



WMGLD
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Peter D. Dion, General Manager

Philip Courcy, Chair
Thomas Boettcher, Secretary
Kenneth J. Chase, Jr.
Jennifer Kallay
John J. Warchol

WAKEFIELD MUNICIPAL GAS & LIGHT DEPARTMENT

BOARD OF GAS & LIGHT COMMISSIONERS MEETING July 15, 2020

MINUTES

IN ATTENDANCE: Commrs. Phil Courcy, Chairman
Thomas Boettcher, Secretary
Kenneth J. Chase, Jr.
Jennifer Kallay
John J. Warchol

Peter Dion, General Manager, WMGLD

Mark Cousins, Financial Manager
Dave Polson, Engineering and Operations Manager
Sylvia Vaccaro, Office Manager

Julie Smith-Galvin, Town Liaison

PLACE: ZOOM MEETING

CALL TO ORDER:

Chair Courcy called meeting to order at 6:36 P.M. and informed the Board the meeting is being recorded. There were no members of the public in attendance.

Chair Remarks: Commissioner Courcy noted that the annual NEPPA conference held in August has been cancelled. There is no August meeting scheduled. The next meeting will be meeting September 2, 2020.

Commissioner Remarks: Commr. Kallay thanked Pete Dion for his explanation on how electricity is priced during the Connected Homes presentation. She expressed that all our customers could potentially benefit by learning this process so perhaps this could be aired more broadly to our customers.

Commr. Boettcher stated WMGLD may want to consider incorporating Sensibo, a remote thermostat for mini-split systems into our rebate & incentive program. He advised that the Environmental Sustainability Committee is going to be pursuing Green Communities and will be having a presentation by their Director. He noted it may be a good idea to have the director of the Green Communities also give a presentation to the Board.

Pete stated that if we use our exemption that we have some customers fed by NGRID and Eversource in Wakefield, we are not required to adopt the additional Energy Conservation Charges on our bills. A list of homes that are connected through the other utilities will be provided. A suggestion was brought to Commr. Boettcher that a flyer/handout be on hand at the building department, as well as, having a link on the Building department's website to our Connected Homes/Rebates & Incentives Programs.

Commr. Kallay reiterated that we still have work to do in educating contractors on our energy efficiency programs.

Town Council Comments

Julie Smith-Galvin thanked the department for their work on the solar installation at the Water department as well as, the 3 EV charger installations. She also mentioned that she will remain the Town liaison for the next year.

Secretary's Report

Approval of minutes from the June 3, 2020 meeting was before the Board for approval.

Pete Dion stated that Commr. Kallay had the following edits:

On page 4, paragraph 2, second sentence the sentence should end after the word site and to omit the rest of the sentence.

On page 6, substitute the phrase worst case scenario for the word Doomsday. In the last paragraph, it should read Matt Ide, from MMWEC, instead of just Matt.

On page 7, first paragraph second to last sentence omit the word they and substitute The State of Maine.

Commr. Chase also noted that on page 6, last paragraph, the word some should be omitted after the word track.

No further amendments.

A motion to approve the minutes of the June 3, 2020 meeting with the proposed changes was made by Commissioner Courcy and seconded by Commissioner Chase.

Vote: The motion was approved unanimously.

Old Business:

Project Updates

COVID 19

A second employee's wife has tested positive. The employee is now quarantined and will be until his wife's test is negative and he will still be quarantined for a period after that. The office remains closed to the public. One office staff member reports to the office each day along with Sylvia, Mark and Pete. The rest of the staff works remotely. There are 4 crews, 2 electric and 2 gas. All are working separately and reporting to separate working locations. The substation workers are reporting to 3 separate locations as well. Staff has reviewed the Town's COVID-19 Training and signed off on this training. Commr. Courcy commented that he is seeing more masks being worn in the field. Pete Dion noted that we need to continue with these good habits and not become complacent.

Commr. Kallay requested an update on the accounts receivable arrearage and if we had historical data going back to the recession in 2008. Mark Cousins stated that it would not be comparing apples to apples because back at that time, WMGLD had the ability to send out delinquency notices and service terminations. Pete Dion interjected that at this time we are precluded from sending out notices and terminating services. Pete stated that we are being proactive in reaching out to our customers that owe large balances, calling them and letting them know we are here to assist them by setting up payment plans for them, so that when the time comes and the DPU allows us to begin sending out delinquency notices and terminations they will not be terminated. It was explained that we cannot terminate C&I as well as, residential at this time.

