

**GROTON SEWER COMMISSION  
MINUTES OF MARCH 23, 2016 MEETING  
2:00 PM – TOWN HALL**

**MINUTES**

Commission Chair James Gmeiner called the meeting of the Sewer Commission to order at 2:00 PM. Also present were Vice Chair, Thomas Orcutt, Clerk, Thomas Hartnett and Business Manager, April Iannacone. Minutes were taken by Ruth Stevens, Water/Sewer Assistant.

**Pressure Transducer addition Discussion**

Referencing an e-mail from Carmen Defillippo (see attached), Mr. Orcutt explained the potential need for a pressure transducer to correct an issue at Partridge Berry Woods. According to his email, Mr. Defillippo said he is getting excessive call-ins due to the fact that it seems the float switches and pump controller are not communicating back and forth as they should be, causing high wet well conditions in that area. He recommended that a pressure transducer would correct the issue going forward. Mr. Gmeiner mentioned that he thought it should be looked into, especially since Carmen's recommendations usually work out. He then asked that Bob Rafferty be contacted to find out what would be involved along with what the pressure transducer would cost.

**Town Meeting Warrant Article - 122 Old Ayer Road Sewer Extension**

Mr. Orcutt reported on 2 feedback questions from the Selectmen's Meeting/Public Hearing that he attended on Monday night, March 21, 2016. He was asked to find out from the BOSC how much they are looking to transfer from Reserves, and secondly what the Reserve Capacity would be if the 122 Old Ayer Road Extension takes place with the need of 10K gpd Capacity. After discussion, Mr. Orcutt made a motion to transfer \$50K from the Enterprise Fund to the FY16 Operating Budget for unanticipated expenses and maintenance, Mr. Hartnett seconded and the vote carried unanimously. With regard to the amount of Capacity available, the BOSC determined that they would, indeed, have enough for the 10K gpd needed at 122 Old Ayer Road, and in addition, have 14K unallocated and 9K for Station Ave and emergency reserves.

**69 Champney Street – Capacity Discussion**

Mr. Orcutt gave an update to the BOSC regarding the capacity issue at 69 Champney Street. The owner, Mr. John Croteau, had originally asked for enough capacity for 5 Bedrooms before renovating said property. After some research, Mr. Orcutt discovered that the property is currently being advertised for 9 Bedrooms. Mr. Orcutt continued that Mr. Croteau never told the Sewer Department that he was adding 4 more bedrooms, nor did he ask or pay for the additional capacity. Mr. Gmeiner recommended sending him a letter telling him that we understand that the number of bedrooms has been increased from 5 bedrooms to 9 bedrooms and that he will need to purchase additional capacity before an occupancy permit can be granted.

### **Discussion of Visual Screening @ Nod Road Pump Station**

Mr. Orcutt told the BOSC that he was contacted by a local real estate agent on behalf of the owners of 96 Nod Road, who are trying to sell their home. The realtor told Mr. Orcutt that the owners are seeking have the Pump Station screened in order to make it more esthetically pleasing to potential homebuyers. He said the owners are willing to do plantings. Mr. Gmeiner noted that there could not be plantings too close to the Pump Station due deep roots. Mr. Orcutt said he was thinking that a green mesh type of screening could be the solution. Mr. Gmeiner said he likes that the Pump Station is visible from the road but understands their position. Mr. Orcutt suggested installing the green mesh screening by zip-tie attachments to the length of the fence but having it only running a foot deep on either side so as not to block the view when driving up or down the street, but only from head-on. Mr. Gmeiner agreed and suggested if the owner wants to do plantings, to do them along the road, not near the fence. Mr. Orcutt said he would check with Carmen/Pepperell as to cost associated with installing the mesh screening and go from there.

### **Public Hearing- Sewer Rates @ 2:30 PM**

The Sewer Commissioners Opened the Public Hearing; Mr. Hartnett read the Public Hearing Notice for the Record.

