

GROVELAND WATER & SEWER BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
September 23rd, 2024

A Regular Meeting of the Groveland Water & Sewer Board was held on Monday, September 23rd, 2024 at 5:15 p.m. The meeting was held in the Main Meeting Room at the Groveland Town Hall, 183 Main Street, Groveland.

Board Members Present

Sarah Sheehan-McGrath, Chairperson
Bill Dunn

Staff Members Present

Colin Stokes, W/S Superintendent
Kimberly Bourque, W/S Office Manager
Meray Eady, W/S Administrative Assistant
Rebecca Oldham, Town Administrator
Arthur Markos, Programs and Project Manager

Guests

Ryan Allgrove, Project Manager Environmental Partners

OPENING

Commissioner Dunn made a motion to open the meeting at 5:17 p.m. Seconded by Chairperson Sheehan-McGrath. All in favor.

New Employees

Arthur Markos

Rebecca Oldham introduces Arthur Markos, the new Programs and Project Manager for Groveland who started a little less than a month ago. Markos explains that it is a different role, but that he is doing a lot of the same things that Renny Carroll was doing as the Highway Department Supervisor. He explains that he is overseeing a lot of the operations of things such as street sweeping, catch basin cleaning, line painting, and different things along those lines that have not been done in a while. Markos wants to get the paving program back up and running to where we are paving roads consistently and explains that he gave a presentation to the Select Board as well. He explains he used to work for the town of Tewksbury as a Project Manager and over saw the paving program, storm water program, and some sewerage work. Before that, he worked for the town of Reading, as an engineer, as well. Markos explains that he really would like to get a new contract for paving next spring, but that they currently have a contract and, with that, really would like to get some projects in. Starting with Murray Ave. up to Harvard with the trench that was left there. He explains that they are trying to put together a schedule with the current paving contractors to complete this project, as well as the intersection of Salem Street and School Street before the winter season. Markos states he will be confirming with water/sewer and others about the utilities in those areas before starting any work. He states that there has been some push back from our current contractor. Commissioner Dunn inquires about money appropriated for Murray Ave. and Superintendent Stokes explains that the contractor has already received the monies. Markos explains that the whole road needs to be Dig Safed, milled, take out 1.5 inches, adjust anything that needs adjusting, look at any drainage issues, then put back another 1.5 inches. He states that he does not even like to talk about it until he has confirmation of dates, that is when he will start to notify everybody and have some meetings about it, but at this point we have not gotten there yet. Commissioner Dunn explains that what he sees in Groveland, is that contractors do a job and then they do not want the responsibility to “put it back.” Dunn thinks that something needs to be in writing before they start any jobs, that they are responsible to putting the road “back.” Markos explains that in his first week here, he spoke with Stokes about a Trench Specification Policy and that there is now one in place and can be found on the Highway Department website under specifications. He explains that a temporary trench must be put it in, they must oversee it for a year, then they must come back, cut it

back, and pave it correctly. He also states that if a utility company or contractor comes in and digs up a brand-new road, they must pave it curb to curb, the entire width. Markos is hoping these projects can get done, but, unfortunately, he does not have much faith in them because there are two separate contractors for milling and paving, so it is hard to get them both on the same page and to agree. He also states that, in his experience, the contractors have a specific timeline of when the paving needs to be completed by. Markos also informs Superintendent Stokes that before he does any projects, he will meet with him about anything water or sewer related that could be done at the same time. He explains that next year there will be one contract with one person/company, here is the money, here are the roads, complete it, and he will be out there overseeing each project with the contractor.

Chairperson Sheehan-McGrath states that with the newly implemented Capital Fee, we can start to make some improvements to lines and pipes, that it is important for Markos and Stokes to collaborate on projects. Stokes explains that in the past few years, we have come a long way of working more cohesively. Markos explains that when projects are decided on, he will sit with Stokes to collaborate about plans, and vice versa. This way trench monies and paving monies can be combined and it allows money to be stretched as far as possible. He plans on a 5 year out Paving Program.

Meray Eady

Superintendent Stokes introduces Meray to the Water & Sewer Commissioners as the new Administrative Assistant in the office.