Commr. Boettcher asked at what point should we be concerned Pete explained that we do have the ability to defer the power bill and just pay the interest. That would be our back stop. We will continue to be proactive in contacting our customers and explain we are here to help and hopefully set up payment plans for them. It was noted that our discussion with commercial customers is different than the conversations we have with residential customers.

NGRID 345KV Project

Dave Polson stated that the Broadway track crossing project has a start date of July 27, 2020 and will run into August. The road will be closed a week prior to the tracks being cut in early August and anticipates Broadway to be closed for a month. Dave is meeting with the Town and the contractors on the Foundry Street projects to discuss the impact of Broadway being closed.

McGrail Substation Upgrades

Pete stated that the transformers have been delivered with the switchgear due in the middle of August. The goal of the first phase is replacing the two old 4kv transformers. Over the next several months we will be working on cutting the circuits over and retiring the old transformers. The project will continue into the next year retiring the old 13 8kv switchgear.

Electric Vehicle Charging

Pete Dion reviewed the EV Dashboard with the Board. It was determined that unique drivers represent the different drivers that have charged at the stations. At this time, the Town of Wakefield has not covered their costs yet, since the chargers came online at the beginning of the COVID crisis. It was also noted that the KWH used is higher than KWH billed because the chargers are using electricity to run the electronics in the chargers even when, they are not charging a vehicle. Pete Dion stated that with increased usage of the EV chargers the gap between utility billing versus revenue will decrease and become closer to equal. To date the Town has not started to enforce parking limitations. Dave Polson stated that he will modify the dashboard to display the numbers on a monthly basis and in an easier to read format going forward.

Gas Supply

Pete stated that he and Mark had a conference call with Tony Manganello and his team today. It was a sales call and not just a concerned citizen. Information was shared with them and they are putting together an assessment. Tony and his team's experience with municipals is on aggregation and not working with Municipals that are LDCs. Commr. Kallay asked when the last time we went out to bid for our gas supply. Pete stated we do not go out to bid as he had also explained to Tony. We have a 30-year relationship with Sprague. Sprague does our daily settlement, nominations and works on establishing our hedging strategy.

We have 75 percent of this coming winter locked up and 33 percent of next winter. We have a layered strategy, so if the numbers for gas are down, we will buy a layer. Perhaps we can have Mark Roberts, from Sprague join us for the next meeting to explain their services. We basically have two forms of supply. Kinder Morgan, who we have no firm capacity and National Grid, who treats us as a tariff customer. NGrid charges us the wholesale transportation rate which gives us the benefit of some assigned capacity. Pete stated that he cautioned Tony not to go to market as our representative as this may jeopardize our relationship with NGRID if they think we are shopping around. Commr. Kallay asked for a copy of the questions that were asked by Tony Manganello and his team. Pete said we are investigating the possibility of securing some firm capacity with Kinder Morgan this year because the prices are down.

Strategic Planning

Commr. Boettcher asked, if NEC is exiting the battery business, do we know who will provide the maintenance service. Pete responded that NEC stated they will continue to maintain the maintenance on the battery per the contract. He did also note that WMGLD is going to pursue monitoring the battery's Network Operations Center (NOC). MMWEC may invest with some other installations in perhaps inventorying strategic spare parts. There are a total 58 installations in North America. There may also be an opportunity for laid off NEC workers to start their own business and provide maintenance service. It is still early in the process, so we will be closely watching it.

New Business

Resilient Wakefield Dashboard – Energy Section

Pete provided a section of the data and included a link to Resilient Wakefield on WMGLD's website. Comm. Boettcher suggested that we should talk about our vegetation management as a key part of resiliency, as well as, the major capital investments that have been made to our infostructure. Commr. Kallay noted that over time a dashboard may be integrated onto the Town's or WMGLD's website.

2020 Goals Updates due to COVID

Pete Dion stated to the Board that we are on target with 2020 goals, however there may be some that are not met due to COVID-19 restrictions. He provided the Board with the following updates:

Train Employees- The electric division completed online safety courses offered by NEPPA. A sub curriculum of online safety classes will be available to all employees.

