TOWN OF GROTON

173 Main Street
Groton, Massachusetts 01450-1237
Tel: (978) 448-1111
Fax: (978) 448-1115

Town Manager
Mark W. Haddad

Select Board

Peter S. Cunningham, *Chair*
John F. Reilly, *Vice Chair*
Alison S. Manugian, *Clerk*
Rebecca H. Pine, *Member*
Matthew F. Pisani, *Member*

SELECT BOARD MEETING
MONDAY, AUGUST 28, 2023
AGENDA
DUNSTABLE TOWN HALL
511 MAIN STREET
DUNSTABLE, MA 01827

5:00 P.M. **Call Meeting to Order**

5:01 P.M. **In Joint Session with the Dunstable Board of Selectmen – Discuss/Determine Solution to Address PFAS and Bring Potable Drinking Water to the Groton Dunstable Regional High School and Surrounding Properties in Dunstable**

6:00 P.M. **Take Appropriate Votes/Action to Implement Desired Solution**

ADJOURNMENT

Votes may be taken at any time during the meeting. **The listing of topics that the Chair reasonably anticipates will be discussed at the meeting is not intended as a guarantee of the topics that will be discussed. Not all topics listed may in fact be discussed, and other topics not listed may also be brought up for discussion to the extent permitted by law.**

Good afternoon, Members of the Groton Select Board and Dunstable Board of Selectmen:

In anticipation of Monday's joint meeting between the two Boards and with the hope of setting the parameters for the discussion to make the meeting more efficient, Groton Select Board Member Rebecca Pine prepared the attached document in an effort to make the meeting more productive. This document is being proposed as a guide and in no means is trying to persuade the outcome of the meeting.

Both Select Board Member Pine and I hope you find this document helpful. I look forward to meeting with all of you at Monday's joint meeting.

Please let me know if you have any additional questions or concerns with regards to this matter.

Best,

Mark

Mark W. Haddad
Town Manager
Town of Groton
173 Main Street
Groton, MA 01450
(978) 448-1111
FAX: (978) 448-1115
mhaddad@grotonma.gov

History

Because of the high level of complexity and technical details, certain decisions were made early on

- For the Town of Groton to oversee the decision-making process vs. the GD School District
- To hire Environmental Partners as consultants
- That building a treatment plant at the High School was not a feasible option based on annual maintenance cost and the fact that DEP wanted the School District out of the water business.
- That the towns' paid administrative and water staff would work out details and bring recommendations to the Select Boards.

An early option to bring water from Dunstable to the High School was ruled out by the Groton Select Board and Town Manager when it was learned that PFAS was found in the Dunstable water.

From that point on, two options were explored

- Bringing water from the Bemis and Jersey St wells in Pepperell to the High School
- Bringing water from the Groton Water Dept's Whitney Well to the High School

There is a significant price difference between the two options

- The Pepperell option is estimated to cost $8.4 million (Groton's Share would be $6,468,000 and Dunstable's would be $1,932,000)
- The Groton option is estimated to cost $12.8 million(Groton's Share would be $9,856,000 and Dunstable's would be $2,944,000)

Groton's Town Manager recommended that the Pepperell option be chosen. However, on July 31st, the Groton Select Board rejected the Pepperell option on a 3 to 2 vote, and instead chose the Groton option (5-0), citing improved fire protection, the ability to serve homes near the High School if PFAS contamination spreads there, and a preference for retaining local control.

The Dunstable Select Board voted in favor of the Pepperell option. (The Groton Town Manager and all members of the Groton SB did not know about this vote when they voted on July 31st.)

Recognizing that Groton would receive some side benefits from using the Groton option, while Dunstable would be forced to pay more without receiving those side benefits, the Groton SB voted unanimously, on Aug. 14, to direct the $1 million contribution from the Groton Water Dept (which had been offered to help reduce the cost of the project) to Dunstable, in the form of annual payments to keep Dunstable's debt payments at the level they would have been if the Pepperell option had been chosen. This was done based on the fact that some of the new revenue that the Groton Water Department would obtain from this project would come directly from Dunstable Rate Payers.

The situation now

Whichever plan is chosen, both towns will need a Town Meeting vote and a debt-exclusion override to pay for the project. These votes need to take place this fall, in order to meet the MA DEP deadline.

The goal of tonight's meeting is to see if the two Select Boards can reach agreement on how to proceed.