National Grid Gas Pit Update

Rebecca Oldham states that she has invited Chairperson Sheehan-McGrath and Superintendent Stokes to the next Select Board meeting to discuss the National Grid proposal over at the pump station on Main Street. She explains that they are willing to add in some parking spaces for the Rail Trail, which she is excited about because as of right now, they are parking in the roadway which is causing issues. Because of this, she fully supports this project, but to do so, the Select Board will need to approve them adding the additional parking spaces. The Select Board will want to know if the Water & Sewer Department has any issues with these additional parking spaces. Superintendent Stokes states that this has been discussed with the Water & Sewer Board. He states that National Grid is looking to place a pressure relief valve on our property to protect their infrastructure and residents. In turn, they have agreed to put in parking spaces, that will mostly benefit the Rail Trail. Commissioner Dunn inquires about the number of spots and if it will be gravel or pavement. Stokes shows a slide on the screen with a mapped-out area of the project. Ryan Allgrove asks if this is in zone 1 and it is discussed that they do not believe it is, but Stokes will double check. Stokes explains that National Grid will also have to go in front of Conservation because there are wetlands. Chairperson Sheehan-McGrath asks Oldham if she wants them both to go to the meeting or just put in writing that they are “good with it.” Stokes informs them that he will be attending the meeting. Oldham states her worry about access issues to our own buildings and Commissioner Dunn adds in that the parking issues would be solved and we do not have to pay for it. Dunn also inquires about a timeline and Stokes explains that they have not indicated a construction timeline, but they have filed with Conservation, so that leads Stokes to believe that they are closer than not. Allgrove states that he would have them put in a gate beyond the parking spots so that you do not have people turning around there. Stokes explains that he would rather have people parking in dedicated spaces rather than in the break down lane of the roadway. Oldham also adds that there will be more parking added at the Shannahan Field as well and if enforcement is needed, we can get the police involved.

Environmental Partners Project Updates/Timeline Discussion

Ryan Allgrove states that he is here to discuss when we need to start making decisions on either building a Water Treatment Plant or purchasing water/tying into Haverhill. Superintendent Stokes states that he has both interconnection agreements, Allgrove’s aspect, and Haverhill’s. Allgrove explains that with the new PFAS regulations, Groveland will exceed them, as the new regulations will be enforced starting in April 2029. He states that the State has not said how they will implement the EPA’s maximum contaminant levels, but that they will be as stringent, possibly more stringent, as the Federal regulations. It is within five years of when the EPA implemented it, which was April 2024. If the levels are not within the guidelines of 4 parts per trillion for PFAS

by April 2029, the town would be considered “Noncompliant”. Allgrove explains that April of 2029 is the target and to get there, there are two choices. Either treating Well 1 and Well 3, but would plan on treating all three wells, or interconnect with Haverhill and utilize their treatment plant. Allgrove explains that there will be a study done to determine what it would cost to interconnect to Haverhill, what happens on their side about what we would need to replace infrastructure wise on Haverhill and Groveland’s side. He states that we would inquire about rates, possibly using assumptions if needed. Chairperson Sheehan-McGrath states that we were under the impression that there would be no rates given until we got closer and more serious about going that route. Allgrove also states that Haverhill must make sure they have the capacity to sell us the amount of water that is needed to supply the entire town of Groveland. Allgrove states that a decision needs to be made by early next year, by the next budgeting cycle because if we go the treatment plant route, April 2029 becomes very soon. He points out the schedule page handouts. Chairperson Sheehan-McGrath inquires if the Town Administrator is planning on having a “Special Meeting,” in which Stokes states that she is not, so the 2025 schedule is basically out. Commissioner Dunn asks if there was any more conversation with Bob from Haverhill and Superintendent Stokes states that he has talked to him and essentially it was all he could do to get the Engineering Agreements from him. We do have the agreements now and Stokes states that it is “what we thought” price wise to get their engineers to work with our engineers. Stokes explains that he is aware of our timeline crunch they are not comfortable discussing numbers with us until they know if it is viable and that the mayor must come up with the numbers. Stokes explains using their current rates of \$7.71 per 100 cu.ft., no matter how much you use, that number plus a couple million dollars for the mains. Allgrove states that the study will come up with improvements that need to be done on both sides, a meter station with treatment at the town line, Capital Costs, and other such things that need to be figured out during the study. Commissioner Dunn inquires about a hypothetical number and Allgrove states it could be in the range of 5-10 million in construction to make it happen. Chairperson Sheehan-McGrath inquires about how often we sign our sewer agreement with Haverhill and Stokes states it is every twenty years. Dunn explains he hates to spend the money on the study, if they are just going to say no. Stokes states that he does not believe that they are going to say no, but the “dangerous” part is going through it all and then them hitting us with a number that is totally unattainable. Sheehan-McGrath states that unfortunately, our rush is not their rush and that they do not “need” us and that we need them more than they need us. Stokes states that we would not enter an agreement with them without the numbers first. Dunn also inquires about the cost to run the plant each year, and Stokes and Allgrove state that in the 2021 study, it was stated that it would be an additional; \$150,00-\$200,000 per year. Stokes states that it would cost at minimum a million dollars per year just to buy their water, without capital costs. Allgrove states that there will be an impact to the rate bearers no matter which route we go. Sheehan-McGrath states that it is two-fold, it is not only what is best financially, but we also do not want to inherit any problems Haverhill is having with their water, while not having any control over it. Allgrove informs the board that a very similar plant was put in in Sharon, MA with all similar specs as Groveland, and the bid just came in at 21 million dollars. Adding in the mains from wells, engineering, other costs, it puts it at about 40 million. He states that the town will want to use SRF, as they have the best interest rates and there is a potential for loan forgiveness for some of it and that the town should keep pursuing that avenue. Chairperson Sheehan-McGrath asks Allgrove that because this is a federal mandate, does he foresee there being any other help from the government and he states that he has not seen anything yet.

