

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

Peter D. Dion, General Manager

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

June 21, 2023

IN ATTENDANCE: Commrs., Chair Jack Warchol
Elton Prifti, Secretary
Jennifer Kallay
Thomas Boettcher

Peter Dion, General Manager, WMGLD
Mark Cousins, Finance Manager
Dave Polson, Engineering and Operations Manager
Sylvia Vaccaro, Minute Secretary

Members of the Public Kathleen Scharf, 69 Pleasant Street

**PLACE: 480 North Ave., Wakefield, MA
& ZOOM MEETING**

CALL TO ORDER:

Commr. Warchol called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm and advised the meeting was being recorded.

CHAIR REMARKS:

Commr. Warchol noted that the July 4th Committee expressed their gratitude to WMGLD for including their fundraising envelopes in last month's billing. They also wanted to ensure that the streetlight in front of the Civic Center will be temporarily removed to make way for the reviewing stand for the parade. They also asked that WMGLD check to see if they still had their banner from last year. Dave Polson said that he will check on the banner.

COMMISSIONER REMARKS: None

TOWN COUNCIL LIASON:

Julie Smith Galvin introduced herself as the new and returning liaison. She stated that she is looking forward to working with the Board and is here to assist them with anything they may need.

Public Comments

Kathleen Scharf, 69 Pleasant Street, commented that she hopes this Board will appoint a commissioner that has strong experience with solar, wind, and batteries. Experience with technologies that we are moving toward and not experience with those technologies we are moving away from. Commr. Warchol advised that the Board is not selecting a candidate tonight, but determining if they can arrive at a consensus, so the Board can make a recommendation to Town Council next week. The decision on which candidate will be appointed, will be made at the Town Council on Monday, June 26.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Approval of the May 16, 2023, minutes was before the Board for approval. Commrs. Warchol and Boettcher provided amendments for clarification.

A motion to approve the May 16, 2023, minutes with amendments as discussed was made by Commr. Boettcher and seconded by Commr. Prifti.

Vote: The motion was approved unanimously 4-0.

OLD BUSINESS:

Project Updates

Energy Park

Pete mentioned that the Conservation Committee did not approve the Northeast Vocational Tech plans. An appeal process has started, which may result in project delays. He stated that WMGLD is keeping a close watch on commitment dates (September 1, 2023) for ordering equipment and is being mindful to not take on construction debt earlier than needed. Pete noted that he will have a better idea of the status of the project at the July Board meeting. He also said that if needed the Board can have call a Zoom

meeting for August. Pete will check with Mike McCarthy about the current rule on ZOOM meetings.

Supply Update

Pete said that we are always working with MMWEC hedging our electric supply for the summer. He noted that on the gas side we did receive positive news on the allocation of capacity from National Grid, which benefits us for our supply for next winter. Pete stated that Mark Cousins and Mark Roberts are working on the numbers. He noted that we were able to secure a greater percentage of our supply for the coming winter, so our numbers will be significantly better than last winter. The numbers will probably be available at the September Board meeting noting that the forward numbers are a lot better than the previous year.

Community Solar Discussion

Dave Polson explained that the project is still in the preconstruction phase. He is in the process of reviewing final design submissions. Once that is completed, the construction phase will begin. It is projected that the panels will be on the roof in the late Fall. He stated that the project should be completed by the end of the year or early January 2024.

Pete informed the Board that initially staff was looking at a 7- year lease to purchase option, however that presented issues such as how we would handle customers leaving the program before the end of the lease term, as well as those customers joining the program mid-term. This prompted staff to look at a model similar to one used by Florida Power and Light. The vendor will provide a 20-year fixed lease for the life of the project, making the operating cost consistent. Joe Collins presented the details of the proposed Community Solar structure. He stated that there will be a 229KW solar system with 2 arrays on the roof of 480 North Ave., of which 129KW will be dedicated to the Community Solar program. There will also be the possibility to create a carve out for low-income customers. Initially customers will be able to purchase 1KW segments. He mentioned that this may change based on customer interest. Twenty-five percent of the array could be reserved for low-income customers. Qualifications for low-income will be based on the existing state assistance programs (ex. LIHEAP). The fee structure will be adjusted for low-income customers to increase the benefit for those qualifying.

The preliminary Fee and Bill Credit Structure would be as follows:

- \$100 Sign-up fee
- \$ 12 per month per KW owned
- Credit on customer bill same as current solar customers (85% of Energy Charge)

Low-income

- Waive the sign-up fee
- \$8 per month per KW owned

Fee and credit structure intended to balance customer benefits and debt service offset

Joe stated that this is a preliminary structure and adjustments would be made based upon public interest. Pete noted that we have to settle on a format because changing the structure would cause a billing system issue. Commr. Warchol requested to have this spreadsheet as well as the generation spreadsheet shared to the Board. Commr. Boettcher requested to have any overhead for the billing system and any staffing issue included in any modeling presented to the Board. Pete said that he is recommending the Florida Power and Light model because it is the simplest of all models that we have researched. Commr. Kallay stated that we must be mindful that some low income may reside in housing authority residences where the Town pays the energy bills, so we should look at how we would offer this program to all those residents. Secondly, she noted that we must ensure that the subsidy is reasonable for both low-income and non-low-income, and lastly the sign-up fee is not based on KW. Pete noted that we are limiting it to one KW to start. The only way we would allow more than 1 KW is if we were not getting a good subscription. Commr. Boettcher stated that if someone decided they wanted more KW then they should be billed \$100 sign-up fee per KW. After discussion, it was recommended that the \$100 apply to each KW block if we end up allowing more than one to be purchased.

Commr. Kallay also mentioned that she is concerned that we are overcompensating for net-metering. Pete noted that the best way may be to adjust the percentage versus a fixed number because of the variables in the fixed costs.

New Business

Discussion of Applicants for Vacant Board Position

The Board reviewed the resumes and qualifications of potential commissioner candidates to make a recommendation to Town Council. The consensus was to recommend Sharon Daly from Aborn Ave to fill the vacant position.

A motion to vote on the proposed candidate was made Commr. Prifti and seconded by Commr. Boettcher

Vote: The motion was approved unanimously 4-0.

A motion to adjourn was made at 7:37 pm by Commr. Prifti and seconded by Commr. Kallay

Vote: The motion was approved unanimously 4-0.