If the two Boards cannot agree

- It is likely that we will not meet the Jan. 2024 deadline set by MA DEP to submit a plan
- Neither Board will have the services of their current Town Counsel Mirick O'Connell for legal advice about the PFAS problem, due to the conflict of interest
- The eventual PFAS solution will be delayed
- Temporary treatment (bottled water and trucked water for irrigation) will need to continue and be paid for longer at an annual cost of approximately $155,000

Pros and Cons of each option (invite additions to this list at the meeting)

Pepperell Pros

- Estimated to be less expensive
- No Inter-basin Transfer permit required
- Shorter distance of new pipe, possibly less risk of unknown sub-surface problems
- Pepperell and Dunstable already work together on providing public drinking water

Pepperell Cons

- PFAS treatment plant still needs to be built; risk of unknown problems arising
- Possible need for additional treatment to reduce/eliminate iron
- Unknowns about sources of PFAS, possible risk of PFAS coming into currently PFAS-free Bemis Well
- Three Towns will be involved in decision-making during construction and for any problems over the next 30 years
- Revenue for water used at High School and by Dunstable residents with contaminated wells goes to a third town, rather than one of the two members of the GDRSD
- Pepperell water rates have historically been higher than Groton's, so GDRHS and Dunstable homeowners will probably pay more for water from Pepperell than for water from Groton

Groton Pros

- Only two towns are involved in decision-making, if problems arise in the future
- Revenue for the water used at High School and by Dunstable residents with contaminated wells goes to one of the members of the GDRSD and is shared with the other member of GDRSD
- Increased/improved fire protection capacity for the High School and the Dunstable residents with contaminated wells, as well as homes along Chicopee Row
- More residents living near the High School will have access to clean water if PFAS is found in their wells
- Treatment for manganese in Groton water is already in place and the new plant can be upgraded to treat for PFAS. There is an Article on the Fall Town Meeting Warrant to begin designing for this upgrade.
- Groton water is currently showing extremely low levels of PFAS and may not need PFAS treatment

- Groton water rates have historically been lower than Pepperell's, so the high school and Dunstable residents near the High School will probably pay less for water from Groton than from Pepperell

Groton Cons

- Initial cost is more expensive for taxpayers
- Longer distance of pipe to be laid; possibly increased risk of unknown sub-surface problems
- Inter-basin transfer permit is required

Long Term Aspects

- Federal standards for PFAS anticipated to mandate a very low, i.e. very safe, level of PFAS in all drinking water sources.
    - This may lead to a need for both towns to improve and/or expand their public water infrastructure to provide public water to more homes. If this happens, the extra cost of the Groton solution could end up being worthwhile for Groton.
- If both towns agree to proceed with the Groton Option, terms could be written into the agreement to allow Dunstable to continue to receive some revenue from the Groton Water Dept after the 30-year bond is paid off.

In Retrospect

More communication between the two Select Boards throughout the process might have helped to avoid the current situation of each SB having voted in isolation, seemingly without considering the other town's preferences.

Since that did not happen, it will be important for all of us to listen, and try to understand the perspective of the members of the 'other' Select Board, during our discussion together.

<u>Parameters/Discussion Points of the Meeting</u>

<u>As a starting point, can we all agree that</u>

- The time to completion for both options is very similar.
- The health issues for the high school and the nearby residents with contaminated wells will be successfully resolved with either option.

If there is agreement, then time to completion, and public health issues are not factors that can help determine the best choice.

Other points

a. Total Cost of both options to the communities
b. Future Treatment of PFAS in Pepperell and Groton – Timeline for completion
c. Legal Representation to Negotiate an IMA, either between Groton and Dunstable, or Pepperell, Groton and Dunstable
d. Impact of not reaching an agreement – Timeline for Groton Dunstable Regional School District to takeover and manage the project.

Mark,
I appreciate the time and effort you and Rebecca put into this document. Overall it is an accurate representation of the situation. I do have a few comments to ensure accuracy of this on-going conversation.

- **Fire suppression**. Pepperell maintains that its distribution line to the GDRHS area could support fire suppression. We feel the evaluation of this issue was using out of date or inaccurate formula. The Groton distribution takes a different route and would support fire suppression to different neighborhoods so this is not truly an apples to apples comparison for the two solutions. GDRHS has fire suppression already.
- **Pepperell Cons/Groton Pros** – these mention that the Pepperell BEMIS well *could* have PFAS in the future and that Groton's *is* currently low and may not need treatment. This is true of all our wells. Both towns will be required to provide treatment to meet/exceed the future federal standard regardless of current levels. Listing this as a 'Con' for Pepperell and a 'Pro' for Groton is not a fair comparison.
- **Current and future costs.** Rates are based on short term operations and long term planning. As both Groton and Pepperell are planning significant changes to their systems including the number of customers, future rates need to be estimated. Basing a decision on current rates is simple but distorts known and unknown factors for future rates.
- **Pepperell's Water Department** is an Enterprise Fund and is not generating revenue beyond costs and retained earnings for stabilization. Adding Groton and Dunstable services will add costs that the rates are intended to offset. It isn't a profit center for Pepperell.
- Pepperell is on the final list for a $1M **federal earmark** that would be dedicated to the regional solution costs. A determination is expected in the fall of 2023.

Andrew

Andrew MacLean
Town Administrator
Pepperell
978 650-1621

Good Morning:

In an effort to provide as much information as possible to help with Monday's discussion, we have developed another summary to help lead the discussion. Again, these are just facts and not intended to persuade the outcome. I hope you all find the attached document helpful.

I look forward to seeing everyone on Monday.