Chairperson Sheehan-McGrath inquires about how much water West Newbury uses and Stokes explains that they use approximately 250,000 gallons per day and that if they could buy water from us, they would. Sheehan-McGrath states that maybe their usage might increase if the rates decreased. Commissioner Dunn asks if we have enough water in our wells to supply them with water and Stokes states that if we were cleaning our water, we would have enough. Right now, we have our wells turned down because the harder we run them, the more “stuff” we pull out of the ground. Allgrove informs the board that the wells output is basically cut in half because you have to blend it, so you would be able to use the wells at full capacity with a treatment plant. Dunn asks about what it would take to connect Groveland to West Newbury and Stokes states that we are already hard piped to them and any work that would need to be done, would be on them. Stokes explains that either route we take, West Newbury wants to have a conversation with us about buying water. Dunn also inquires about how much it could offset costs. Chairperson Sheehan-McGrath states that it is a good idea to add it to the Town Meeting next year to make sure we would have the monies appropriated for it if something like this were to happen, as she likes to be ahead of the game.

Allgrove informs the board that the Pilot Study has started and that himself and Stokes are hoping that the town will be able to use grant money for this, as it has already been submitted. He states that the grant will be granted retroactively. The Pilot Study Proposal draft was sent to Stokes and they are hoping to get it submitted to the DEP by the end of this week, or early next week. Allgrove is hoping to get the field work done over the winter while the flows are low and for the Pilot Study report to be approved by the DEP by the time of Town Meeting in the spring. That is when a decision will have to be made of which route we go. No matter what, capital money will need to be voted on for the design of either the interconnection or the water treatment plant. Chairperson Sheehan-McGrath states that we need to have a date that a vote is needed by to get it on the warrant for the Select Board, even if the amount is blank until we come up with that number. We will need to have something on there basically as a placeholder. Allgrove states as it gets closer, we will have to make reasonable assumptions about numbers in order to make an educated decision, since there are a lot of variables out of our control. Sheehan-McGrath just wants to make sure the people of Groveland know that the board has made the best decision possible for them and have completely vetted all options to the best of our ability. Stokes states now that we have the agreements, we can get the ball rolling and start talking to their engineers as well.

Commissioner Dunn asks about off setting costs by selling water to West Newbury and Allgrove responds, hypothetically, depending on their usage, it could offset our costs by possibly a quarter to a third. It is definitely an avenue to look into. Dunn also inquires about having to have either avenue completed by April 2029 and Allgrove believes that as long as, for example, the plant is being constructed and “they” see that the work is being done, with other means in place, the town would not be fined. But, if April 2029 rolls around and absolutely nothing has been done, either way, that is when the town would be fined. Allgrove also informs the board that public engagement will have to start in 2027. Chairperson Sheehan-McGrath states that the public will be informed by 2025, since they will have to vote at The Annual Town Meeting in the spring to appropriate money for phase one.

LOWER KING STREET SEWER EXTENSION

Superintendent Stokes informs the board that the Dehullu’s came in to inquire about a short sewer extension on King Street for one of their clients going from Homestead Lane to Outlook Drive. Originally, they had presented it as a forced main, which Stokes states is not good for that situation and they were told they had to come back with a gravity design, which could benefit others in the future. That design was presented and the board was able to see a slide that Stokes presented. He states that it will be 276 feet, they are running it at proper depth, it will be stubbed out at each house along the way, and a stub at the end going out to Outlook Drive to be able to continue down King Street in the future, if that ever happens. Stokes explains that it is very straight forward and small and they are doing it how it should be done. It benefits us, because at a minimum we can gain four customers. Commissioner Dunn inquires about the betterment, whether they pay us, or him. Stokes explains that the board has to decide how this works, but typically the person adding the extension will pay for it. Then for the next five or ten years, if those houses along the way connect, they have to pay the person who extended it. They make their own agreement and it has nothing to do with us. After the agreed upon timeframe, the house that connected will have to pay us and the original person who paid for the project can no longer recoup any money for the cost of the project. Chairperson Sheehan-McGrath asks about what has been done in the past, five or ten years, and Stokes states that he has seen both. Commissioner Dunn inquires about having to wait to tie into that sewer pipe and Stokes explains that we can tie in whenever we want.

