

WMGLD  
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Peter D. Dion, General Manager

Thomas Boettcher, Chair  
Elton Prifti, Secretary  
Philip Courcy  
Jennifer Kallay  
John J. Warchol

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

**March 2, 2022**

**MINUTES**

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Commrs. Thomas Boettcher, Chairman  
Phil Courcy  
Jennifer Kallay  
Jack Warchol

Peter Dion, General Manager, WMGLD

Dave Polson, Engineering and Operations Manager  
Sylvia Vaccaro, Office Manager

Member of the Public

Kathleen Scharf                      69 Pleasant St.

**PLACE:** ZOOM MEETING

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Commr. Boettcher called the meeting to order at 6:30P.M. and informed the Board the meeting is being recorded.

**Chair Remarks:**

Commr. Boettcher mentioned that the CDC along with the local Board of Health has lifted the mask mandate and hopefully this will soon lead to in-person meetings. He thanked staff for the press release to address customer concerns about rising energy costs due to the volatile global community.

### **Commissioner Remarks:**

Commr. Courcy read the following statement to the board:

I believe it is incumbent on the Board to acknowledge the current global political economic situation as it closely relates to our core energy business. A month ago, we saw promising signs that our two-year battle with Covid-19 was fading. Spring would emerge, people would begin to gather as normal, the supply chain and the economy would rebound. We would now battle inflation versus anti-vaxxers. We knew we had a couple more months of winter and its high energy costs to endure. President Biden opened the strategic oil reserves when oil rose to \$85 a barrel to keep gasoline prices lower. The European Union natural gas supply was being squeezed by Russia and the US diverted LNG tankers to help. Then Russia invaded Ukraine, the existential crisis shifts from the effects of the rising earth temperature to the threat of nuclear war. Many experts will attempt to predict what happens next to energy supply and cost. Russian banks and assets being sanctioned, Germany pulled the plug on Nord Stream 2, Bp and Shell divested in Russian oil and gas (Exxon Mobil next/) none of this will be favorable for energy cost. The global fossil fuel use data for 2021 is showing increased use of coal for power generation especially in China and India. The use of coal in the United States increased for the first time in 7 years due to the high cost of natural gas. Despite all our efforts the environment is taking a hit. The obvious challenge will be how to keep the electric and gas rates as low as possible in this changing environment. He concluded in saying that the global political situation will be in our thoughts and our agenda going forward.

Commr. Kallay noted that Green Communities is back up and running and is gathering information together for an end of April submission.

**Town Council Liaison Comments:** Not present.

### **Public Comments:**

Kathleen Scharf said that she is interested in the Peaker Plant, so the Board will be hearing from her again. She stated that she wanted to know how this group works and how it navigates the complex issues in supplying power to the Town. She commented that she wonders with the push for electrification if the Board has given thought to where the electricity is coming from now and where it will come from in the future. She noted that she was impressed with the amount of data that is available on WMGLD's website. Commr. Boettcher said that our power supply portfolio is published in the

monthly Board book and pointed to this month's information. Pete explained how WMGLD's non-carbon-emitting resources increased from 43 percent in 2020 to 48 percent in 2021 and is projected to increase to 51 percent in 2022, which exceeds the 2030 goal and the current power supply portfolios of the investor own utilities.

## Secretary's Report

Approval of the amended minutes included in the Board book from the January 26, 2022, Strategic Meeting was before the Board for approval.

**A motion** was made by Commr. Courcy to accept the January 26, 2022, minutes and seconded by Commr. Kallay.

**Roll Call Vote:** Commr. Courcy           Aye  
                          Commr. Kallay            Aye  
                          Commr. Warchol          Aye  
                          Commr. Boettcher        Aye  
The motion was approved unanimously 4-0.

Approval of the amended minutes included in the Board book from the February 2, 2022, meeting was before the Board for approval. Commr. Kallay had 4 minor edits.

**A motion** was made by Commr. Courcy to accept the February 2, 2022, minutes and seconded by Commr. Kallay.

**Roll Call Vote:** Commr. Courcy           Aye  
                          Commr. Kallay            Aye  
                          Commr. Warchol          Aye  
                          Commr. Boettcher        Aye  
The motion was approved unanimously 4-0.

## Old Business:

### Gas Supply Analysis

Pete noted that he and Mark Cousins prepared a supply cost analysis comparing WMGLD to Eversource and National Grid through January 2022. On the electric side WMGLD was 38 percent lower and on the gas side WMGLD was 1.8 percent higher. Pete noted that the 1.8 percent is nominal considering our size compared to Eversource and National Grid. He said that staff will continue to monitor this closely and try to keep rates as low as possible, however every utility's costs are rising given the global situation.

