

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

Peter D. Dion, General Manager

WAKEFIELD MUNICIPAL GAS & LIGHT DEPARTMENT

BOARD OF GAS & LIGHT COMMISSIONERS MEETING

March 6, 2024

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

Peter Dion, General Manager, WMGLD
Mark Cousins, Finance Manager
Dave Polson, Engineering and Operations Manager
Jim Brown, Gas Superintendent
Paul Robertson, Gas Street Foreman
Raven Fournier, Gas System Engineer
Joe Collins, Business Analyst- Energy Services
Sylvia Vaccaro, Minute Secretary

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:

None

COMMISSIONERS REMARKS:

Commr. Daly stated that WMGLD staff and Commissioners, along with representatives from the Wakefield Public Schools, Town Council, Public Works, Planning Committee, and School Committee met to discuss Wakefield's Green Communities Energy Reduction Plan. The discussion was about planned investments around high energy use buildings in town and plans to reduce their energy consumption and next steps. She said the minutes from this meeting will be circulated. Pete mentioned that there will be a more detailed audit of both the Dolbeare and Woodville schools, to potentially identify areas of opportunity for grant application and support from WMGLD. He noted there maybe be some short term as well as long term investments to try and help move the schools away from gas consumption. Commr. Kallay explained that the next grant application cycle is this Fall, so we can start working on a proposal for funding and integrating that funding and any other capital needs into the plan now for fiscal year 2026. Commr. Daly stated the next meeting is planned for the end of June after the detailed audits are completed.

TOWN COUNCIL LIASON:

None

Public Comments

None

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Approval of the February 7, 2024, minutes was before the Board for approval. Commr. Kallay submitted minor edits to the minutes.

A motion to approve the February 7, 2024, minutes as amended, was made by Commr. Boettcher and seconded by Commr. Kallay.

Vote: The motion was approved unanimously 4-0.

Old Business

Project Updates

Energy Park

Pete stated that Atty. McCarthy has been working with the State to ensure compliance with the Home Rule Petition. He said all the signatures have been obtained except for the land behind Beebe station. The Ballister Street site remediation will be completed this Spring with park construction beginning this summer for tentative completion by the end of the year. Dennis Fazio and Joe Conway are both in agreement with the reforestation plan for the Mapleway playground to begin in the early Fall. Pete noted that the major equipment bids for the; generator, switch gear, and pad mounts have been awarded. He said that WMGLD is working with the battery vendor (Delorean) and reminded the Board that the battery is part of an

MMWEC bid. The first municipals to receive batteries under this bid for summer peak this year will be Groton, Holden, and Paxton. WMGLD can review and learn from their installation process. Our goal is to have the Energy Park battery installed for summer peak 2025.

Gas Department Annual Update Presentation- Jim Brown, Paul Robertson, and Raven Fournier

Paul Robertson stated that the Gas department has been working closely with the DPW in planning for future project replacements to coordinate for paving. He noted that all the dead main work on Central, Cordis, Dillaway, and Upland streets were completed, which allowed them to move on to replacing 700 feet of bare steel main on Catalpa Street and replacing 22 services on Chestnut Street. Paul said that over the winter replacement work started in the Quannapowitt Ave. area, which will be finished within the next week. The next project will be to replace 1200 feet of bare steel main on Heritage Ln. All this work will allow the Town to begin their paving projects. Pete stated that working with the Town requires flexibility because of changing schedules, so the Gas department meets with the Town more frequently.

Jim Brown provided a system overview to the Board. He noted that on the services side there has been an increase in plastic pipe from 79.61% in 2020 to 86.46% in 2023. He said that department continues to use the practice of a contractor installing the "dead main" in the early Spring and then WMGLD staff livens the main and changes the services over. This process has been extremely effective and time saving. This year, some leaks have been detected in the Greenwood Ave. area. Nearby Oak St is coated steel, so the entire neighborhood will be replaced with plastic. He mentioned that the system consists of .14% of cast iron, which is about 780 feet. He said that we will be able to remove the cast iron and discontinue the winter patrol program this year. He revealed that WMGLD will be the only utility in the area that has completely eliminated cast iron. He continued to say that 1.6 miles of dead main will be eliminated this year and another 1.5 miles in the Crescent and Otis Street area with the anticipated grant. Jim noted that there were no Class 2 leaks at the end of the year and the only Class 3 (Significant Environmental Impact -SEI) leak was eliminated. Class 3 (non-SEI) leaks are down to 35 from 137 in 2018. He said that this number will be reduced to around 15 by the end of this year. The aggressive program to move meters outside of buildings continues with a goal to relocate around 100 meters a year. Commr. Daly inquired if new construction requires outdoor meters. Jim stated that it does, and the only exception may be a commercial building in the Square, so that a meter is not placed near a sidewalk.

