

WMGLD
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Peter D. Dion, General Manager

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

WAKEFIELD MUNICIPAL GAS & LIGHT DEPARTMENT

BOARD OF GAS & LIGHT COMMISSIONERS MEETING

July 17, 2024

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

Peter Dion, General Manager, WMGLD
Mark Cousins, Finance Manager
Dave Polson, Engineering and Operations Manager
Joe Collins, Business Analyst- Energy Services
Sylvia Vaccaro, Minute Secretary

Mike McLane, Town Council

Members of the Public

None

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

CALL TO ORDER:

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

CHAIR REMARKS:

None

COMMISSIONERS REMARKS:

Commr. Warchol remarked that he saw a post on the Wakefield Community page commenting that WMGLD's residential renter's deposit requirements were too high. Pete stated that the deposit amounts have not changed in over ten years. Mark said that the deposits are \$250.00 for renters without gas heat and \$400.00 for renters with gas heat. He noted that in comparison to other municipals, WMGLD deposits are on the low side. The Board reviewed the WMGLD website and suggested that clarifications be made to clarify the difference between a new service is being installed and a new customer signing up for an existing service. They also mentioned that the deposit amounts should be stated on the application, as well as on the main Customer Service page. Pete noted that the revisions will be made. Mark explained that once the customer submits their application, a customer service person reaches out to the customer and discusses the requirements and obtains their deposit. He noted that commercial deposits are calculated based on prior usage for the building or an estimate based on the request of the customer for a new facility. Commr. Boettcher commented that someone also posted that WMGLD did not have Budget billing. He said he did let them know that WMGLD does offer this and to call the office for further details. Mark advised that budget bill accounts are monitored throughout the year to ensure that the budget amount is consistent with their consumption and any necessary adjustments are made. Commr. Kallay requested a deposit study as it would be beneficial to know current practices for further discussion. Pete said that he will provide a summary of all WMGLD fees and the actual costs for the Board to review.

Commr. Boettcher said that the DOER (Department of Energy Resources) and MCEC (Massachusetts Clean Energy Center) is offering Mass Fleet Advisor (massfleetadvisor.org), technical assistance for medium to heavy fleet electrification. This is open to private, public, and non-profits in municipal territories. Commr. Kallay suggested that this information be shared with Wakefield DPW. Commr. Boettcher inquired about the uptick in outages in the past six weeks. Dave commented that these were due to birds, squirrels, heat related issues, a lightning strike, and an underground cable failure. Dave noted that power was restored quickly through switching and others through repairs with most outages lasting approximately 30 minutes. He noted that it is rare for WMGLD to have these frequent outages. He explained that WMGLD takes proactive measures to prevent outages. Pete noted that the failed underground cable was included in the Capital budget for next year, but it has been moved up to this Fall.

Commr. Daly requested that the discussion of the State grant summary be moved up under Old Business as the first item as Mike McLane is here as a guest from the Town Council to discuss these grants.

A motion was made by Commr. Warchol to take out of order the state grant summary discussions and move it ahead to the discuss grant opportunities with Town Council Chair, Mike McLane, seconded by Commr. Boettcher.

Vote: The motion was approved 5-0.

TOWN COUNCIL LIASON:

There is no update to report on the appointment of a Town Council liaison.

Public Comments

None

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Approval of May 8, 2024 Minutes were tabled for the September 4, 2024, meeting as Commissioners' edits were not included in the Board Book.

Old Business

State Grant Summary and Discussion

Town Council, Mike McLane stated that he is the chair of a new Town Council subcommittee along with Edward Dombroski and Robert Vincent. They will be working with the Town to devise a plan that will bring the Town in compliance with the MBTA overlay so the Town does not lose \$3.7 million in grant money. He stated the 3 plans that were previously brought to Town Meeting in the Spring were not approved. Mike said that he wants to be completely transparent with the public about the dollar amount of grants that the Town could potentially lose if they are not in compliance by the end of the year. It was discovered after the Spring Town Meeting that WMGLD has received \$1.5 million in grant money, and he is not sure if that money is at risk and if it should be included with the Town's estimate of \$3.7 million at risk. Pete noted that he sent an email to Sherri Dalton this morning with further grant information and will defer to Mike McCarthy and Tom Mullen. Pete confirmed that WMGLD has received approximately \$1.5 million in grants dating back to 2017. He stated that in some of the cases, such as solar rebates, the grants from DOER act as seed money, with the hope that the utility keeps funding these programs after the grant is used. Commr. Daly stated there is new funding coming from the Federal government that is in the form of State formula funds. The state applies for these large grants and creates grant programs for municipals. These funds may also be at risk. Mike McLane agreed to follow up with the department on some of the opportunities the Town is reviewing.

Project Updates

Energy Park

Pete stated that the Energy Park site has been cleared and construction is underway. The fence and gate will be installed in two weeks. There has been a lot of construction going on Hemlock Road for both high school projects and the Energy Park. WMGLD has been installing underground conduit from the existing high school over to Landrigan Field and then down to the Energy Park. The contractors for the NEMT have been installing conduits from the site to the property line. In the Fall, the selected site contractor will install a manhole where the conduits will be brought together in front of the Energy Park. After the Town finishes with their water and sewer work, WMGLD will install our gas main down to the Energy Park for the generator. We are hopeful we will complete this before school starts in September. Commr. Boettcher inquired if there have been any roadblocks on this project. Pete said some switchgear delivery has been pushed back 3 months, so we are now working on alternatives to meet the current schedule. Dave said there are no other equipment issues.

Pete stated that we have been working on the overloaded transformer list that Vinnie compiled after the first heat wave. Commr. Boettcher asked if we had already hit our peak for the year. Dave said we hit our peak for the year to day yesterday, July 16, 2024.

Kenneth J. Chase Jr. Community Solar Project and Dedication Update

Commr. Warchol said that there has been no update on former Commr. Chase, so we will not be able to set a date for the dedication ceremony yet. Pete stated that the solar project is now fully subscribed. Joe noted that last month's total solar array produced 18,525 kwh, equating to 148 per kwh per panel, or an \$18.00 credit per customer. The prior month was 133 kwh per panel or \$16.80 per customer.

Strategic Planning Discussion

Pete asked if there was anything anyone wanted to add otherwise, we will discuss the timelines attached to the goals and initiatives at the September Board Meeting.

New Business

Town's Energy Reduction Plan

Pete noted that the detailed audits for the Dolbeare and Woodville schools took place on June 24, 2024. The auditors reached out to Tim O'Brien, requesting building and footprint drawings. Pete said that Tim had been out on vacation and is working to get them the information as quickly as possible. Commr. Daly said that we need to be mindful that there are some grants that the Town is eligible to apply for, with upcoming deadlines. Commr. Kallay said she believes the deadline is in October. Joe confirmed the date as October 18, 2024.

Any other matter not reasonably anticipated by the Chair

Executive Session if necessary

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made at 7:50 pm by Commr. Warchol and seconded by Commr. Prifti.

Vote: The motion was approved unanimously 5-0.