Mark Cousins and Joe Collins presented an analysis of the projected annual gas CCF savings and the translation to carbon savings of the gas moratorium

decision for multi family new construction made a few years ago. Joe said the preliminary analysis looked at savings based on the gas moratorium for new family units currently in place and under construction. He looked at what units of similar size would use with gas heat versus heat pumps. He used the current residential survey data from the Energy Information Administration (EIA). Through that data, he was able to determine that there is about a 59 percent carbon savings using heat pumps versus gas heat. He noted that it is equivalent to 180 passenger vehicles driven for one year or 2,083,441 miles driven:93,282 gallons of gasoline consumed, or 81,434 gallons of diesel fuel consumed. Pete stated that 1000 square foot units were used as the standard. Mark stated that he validated the Energy Information Association data, which was specific to the Northeast, of 256 CCF and 810 kWh with the customer data from the first new Foundry Street building. Commr. Boettcher commented that this is a great side by side comparison. He inquired if we could apply this to our savings, or how it impacts our gas peak. Mark stated that this is an avoidance of peak. It was based on 1000 units that are planned in town over the next 3 years. Pete noted that annually it is a savings of 256,000 CCF. Commr. Boettcher inquired as to what the cost savings would be. Mark replied that weather dependent, on an average 5 million ccf of gas sold, it would be roughly a 5 percent savings. Commr. Kallay asked if he assumed a declining grid emission over time or as of 2022. Mark stated that it is as of the data available today. Commr. Kallay noted that over the lifetime this would be much higher assuming the grid emissions keep going down.

## **Project Updates**

### **COVID**

Pete noted that on February 1, 2022, the Town lifted its mask mandate and testing requirements for non-vaccinated personnel. The plexiglass is still up at the WMGLD front counter, and we have masks available to staff and customers that choose to wear them. There were 5 cases of Omicron after Christmas, however business was not impacted. Three out of the 5 cases were caught by the Monday morning rapid tests that were provided by the Town.

### **Solar Projects**

Pete stated that he and Dave Polson will meet with the ZBA on March 23, 2022, to discuss the solar project at 480 North Avenue and provide renderings of the proposed project for them to review. Pete noted that he will also discuss some

issues concerning new buildings being moved closer to the street to maximize building space, thereby causing not only issues for overhead wires but the placement of transformers. Commissioner Boettcher inquired if we also have the support of the Fire department on this issue, as it presents a safety concern to them as well. Pete mentioned that the Fire department and the Town Building department are aware of this issue. Pete mentioned that they will also start the discussion with the ZBA about solar and EV readiness. No decisions about this will be made at this time. Commr. Boettcher asked if we anticipate any issues with our solar project. Pete noted that he is hopeful there would be none. The original concern, when the building was built was around esthetics, but as the renderings illustrate, there is no change on North Ave. side and limited visual impact to the four properties located behind the building.

### **Winter Gas and Electric Supply Status**

Pete commented that through January 2022 we were better or even with the investor-owned utilities (IOUs). He said that we will be watching the impacts of pricing regularly and be in contact with Sprague to discuss pricing. He noted that all utilities have increased the cost of fuel charges. He commented that the winter heating season is from November to April, but the real drivers of our costs are between December 15<sup>th</sup> to March 15<sup>th</sup>. Usually, we can drop the cost of CCF precipitously, starting in April but this may not be the case this year due to the global energy issues.

### **New Business**

#### **Review of 2021 Performance and Discussion of 2022 Goals**

Pete noted the results of the 2021 Performance and Goals were included in the Board book. The subcommittee to review the 2021 goals and establish the goals for 2022 has not been created yet. He stated that since Commr. Prifti is absent tonight; this can be reviewed in next month's meeting in Executive Session. Commr. Courcy volunteered to serve on a subcommittee if needed. He said that he went through the goals in the book and matched them up to the mid-year update and believes there will not be too much work to do, as most of the information was updated in November. Commr. Kallay requested that under the section, "Providing Customer Service Education and Outreach", that the names of the customer service sessions be added to the documentation. Pete noted that these sessions are also documented on our website. Commr. Boettcher asked if any other Commissioner would like to volunteer for the subcommittee. Commr. Courcy said he does not feel that we need to meet as a subcommittee and that we could get through it during Executive Session. Commr. Kallay said she will meet with Commr. Courcy and go over the information. Commr. Kallay stated that she is interested in implementing more marketing campaigns this year promoting our various energy efficiency programs. Commr. Boettcher agreed. He said a lot of

customers are not aware of the programs that we offer. Commr. Boettcher said that he would like to see us bring forth plans or feasibility for residential and commercial batteries coupled with or without solar for dispatch. Basically, the same concept as vehicle to grid. Review of 2021 Performance will be on the April agenda and the 2022 Goals to be discussed as well. Pete stated that senior staff will begin reporting next month with Vinnie McMahon and Paul Redmond discussing the electric system.

