# SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES MONDAY, APRIL 3, 2023 AT 3:00 PM

**173 MAIN STREET**

APPROVED

**SB Members Present:** Rebecca H. Pine, Vice Chair; Matthew F. Pisani, Clerk; Peter Cunningham

**SB members Remotely Participating:** John Reilly, Chair; Alison S. Manugian

**Also Present:** Mark Haddad, Town Manager; Kara Cruikshank, Executive Assistant to the Town Manager; Laura Chesson, GDRSD Superintendent; Robert Rafferty, PE, Environmental Partners; Tyler Schmidt, PE, Environmental Partners; Paul Brinkman, Business Manager- Pepperell Department of Public Works; Michelle Collette, Groton Board of Health

Board of Water Commissioners: Greg Fishbone; James Gmeiner; John McCaffrey; Tom Orcutt, Groton Water Superintendent

Ms. Pine called the meeting to order at 3:00 PM and reviewed the agenda. Ms. Pine said there is one item on the agenda which was to discuss PFAS Solutions for the Groton Dunstable Regional High School.

The Board of Water Commissioners called the meeting to order.

Mr. Haddad said Representatives from the Town of Groton, Groton Dunstable Regional School District, Town of Pepperell and our Engineers from Environment Partners were all in attendance. The meeting is to discuss solutions to bring clean potable drinking water to the Groton Dunstable Regional School District High School to resolve the PFAS contaminated well at the High School. Mr. Haddad said the Department of Environmental Protection is looking for the District to provide a permanent solution to bring clean potable drinking water to the High School and properties in Dunstable that have been impacted by PFAS. Mr. Haddad said for the last several months he has worked diligently with Dr. Laura Chesson, Mr. Tom Orcutt, Groton Water Superintendent; Environmental Partners, and Representatives from the Town of Dunstable and the Town of Pepperell to look for various ways to address this issue.

Mr. Haddad said that based on a thorough review of all available options, Representatives have narrowed the potential solutions down to two. Option #1 would be to bring potable drinking water from the Town of Groton Water Department to the High School and the properties in Dunstable. Option #2 would be to bring potable drinking water from the Town of Dunstable Water Department (with an interconnection with the Town of Pepperell) to the High School and the properties in Dunstable. Mr. Haddad thought everyone should be aware that the least expensive solution and easiest solution is to make a direct interconnection to the Pepperell water system and supply water to the High School and surrounding properties. This Option was eliminated early on by the Board of Water Commissioners and Select Board since the Pepperell drinking water sources that would supply the potable drinking water have levels of PFAS that exceed current DEP standards. Mr. Haddad said having PFAS in the water to solve a PFAS problem makes no sense and was immediately discounted. The Groton-Dunstable Regional School District has been testing homes in the area. Several homes in the Kemp Street area of Dunstable have been affected by this and Mr. Haddad said we need to resolve those issues as well. Ms. Pine said she wanted to clarify to the public that the state is requiring the School District to remediate the PFAS situation at both the Groton Dunstable Regional High School and impacted homes that surround the High school. Dr. Laura Chesson said they had to provide the DEP with their short-term solution today. The School District has to provide bottled water to those homes affected and they had to verify they are on the State Safe List.

Mr. Tyler Schmidt, from Environmental Partners, presented a PowerPoint to give background information about the PFAS problem and walked everyone through the two options. Mr. Schmidt said in 2022 the GDRHD sampled for PFAS and the results came in well above the Maximum Containment Level enforced by MassDEP. The cause of the contamination was a 2003 fire on the athletic field track that was extinguished with Aqueous Film Forming Foam, a known PFAS contamination contributor. He also said MassDEP has sampled the surrounding private wells along Groton Street and Kemp Street. Several have high levels of PFAS. MassDEP notified the GDRSD that they are responsible for the PFAS contamination and must provide a solution to all impacted residents.

Option #1 would be a 12-inch Groton water main extension up Chicopee Row to the GDRSD High School and an 8-inch loop along the school’s emergency access road to the Kemp Street/Groton Street PFAS impacted properties. The estimated cost of this solution is approximately $16,780,000. Some advantages and disadvantages:

* Schedule and Permitting timeline would be 1.5-3 years total
* Potential for 136 new water system customers
* More expensive option for Groton