Mark

General Info:

- GDRHS PFAS6 at 470 ppt
- MADEP PFAS6 limit 20 ppt
- EPA likely to shift to 4 ppt per PFAS chemical
- Both Pepperell's and Groton's PFAS solutions are both regional approaches
- Pepperell's SRF application is for treatment and does not include infrastructure and expansion to the GDRHS (not too sure if you could modify an application after the deadline for submissions). In addition, water from Dunstable to Pepperell is not in Pepperell's application and does not qualify for PFAS mitigation funding.
- Pepperell is not entirely an Environmental Justice Community only a portion of it but there may be some funding credits to Pepperell
- All three communities want to sell more water and pick-up more customers .
- An IMA with Pepperell is an unknown as are any financial impacts of said IMA
- An IMA with Dunstable is a known equation – 77/23 +/- split (roughly)
- Contingencies for horizontal construction are a lot less than vertical construction
- No DEP Consent Order in Place due to collaborative efforts – delays and disagreements could force DEP to place a Consent Order

Considerations:

1. IMA for shared use of Mirik O'Connell – Brian Falk
    a. Groton Select Board approves IMA
    b. Dunstable Select Board approves IMA
    c. GDRSD School Committee approves IMA
2. Groton and Dunstable each Retains separate Counsel
3. Project reverts to GDRSD to manage
    a. Groton Town Meeting Approval of Project Approach & Cost
        i. Groton Town Meeting Approval of Debt Exclusion (Fall '23)
        ii. Groton Ballot Approval of Debt Exclusion (11/7/23)
    b. Dunstable Town Meeting Approval of Project Approach & Cost
        i. Dunstable Town Meeting Approval of Debt Exclusion (TBD)
        ii. Dunstable Ballot Approval of Debt Exclusion

The only significant difference in these two options is the cost –

	Groton Solution Overall - $12.8M	Pepperell Solution Overall - $9M
Groton Annual Cost	$428,564 - $82.42 per average home	$217,722 - $57.06 per average home
Dunstable Annual Cost*	$98,140	$65,034

*Groton Select Board voted to utilize $1 million contribution from Groton Water Commission to offset increased cost to Dunstable on Groton Solution. No added impact to Dunstable on either option.

Groton Whitney Well System Expansion

Groton PFAS currently at 2.04ppt

Design & Permitting:

Interbasin Permitting needed - likely two years – 1 year if able to forfeit Lost Lake reserved capacity

Conservation Commission approvals needed – Groton, Dunstable

Drone Survey done

Construction:

3.5 miles of main construction (G=2.9 m +/- , D=0.6 m +/-.)

Construction time - 12 months for water + 2 for completion (from start of project)

Earliest Water feed to HS – October 2024

Earliest Construction Completion – September 2025

Cost:

$12,801,193 construction cost (inc. $500-$600k chlorine booster station)

- Dunstable Impact - $2,944,211or $98,140 annually
- Groton Impact - $9,856,982 or $328,564 annually - $82.42 annually per average home
- SRF application filed August 11, 2023

District Costs

- Annual GDRSD Water Cost - $55k
- Annual GDRSD rate payer cost for PFAS treatment of Whitney Well - $ TBD
- Annual GDRSD Costs pending final solution - $160k – Until Completion:
  - Water testing for residents - $30,000 - $35,000 per year
  - Water delivery for residents - $18,000 - $25,000 per year
  - Temporary irrigation $100k annually

Jersey Street & Bemis Wells to GDRHS & area – Pepperell Solution

Pepperell PFAS in Jersey Well 0 – 16.5 ppt (no per chemical data available)

Design & Permitting:

No Interbasin Permitting needed

Conservation Commission approvals needed – Groton, Dunstable, Pepperell

Drone Survey – 8 weeks

Construction:

3.0 miles of main construction (G=1.40 m+/-, D=1.09m +/- and P= 0.67m +/-)

Construction time - 9 months for water + 3 for completion (from start of project)

Earliest Water feed to HS – May 2025 (Not using Emergency Access Road, but using Kemp Street and Groton Road to Chicopee Row and then into the High School through the main access road, which brings the water last to the High School, but maintains a chlorine residual, that's why it was chosen)

Earliest Construction Completion –July 2025

PFAS Systemic Treatment – 2-3 years – Fall 2025 or Fall 2026

Cost:

$8,482,699 construction cost

- Additional Chlorine Booster Station Cost - $500 - $600k
- Dunstable Impact - $1,951,021 or $65,034 annually
- Groton Impact - $6,531,678 or $217,722 annually - $57.06 annually per average home
- SRF application unclear – amend current? Next year? Emergency?

District Costs

- Annual GDRSD Water Cost - $64k
- Annual GDRSD rate payer cost for PFAS treatment of Jersey Well - $10k annually
- Annual GDRSD Costs pending final solution - $160k – Until Completion:
  - Water testing for residents - $30,000 - $35,000 per year
  - Water delivery for residents - $18,000 - $25,000 per year
  - Temporary irrigation $100k annually