Present from the Public were:

Toni Brogan of 25A Blacksmith Row  
Debbie Eaton of 21B Blacksmith Row

Mr. Gmeiner asked Ms. Iannacone to give a brief update on the last few years' financials for Sewer. (See attached). She noted that FY15 represented the first time that budgeted amounts and the actual amounts received leveled out. She said that rates were lowered for FY 12, 13 and 14, but believes that lowering them any further would be detrimental at this point because rates are now just covering expenses without any excess. She recommended not relying on enterprise funds currently at \$568K for reducing rates any further due to upcoming mandates and changes with the Pepperell Plant. Mr. Gmeiner went on to read Mr. & Mrs. Brogan's emailed questions and concerns and began explaining/answering those questions. Upon further discussion with regard to what Mrs. Brogan and Mrs. Eaton believe to be extremely high water/sewer bills, as well as mitigation efforts that the Water Department has tried to work on with Mrs. Brogan, Mr. Hartnett summarized that there must be something *unusual* occurring that is causing a difference with those two units in the complex. Mr. Albro, of F.R. Mahoney, who was waiting in the audience for his appointment after the hearing, suggested that the problem might be due to high pressure coming in from the street. He asked if they had a pressure reducer valve and if anyone had checked to see what it was set at. He noted a higher water pressure setting could result in a higher volume of water being utilized, contributing to their higher rates. Mr. Orcutt suggested that the residents go back to the builder to check the pressure and adjust the valve to a lower setting. Mr. Gmeiner asked that they let the BOSC know the results of their findings. Mr. Orcutt made a motion to close the Sewer Rates Hearing at 3:15 PM, Mr. Hartnett seconded and the vote carried unanimously. Mr. Orcutt then

made a motion *not to increase or decrease Sewer rates* at this time. Mr. Hartnett seconded and the vote carried unanimously.

### **Discussion of Grinder Pumps**

Mr. Gmeiner told Mr. Albro that the BOSC had been under the impression of the “one-size-fits-all” theory with regard to cores and grinder pumps, but now realizes it is not the case. He then asked Mr. Albro how the scenario would play out if a Groton resident with a failed grinder pump needed to use F.R. Mahoney for remedy or replacement. Mr. Albro suggested that those residents with grinder pumps be given F.R. Mahoney’s phone number and be provided with options and information for the various services they offer to Groton in such a case. Mr. Hartnett asked how long the response wait would be. Mr. Albro answered that from 7:30 am to 4:00 pm, their “live operation” could respond fairly soon. He added that there is a technician on call for 24 hours, but if a failure happened during the night, it may not be until the next morning that they are able to get there. He also explained that each truck has loaner/spare cores that could be used while the homeowner’s core is being repaired. In addition, Mr. Albro noted that having F.R. Mahoney on-call would require no interface from Pepperell and is also more knowledgeable of what is required than a local plumber because they are a certified service and their goal is to keep the cost of ownership down. Mr. Orcutt asked Mr. Albro if the BOSC would need to sign a maintenance agreement. Mr. Albro responded saying “no”, that they have their own service policy. Mr. Orcutt questioned Mr. Albro on Service Rates/Policy for customers. Mr. Albro said that they can find it on F.R. Mahoney’s website. Mr. Albro said he will also provide stickers and refrigerator magnets for customers which provide instructions in case of a pump failure. Mr. Hartnett inquired about the life expectancy of a grinder pump and Mr. Albro said they can tell a lot from the pump’s serial number, such as age and date made. Mr. Hartnett thought it was a good idea to use F.R. Mahoney and Mr. Gmeiner agreed. Mr. Hartnett then questioned Mr. Albro as to how the customer would know if the grinder pump is not working. Mr. Albro responded that an indoor unit would have a 9V battery backup and would chirp if it lost power, a high level alarm if it failed, and also an intermittent alarm to indicate wear. Mr. Orcutt agreed with doing a sticker campaign as Mr. Albro had previously suggested and Mr. Albro said he would deliver stickers and refrigerator magnets to the office. Mr. Gmeiner recommended sending a letter to Sewer customers with grinder pumps alerting them to the services that F.R. Mahoney offers.

### **Other Business**

There will be a public hearing announcement in the Groton Herald with regard to the Town Meeting Warrant Article extending the Sewer District to include 122 Old Ayer which will be advertised for the April 1<sup>st</sup> Edition to be scheduled for Wednesday, April 6, 2016 @ 2:30 PM.

**Next Meeting** – The next meeting of the BOSC will be held on **Wednesday, April 6, 2016 @ 2:00 PM** with a **PUBLIC HEARING @ 2:30 PM**.

### **BILLS SIGNED**

One set of Bills were signed at this meeting for FY-16, Expense Warrants (EW-20).

**MINUTES of March 9, 2016** – Mr. Hartnett made a motion to approve the previous meeting’s minutes Mr. Orcutt seconded, and the vote carried unanimously.

**ADJOURN** – Mr. Hartnett made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 3:45 PM. Mr. Gmeiner seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Ruth Stevens,  
Water & Sewer Assistant