Chairperson Sheehan-McGrath makes a motion to change the bylaw of betterments to a 5-year standard of collecting payments from others tying in and the Water & Sewer Department can tie in at any time at 6:10 p.m. Seconded by Commissioner Dunn. All in favor.

CENTER STREET SIDEWALK JOB/REPLACE PIPE UNDER CULVERT

Superintendent Stokes explains that there is a culvert where the water main goes underneath the sidewalk on Center Street. He states that we have had problems in the past with this pipe with electrolysis. He explains that some equipment that the gas company had attached to their gas main there got hit by lightning, it got fried and is putting electricity into our water main and it ate holes in the sides of the pipe. National Grid paid to replaced pipe on both sides of the culvert, but not under the culvert. Stokes brought this to Rebecca Oldham’s attention that this piece of

pipe should be replaced while they are redoing the culvert, in turn she has reached out to the engineers to get this on their agenda to be part of the project. Commissioner Dunn asks if this would be grant money and Stokes explains that he is hoping it will be, but either way it should be replaced whether it is paid by a grant or our funds.

OLD OR UNFINISHED BUSINESS

PFAS

Superintendent Stokes, referring to the PFAS PR that was sent out, states that we fielded a few calls about it, but was very surprised it was not more. Most people who called were just asking for clarification. He stated that anyone that “complained” online did not call the office. Stokes stated one gentleman called because he is a cancer survivor, which is one of the subgroups that should consult with their doctor. This gentleman was complaining about having to buy bottled water and would like the Water Department to pay for it. Stokes explained that was not something he could decide on his own. Chairperson Sheehan-McGrath states that if the water was truly unsafe to drink, there would be water boiling mandates among other things. The board has decided that is not something we are willing to do at this point. Stokes explains the PR that went out is worded in a very specific way, mandated by the DEP, which makes it hard to understand for the average person. Stokes reports that we have received the September test results back and they are 13ppt. Chairperson Sheehan-McGrath suggests that we post the results on our website and Stokes agrees.

Chairperson Sheehan-McGrath asks about the FAQ PR and Stokes explains that they should be posted on our website. She also asks if it would be a good idea to keep the town people up to date on the processes with the new regulations, posting timelines, schedules, and things of that nature, Stokes, again, agrees. Stokes explains that anyone that he has spoken to about this matter, he tells them that either way, they are going to be paying more and that it is a federal mandate and we are being forced to do this. He states the discoloration has been an issue for decades, but no one ever wanted to pay to fix it. Because of PFAS, we will have to get rid of the iron and manganese along with it. Stokes explains that it will not be “like a light switch” fix, that it will still take years of a plant to clean the water and to continue to flush the hydrants to get all the existing minerals out of the pipes, on top of replacing pipes. He states that even going the avenue of buying water from Haverhill, they could have a situation where we are getting dirty water from them and unfortunately there will be nothing we can do about it.

KING STREET

Superintendent Stokes states that the guys have been working on King Street, two which got completed today. The plan is to get the left side of the road completed, then pave all the patches and pave a portion from the water break near Broad Street, at the same time. The paving was scheduled for Friday, but it might be Thursday since they are a little ahead of schedule. He states then they will start the work on the other side of King Street. Our guys have been out there everyday drilling the actual holes, because that was the previous agreement with the developers. If all things go well, they can get two done in a day, but that is not always the case working with old parts.

DEPARTMENTAL PAPERWORK

Superintendent Stokes presented the engineering contract from Environmental Partners to see what is needed to tie into Haverhill.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ms. Bourque presented the minutes from the August 19th, 2024, Water & Sewer Board meeting. **Chairperson Sheehan-McGrath made a motion to approve the minutes from August 19th, 2024, as submitted. Commissioner Dunn seconded. No further discussion. All in favor.**

NEXT MEETING

Monday October 21st, 2024, at 5:00 p.m. at the Central Fire Station Meeting Room, 181 Main Street, Groveland.

CLOSING

Chairperson Sheehan-McGrath made a motion to close the meeting at 6:36 p.m. Seconded by Commissioner Dunn. No further discussion. All were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Kimberly Bourque
Water & Sewer Office Manager