Act (NAA) Program in return for matching tax credits, pending approval from the State of Connecticut, 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 22-09-37.

Manager Bouges said five (5) Non-profits in our service territory applied with the state, and received their approval. A committee met and discussed the applications, while taking previous years’ recipients into consideration. The committee agreed to fully support Bill Memorial Library. Director Gaudet reminded the Commission that the State confirms the final amount of the award, not to exceed \$150K.

Commissioner Mathanool asked which state agency heads this program  
Finance Director Yuhas said it is the Department of Revenue Services (DRS).

**Motion carried.**

- B. **GUC-WPCA 22-09-38** Consideration of and action to authorize Groton Utilities Management to issue a purchase order to Technological Solutions, LLC., 5 Ricky Lane, Preston, Connecticut, for an amount not to exceed Eighty Seven Thousand Eight Hundred Forty Dollars and No Cents (\$87,840.00) which includes a twenty percent (20%) contingency for SCADA Prism Support, to be paid from FY 23 Electric Operations and Maintenance Budget, 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 22-09-38.

PMP Rehrig stated that GU has an obligation from Convex and ISO-NE to provide real time tracking. Our current system is no longer supported and this purchase from Technological Solutions will update the software and operating instructions with ISO.

Commissioner Scully inquired why there is a contingency. PMP Rehrig noted the proposal acknowledged there will be an over run of hours due to the unpredictability. Commissioner Zuliani wondered if SCADA ran 24/7. PMP Rehrig said we will use SCADA only for real time information; however, field devices will remain manually operated. Commissioner Scully noted that a fair amount of money has been spent on SCADA. PMP Rehrig said this request is to update data point programming, and install an updated operating system. Chairperson Hedrick reminded the Commission that all three divisions have SCADA. Director Gaudet added that funds are budgeted annually for SCADA.

**Motion carried.**

- C. **GUC-WPCA 22-09-39** Consideration of and action to authorize Groton Utilities Management to issue a purchase order to Technological Solutions, LLC., 5 Ricky Lane, Preston, Connecticut, for an amount not to exceed Ninety One Thousand Two Hundred Dollars and No Cents (\$91,200.00) including a twenty percent (20%) contingency, for SCADA integration, 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 Godley** moved, **Commissioner Scully** seconded that the Groton Utilities Commission / Water Pollution Control Authority approve Action Item GUC-WPCA 22-09-39.

PMP Rehrig stated the new relays need to be programed with data points for communication with other stations not owned or operated by GU.

Commissioner Godley inquired about the \$200/hour rate for the programmer and if this is the standard. PMP Rehrig stated this individual has advanced knowledge of our system and is comparatively priced.

Commissioner Scully confirmed this is to implement relays from Buddington into the system.

**Motion carried.**

- D. **GUC-WPCA 22-09-40** Consideration of and action to authorize Groton Utilities Management to issue a purchase order to Sensus, 450 North Gallatin Avenue, Post Office Box 487, Uniontown, Pennsylvania, for an amount not to exceed Three Hundred Seven Thousand Eight Hundred Dollars and No Cents (\$307,800.00) which includes a twenty percent (20%) contingency, for the purchase of two thousand (2,000) electric meters, to be paid from the FY 2023 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 22-09-40.

General Manager Biron said electric meters need to be upgraded to the next generation meters. Due to supply we will not receive all 2,000 meters at once.

Commissioner Godley asked for confirmation that these replace meters in homes. Director Gaudet confirmed as first generation electric meters are reaching end of life.

General Manager Kruszewski said there is a need for 6,000 meters. 2,000 meters were ordered last year and the Utility has still not received all of that order. The last 2,000 meters will be budgeted next Fiscal Year.

**Motion carried.**

**12. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, at 12:11 p.m., **Commissioner Godley** moved, **Commissioner Scully** seconded a motion to adjourn.

**Motion carried.**

Attest:

Keith Hedrick  
Chairperson

*Approved October 19, 2022*



**From:** sam spano <syclonesam@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, September 20, 2022 12:45 PM  
**To:** Director's Office <directorsoffice@grotonutilities.com>  
**Subject:** UC Meeting 9/21/22

Sam Spano 300 Thames St

There have been seven odor days since the last UC meeting on 8/17/22. These were Mon 8/29 PM, Wed 8/31 PM, Fri 9/2 PM, Sun 9/4 PM, Fri 9/9 PM, Sat 9/17 PM, Sun 9/18 PM.

The Sunday 9/4 event was particularly bad. About 8:45 PM I exited my back door to go on an errand and there was a bad smell on my rear porch and in my driveway. It was like methane gas just hanging in the dead air since there was no wind at all at the time. I got into my car after less than a 30 second exposure. I at first did not realize how bad it actually was until my eyes started stinging and I started experiencing respiratory distress as I drove to the store. I then thought I had better call this in when I get back home.

.Upon my return a half hour later, it had started to rain and a slight wind had picked up. As a result the odor had completely dissipated. At that point since was late on a holiday weekend and the odor was now gone I did not place the call.

This type of odor just hanging in dead air has happened before. It is not the most common type of event but is always bad.

The Saturday 9/17 event listed above had to be called in twice to customer service.

Again, I suspect there have been more odor days. However, it depends on the wind direction or lack there of. Also, I was away for six days in late August.

There is a new factor that I believe is now influencing odor days. Starting last month in August, Groton Utilities installed two units on the roof of the plant. These units are called "Fogmaster(s)." Their purpose is to release mist of a substance called "OdorGone" contained in 55 drums at an interval of 15 minutes each hour in an attempt to mask the odors coming from the plant. This substance was compared to "Febreze" by the Gen. Mgr. of Operations at the August 17 UC meeting.

A point I would like to make here is that adding more chemicals to the air to mask odors produced by the WWTF which are caused by chemicals already in the air is not a very good thing. On Friday 9/2 at approx. 3:15 PM, I ventured out onto my front porch which I rarely do anymore because of the ongoing problems. However, the air smelled OK when I opened my front door. It was not until after being out there about 90 seconds my eyes started to sting, my throat tightened and I started getting short of breath, that I realized there was something bad in the air and immediately went back inside.

So here we are Well Past the 3 Year Anniversary of when the odor problems began on 7/08/19.

Again I Thank the Commissioners for Your Help in Advance