Preventative Maintenance on Gas System- Class 3 leaks may not be reduced by 15% by the end of the year as we are focusing on the class 2 leaks that we were restricted working on due to COVID.

Facilitate Solar- Pole Top Pilot Program- Half are up with the balance due to be delivered before the end of the month. Commr. Boettcher inquired about the metrics on potential power produced from these. Pete will see if we have obtained numbers by the next meeting.

Promote Expansion of Energy Efficiency- Pete stated that he will talk to MMWEC about giving a presentation to the Board during the September meeting on their Go Program, which is focused on commercial energy efficiency incentives

Prudent O & M Spending – Commr. Boettcher inquired if COVID had an impact on WMGLD's overtime. Pete stated that there was a decrease during the months of March-May, but there may be an uptick in the coming months as we try to complete projects before we head into the uncertain fall and winter months.

Annual Audit Performance- We are in phase I of the audit with Inventory scoring a perfect 100%. The auditors will resume their audit in September.

Data development - Residential battery -Pete told the Board that this may not be able to be addressed by the end of the year. He advised the Board that the first year of the enhanced rebate & incentive program is really about collecting all the data and reviewing it with the Board in the first quarter of next year to see where we stand. Pete mentioned that Commr. Boettcher had informed him about a company called Sense that can monitor a customer's usage by installing clip-ons in your panel for CTs and take a profile of your usage from those CTs. They take a power curve for the different devices in your home to see how you are using your electricity. This informational tool retails for \$299.00 and if we offer a \$50 rebate for this, Sense will match the rebate, making the price \$199.00 for our customers. Pete asked Mark Cousins to look at the budget to determine if we would be able to offer this rebate before the end of the year. Pete will make a recommendation to the board at the September meeting. Pete also noted that Sense may have load management capabilities, which could help verify that a customer curtailed usage when we requested. If so, this program would run parallel with the Connected homes program. Sense is looking into this and will follow-up with Pete.

Strategic Planning – Commr. Kallay inquired if the Board could visit the mission statement conversation with aim to include it on our website. Commr. Courcy stated noted that time would be set aside at the October meeting to discuss this. Commr. Kallay wanted to note that she may hear back about the MVP grant in August. Commr. Courcy advised Pete to keep a scorecard of what was discussed tonight, so he can refer back to it during his evaluation.

5G Rollout- Pete advised that this is a concern because they are asking to go on utility poles and within the electric utility space on these poles. This could affect the safety & reliability of our system, so guidelines and rules would need to be established first. Peabody and Chicopee Electric Municipals are in negotiations with Verizon currently and we are closely monitoring the situation. Commr. Boettcher asked if we have consultants and or experts advising us on how to navigate this. Pete advised that Duncan & Allen are consultants that local utilities are using. They have one person that is a leading expert with the MEAM group. MEAM also has a couple of consultants that we will tap for their expertise.

Commr. Boettcher noted that there is a lot of controversy around 5G coming into the town. Pete said the more the Town can do on the upfront side especially with esthetics the more substantial and secure any kind of challenges would be. Dave Polson explained the town could use the same model they used for the NGRiD 345 project in educating the public. Commr. Boettcher also stated that the public needs to know that we will also gain infostructure from this project.

Diversity and Inclusion at WMGLD

Pete informed the board that he started this training for WMGLD employees before the recent issues arose. We just had a Zoom meeting by department held on Racism in America and discussed the current climate. Commr. Kallay asked if we had workforce development or hiring practices that address the challenges of workforce diversity. Pete explained that the work we are doing now with Four Letter Consulting is certainly a piece of this, however there are several WMGLD employees, who are utilizing the tuition reimbursement program. In terms of hiring, we are going to consider expanding the area that we draw potential employees from to outside the Wakefield envelope. Commr. Boettcher stated that he had received an inquiry from a citizen asking about what WMGLD's was doing about diversity and inclusion. He also noted that Town Council may be making all town employees take diversity and inclusion training to which he added that WMGLD has been ahead of the curve. Pete confirmed that we are going to continue with this training.

Any other matter not reasonably anticipated by the Chair

No further matters to report.

A motion to adjourn was made at 9:02 p.m. by Commr. Courcy and seconded by Commr. Boettcher.

Vote: Unanimously in favor of adjournment.