

**WAKEFIELD MUNICIPAL GAS & LIGHT DEPARTMENT
BOARD OF GAS & LIGHT COMMISSIONERS MEETING**

March 1, 2018

MINUTES

IN ATTENDANCE: Comms. Kenneth Chase, Chairman
William Boodry, Secretary
Kevin T. Haggerty
Jack Warchol
Rafael McDonald

Peter Dion, General Manager, WMGLD
Maureen Mata, Executive Assistant
Gene Sullivan, Asst. General Manager
Mark Cousins, Financial Manager

PLACE: WMGLD Conference Room, 480 North Avenue

CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman K. Chase called the meeting to order at 6:01 P.M.

Newly appointed Commissioner, Rafael McDonald was congratulated on his appointment and the Board indicated it was looking forward to his input.

Approval of Minutes:

Commr J. Warchol recommended that the minutes reflecting the appointment of a General Counsel be amended to include the intention of the Board to categorize this position as a special employee. Commr J. Warchol made a motion to that effect to and the motion was seconded by Commr. K. Haggerty.

Vote: The motion was approved.

A motion to approve the minutes of the February 1, 2018 meeting was made by Commr J. Warchol. . Motion was seconded by Commr K. Haggerty.

Vote: The minutes of the February 1, 2018 were approved.

A motion to approve the minutes of the February 26, 2018 meeting was made by Commr J. Warchol. Motion was seconded by Commr B. Boodry.

Vote: The minutes of the February 26, 2018 were approved.

Double Poles: Commr. K. Chase asked General Manager Dion if there was an update on the 3 double poles on Nahant Street. The Board was informed by the General Manager that Dave Polson had contacted Verizon to move expeditiously on transferring their wires and it is Verizon's job to remove the poles.

General Manager's Report:

Beebe Substation: General Manager Dion informed the Board that the two main buses at the Beebe Substation were de-energized for maintenance and repair. This was part of the major cutover from Beebe to the Wallace substation.

Commr B. Boodry inquired as to the lag in financial reporting. Financial Manager Mark Cousins responded that the WMGLD must follow the FERC accounting framework as it was mandated by the DPU. This requires more time to categorize income and expenses. In addition, General Manager Dion pointed out that the WMGLD has two major financial closings each year: June 30 to close out the fiscal year and December 31 to close out the calendar year as required by our auditors. We have had nine years of clean audits following this schedule.

Record Gas Usage: The late 2017, early 2018 extreme cold weather brought about record high gas sales. The General Manager advised the Board that this precipitated a number of inquiries to the WMGLD about unusually high gas bills. Customers were shown a comparison of this year's usage vs usage during the same time period last year. Commr R. McDonald inquired about lower gas pressures during the cold snap and was advised that High Efficiency gas burners can require more gas pressure than we are committed to provide. The WMGLD is continuing a program to eliminate the few remaining low pressure areas in order to be able to provide higher pressures in the future.

Old Business:

Generator Update: The General Manager informed the Board that this was proceeding as scheduled. In response to a question from Commr J. Warchol, the General Manger responded that after discussions and meetings with the Town, no building permits were required. Commr R. McDonald asked about the locations of these facilities and made plans to visit the WMGLD facilities in town.

Battery storage: The bids for this 3 MW project came in favorably resulting in costs dropping to \$2.9 million vs. the expected \$3.2 million.

Berkshire Wind and Battery Storage: Authorizations for financial agreements with MMWEC for these two projects were discussed. Commr J. Warchol wanted time to review the documents before signing. Commr K. Haggerty asked if General Counsel McCarthy had reviewed the documents and Commr B. Boodry added he would recommend that all documents of this type be reviewed by General Counsel. The General Manager responded that he would have them reviewed and he would also check on timing requirements with MMWEC advising the Board that there is a possibility a brief meeting may need to be scheduled for the sole purpose of approving these documents.

Mutual Aid Payment Update: The WMGLD has been advised that the second payment has been approved and will be received in the next week

Draft Employee Handbook: The General Manager informed the Board that the employee Associations have received this handbook and are reviewing it. It has also been reviewed by the General Counsel. Commr J. Warchol questioned the out of state policy on travel and the General Manager pointed out that this is a fluid document and there will likely be modifications after all affected parties complete this review.

New Business:

Hiring Freeze: Commr K. Haggerty made a motion to institute a hiring freeze. The motion was seconded by Commr. B Boodry. The General Manager asked what the source of the concern over hiring was and what additional information could be provided. Commr Haggerty stated that the Board should have a greater role in the hiring process and wanted to see what jobs were and weren't being filled and that the Board should have a greater role in hiring decisions. The General Manager identified that such an approach could be in conflict with MGL Chapter 164 Article 56. Commr J. Warchol added that he might be amenable to the Board approving the creation of new positions but not reviewing candidates' resumes and approving specific hiring decisions. Commr J. Warchol also said that he would like to review Chapter 164 before taking a formal position on a freeze on hiring or on new positions. Commr B. Boodry endorsed the concept of a freeze but in response to Commr. J. Warchol's concerns, he pointed out that the Board meets monthly and a review of staffing could take place as part of the meeting.

The General Manager responded with an overview of the current personnel situation. He informed the Board that there is only one position currently being filled; Gas Street Foreman. In response to a question from Commr R. McDonald, the General Manager outlined the cascading effect brought about by filling an open position and the resulting vacancies that get created. The General Manager said that all positions are posted internally and if not filled, are advertised and filled from outside the WMGLD. The general manager indicated he would begin to advise the board of any open positions prior to posting. The General Manager further explained that there is another gas department opening that will be posted and filled after all pending litigation is completed.

The General Manager also explained that the Chief Engineer position was being eliminated and that it would be replaced with a System Engineer for the Gas side of the business comparable to the System Engineer position already in place for the Electric division. The result would enable the Department to better focus on Gas System operations and design in the increasingly regulated Natural Gas environment and result in a savings of over \$50,000 annually.

Commr K. Haggerty said that his purpose behind suggesting a freeze was to bring personnel information to the Board in a timely fashion and that a monthly review could accomplish that. He was joined by Commr B. Boodry saying that their intent through this action was to be informed on an ongoing basis. The General Manager said that personnel information would be provided as part of future board informational materials on a monthly basis and shared a template for comment. Commr R. McDonald added that he would prefer a format that used positions rather than specific names.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

Commr J. Warchol **made a motion** to enter executive session at 7:09 P.M. to discuss personnel issues and issues involving contract negotiations with the Board returning to open session at its conclusion. The motion was seconded by Commr B. Boodry.

Vote: The Board was polled individually and voted unanimously to enter executive session.

Open Session:

Commr B. Boodry **made a motion** to come out of executive session and return to open meeting at 7:48 P.M. The motion was seconded by Commr J. Warchol

Commr R. McDonald told the Board that he had reviewed the WMGLD gas data as well as the modeling for the Berkshire Wind Project and that he will return to these topics at the next meeting.

Adjournment:

A motion to adjourn was made at 7:52 P.M. by Commr B. Boodry and seconded by Commr J. Warchol.

Vote: Unanimously in favor of adjournment.