Commr. Boettcher inquired if we have identified a location for the EV Fast grant charger. Pete mentioned that the Town originally had identified a preliminary site across the Lake on Main Street, however, it was parallel parking and that was not allowed, so the Town identified another potential site on Quannapowitt Parkway. Commr. Boettcher inquired about the status of the solar grant for the Water department building. Dave Polson stated that he spoke to Joe Conway, from the DPW, and Joe did review the quote and has selected a vendor (same vendor that was used for the other water department building) and will submit the application to WMGLD. Pete commented that WMGLD will assist with the project management.

Pete also mentioned that Representative Lipper-Garabedian approached him about participating in a Green Day Recycling event with the Town. He said that we are also looking into supporting a dehumidifier recycling event in Wakefield that mirrors an event held in Melrose. Pete commented that he met with National Grid yesterday to discuss event details.

## **Environmental Sustainability Committee Town Meeting Proposals**

Commr. Boettcher noted that the ESCS approved to sponsor the EV ready & solar ready codes as Town Meeting warrant articles. The codes are in the process of being crafted. He queried if the infrastructure is ready for more solar coming online and any challenges that the utility may face. Commr. Kallay commented that a potential clause in the code maybe making it a requirement that at the time the building is built that a certain proportion of either the roof space or parking lot space is developed. The Town of Watertown has language that states that a minimum of 50 percent of the roof space and 90 percent of the parking lot canopies would be covered with solar upon the building being built. She stated that she wanted to be sure that we are ready for this kind of development if these clauses are included into the codes. Commr. Kallay expressed three concerns about this potential development: technical or engineering concerns, clarification of incentives, and net metering. Pete stated that from a system perspective he can't speak about the distribution impact not knowing where the building is being built, but from a system level we are ready, but distribution upgrades maybe required depending on the location. These upgrades are common occurrences. If there is significant impact to adding solar, we would prepare a cost estimate for the developer which would be included in the interconnect cost. He stated that we do not offer incentives for new construction, if this code passes, we will not incent developers to do what is required of them. He continued to say that net metering is something that is constantly reviewed, the rate we pay rises and falls with our cost of electricity. The solar customer receives 85 percent of the cost of

electricity. We do need to monitor the impact on our distribution charge but keeping the focus on new development does limit the impact to some extent because it is on new growth not on existing conversions where we would lose rate base.

Commr. Kallay wanted the Board to take into consideration that on the net metering side the constructs that are tied to rates are not necessarily tied to the cost of solar. Solar costs are projected to continue to decline over time, which could result in WMGLD paying more for that resource. She noted that we may at some point change the construct and should at least review this on an annual basis to make sure the credit we are issuing is appropriate given the solar costs. She noted the importance of keeping track of it as the solar costs could diverge quite a bit from our rising costs.

### **Any other matter not reasonably anticipated by the Chair.**

Commr. Courcy mentioned that the May 2022 Board meeting is scheduled for May 4<sup>th</sup>, which conflicts with the MMWEC's conference. It was agreed that the May Board meeting will be rescheduled to May 11, 2022.

### **Executive Session – Collective Bargaining and Customer Issue**

**A motion** to come out of General session and enter into Executive session for the purpose of Collective Bargaining was made at 7:29 pm by Commr. Warchol and seconded by Commr. Courcy.

<b>Roll Call Vote:</b>	Commr. Courcy	Aye
	Commr. Kallay	Aye
	Commr. Warchol	Aye
	Commr. Boettcher	Aye

The motion was approved unanimously 4-0.

**A motion** to come out of Executive session for the sole purpose of adjournment was made at 7:35pm by Commr. Courcy and seconded by Commr. Kallay.

<b>Roll Call Vote:</b>	Commr. Courcy	Aye
	Commr. Kallay	Aye
	Commr. Warchol	Aye
	Commr. Boettcher	Aye

The motion was approved unanimously 4-0.

**A motion** to adjourn was made at 7:37pm by Commr. Warchol and seconded by Commr. Courcy

**Roll Call Vote:** Commr. Courcy                   Aye  
                  Commr. Kallay                    Aye  
                  Commr. Warchol                Aye  
                  Commr. Boettcher            Aye  
The motion was approved unanimously 4-0.