Raven Fournier advised the Board that bids for the Oak St. dead main replacement project were received at the end of February with work to start in the middle of March. In conjunction with the Energy Park project, the

department will also replace 6810 feet of steel main on Hemlock Road, which will provide services to the Energy Park and Northeast Metro Tech. Raven also provided the Board with an update on the PHMSA NGDISM grant. The Water St & Crescent St. project (replacing 1.37 miles of main and services) was awarded in April of 2023 and is presently in the engineering/planning and bidding materials/labor stage. The Main St. replacement project application was submitted in August 2023, and we should be receiving a decision in 2-4 weeks. This project would replace 3.61 miles of existing infrastructure on 14 streets in Greenwood.

Commr. Warchol commented that someone on Facebook posted about not being able to have gas service extended down their street. He inquired about the policy surrounding this. Pete noted it depends if there is gas currently on the street or if a gas main extension was required. Pete noted that it has been about 12 years since WMGLD has extended a gas main. If there is not an existing main in front of the house, we would tell the customer that there is no gas on the street. If the customer called and asked that the gas service be extended, they would have to pay to dig and WMGLD would lay the pipe. Pete said this was a unique situation and the GIS system should be reviewed to see how far the main goes down the street. Jimmy stated that he will review the gas service application to see if any changes would provide clarification. Commr. Boettcher commented that when customers submit a new gas service application, we should also inform them about electric options.

Community Solar

Pete said that the solar array on the roof of 480 North Ave is in service. He noted that there was an underwhelming attendance at the information session held today at the Senior Center. Joe provided the following enrollment update:

- 56 sign ups
- 163 kW request in total
- Average request of 3 kW
- 155 kW non-low income
- 8kW low-income

Joe noted that the targeted low-income mailers were sent out this week. He also mentioned that these mailers were also sent to customers at 101 Broadway, which falls under Wakefield Housing Authority. The initial signup period is closed; however, the sign-up period was extended to April 1, 2024. At that time, we will see what we have left for KW and see if we can fulfill previous customer requests and contracts will be mailed out. Pete said that we can leave the low-income side open for a longer period. Commr. Boettcher suggested that if the low-income side is not fully subscribed perhaps it may be offered to the Town for the Housing Authority. Commr. Prifti recommended that WMGLD conduct another solar rooftop info session and a session on heat pumps with a vendor.

Strategic Planning

Commr. Warchol stated that each Commissioner was given homework to complete the initiatives under their assigned goals, so these may be forwarded to Jon Wortman before the Strategic Planning session on March 20, 2024.

Review of 2023 and Establishment of 2024 Goals and Objectives

The subcommittee of Commrs. Daly and Warchol met last month to review the 2023 performance versus goals and develop 2024 goals. They provided their revisions (included in the Board book) to the rest of the Board and discussion ensued.

A motion to accept the 2024 goals as amended was made by Commr. Prifti and seconded by Commr. Kallay.

Vote: The motion was approved unanimously 5-0.

Pete provided the Board with a detailed review of his 2023 performance versus goals (included in the Board book).

New Business

Any other matter not reasonably anticipated by the Chair

A motion to exit General session and enter Executive session to discuss the 2023 performance versus goals returning to General session for the purpose of voting on the performance award and the percentage increase of base pay and to adjourn was made by Commr. Boettcher and seconded by Commr. Prifti at 9:08 pm.

Roll Call Vote:	Commr. Daly	Aye
	Commr. Kallay	Aye
	Commr. Prifti	Aye
	Commr. Boettcher	Aye
	Commr. Warchol	Aye

The motion was approved unanimously 5-0.

Executive Session

A motion to come out of Executive session and back into General session was made by Commr. Daly and seconded by Commr. Boettcher.

Vote: The motion was approved unanimously 5-0.

Commr. Warchol thanked GM Dion for his hard work this past year and said that other Commissioners had comments as well. Commr. Kallay had a few notable examples of GM Dion's accomplishments this past year including the awards received from APPA, APGA, and NEPPA, his work to get the Home Rule petition for the Energy Park passed, as well as speaking at Town Meeting to get the Specialized Energy Code passed. Commr. Daly noted that WMGLD is a well-respected department in town and what GM Dion says carries a lot of weight. Commrs. Boettcher and Prifti both concurred.

A motion to award GM Dion a bonus in the full amount of 6% for 2023 was made by Commr. Prifti and seconded by Commr. Boettcher.

Vote: The motion was approved unanimously 5-0.

A motion to award GM Dion a base salary increase in the amount of 3.5% was made by Commr. Prifti and seconded by Commr. Daly.

Vote: The motion was approved unanimously 5-0.

A motion to adjourn was made at 9:56 pm by Commr. Boettcher and seconded by Commr. Prifti.

Vote: The motion was approved unanimously 5-0.