Option #2 would be a Pepperell-Dunstable 12-inch water system interconnection from Route 113 in Dunstable down Groton Street and North Street to Jersey Street. Two 8-inch branches will serve the GDRSD High School and the Kemp Street/Groton Street PFAS-impacted properties. Option # 2 was reviewed and a cost estimate was provided by the Pepperell DPW. Pepperell is currently reviewing cost options to upgrade their Treatment Plant to deal with PFAS in Pepperell’s system. This is a very expensive proposition. Pepperell is participating in this Option because installing an interconnection with Dunstable will allow them to avoid some upgrades to their Treatment Plant since Dunstable’s water supply has consistently tested as “non-detect” with regard to PFAS. Since Pepperell would benefit from tying into the Dunstable System, regardless of assisting with the PFAS issue at the High School, they may be willing to offset a significant portion of the cost to provide potable drinking water at the Groton Dunstable Regional High School, as well as, the surrounding impacted properties in Dunstable. This participation by Pepperell would reduce the total estimated cost to Groton and Dunstable by $10,400,000 to approximately $7,230,000. The project being PFAS related would be eligible for a Drinking Water State Revolving Fund. This would be a zero-percent interest program. Some advantages and disadvantages:

* Schedule and Permitting timeline would be 2-4 years total
* Less capital cost for Groton
* May provide irrigation water (with additional cost) sooner
* No new water customers for the Groton Water System

Mr. Haddad said If we go with the Groton Option, the Town of Groton would put an Article on the Warrant to seek funding for that article for approximately 17 million dollars. If we decide to go with the Pepperell Option, Groton would not need an Article on the Warrant at this Town Meeting. Mr. Haddad said we would negotiate an inter- municipal agreement with Pepperell and Dunstable. It would be brought back to the Select Board for approval and we would start paying debt service to Pepperell in approximately two years.

Due to technical issues with the Zoom feed, Ms. Manugian left the meeting after Mr. Schmidt’s presentation.

Questions/Comments:

Mr. Pisani said during the presentation it sounded like there could still be a potential problem with Pepperell joining. Mr. Paul Brinkman said everyone he has approached about this, says this makes sense. Ms. Pine asked Mr. Brinkman if Pepperell would need a Town Meeting Vote to approve this. Mr. Brinkman said they would need Pepperell Town Meeting, on May 1st, to appropriate the funds. Pepperell’s Town Meeting would cover the funds for this Option. Mr. Haddad stated that Dunstable’s preference is to work with Pepperell because it is a cheaper solution. It would also solve the irrigation problem for the School District faster.

Mr. Pisani said 136 homes on Chicopee Row could potentially hookup up to water. Mr. Pisani asked what would we charge to a resident for a potential hook-up fee. Mr. Orcutt said it is 136 homes from Hollis Street to the High School, plus streets off Chicopee Row. Mr. Orcutt said that the collection fees would be prorated. They are all on well water. Mr. Haddad said on an interim basis, we can run a pipe from Pepperell to the high school for irrigation only and treat that water on a short-term basis to eliminate PFAS. If we went with the Groton Solution, this is not an option and the high school would have to wait 2 years before they can get irrigation.

Ms. Pine asked what action are we looking at today. Mr. Haddad said he would like them to decide if we are going with the Groton Solution or the Pepperell Solution and then set a meeting up immediately with DEP. Mr. Haddad said he is recommending the Pepperell/Dunstable/Groton Solution based mainly on the cost. The taxpayers of Groton are being spread thin with the Florence Roche debt and the potential for an operational override for FY 24. There are a few important things if we went with the Dunstable/Pepperell Solution. If we contact DEP right away there may be a way to speed up the permitting process. Also, Pepperell is an Environmental Justice Neighborhood. They have access to better grants and loan forgiveness than the Town of Groton on its own.

Mr. Cunningham asked Mr. Schmidt if he has a meeting scheduled with DEP. Mr. Schmidt said not as of yet, but DEP has attended several other meetings and they are familiar with this issue. Mr. Schmidt can try to schedule a meeting with DEP within the next several weeks.

Michelle Collette, Groton Board of Health, said she respects the financial considerations. She believes having town water go up Chicopee Row to the school is a better long-term solution so she is in favor of the Groton Solution. Mr. Pisani agreed with Ms. Collette and said it would give us the option of tying water into those homes and giving fire protection for the biggest unprotected area in town.

Mr. Orcutt recommended keeping the Article on the Warrant. If Pepperell runs into problems with their Town Meeting Article, we would have to wait until Fall Town Meeting to get our Article back before Town Meeting. Mr. Cunningham asked if we will have communication with DEP before Town Meeting. Mr. Haddad said he would like to set a meeting up as soon as possible.

Mr. John Reilly said he was leaning towards the Pepperell, Dunstable Solution.

Ms. Pine entertained a motion to endorse proceeding with the Dunstable/ Pepperell solution to treating the PFAS at the High School.

Mr. Cunningham moved to endorse proceeding with the Dunstable/Pepperell/Groton Solution. Ms. Pine seconded the motion. Roll Call: Cunningham-aye; Pine-aye; Pisani- nay; Reilly- aye (Manugian was not present for the vote).

Mr. Haddad wanted to thank Environmental Partners for putting the presentation together so quickly.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:02 pm

Respectively submitted by Kara Cruikshank, Executive Assistant to the Town Manager