

WMGLD  
P.O. BOX 190 480 North Ave.  
Wakefield, MA 01880  
Tel. (781) 246-6363 Fax (781)  
246-0419



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**

**December 6, 2023**

#### **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  
Joe Collins, Business Analyst- Energy Services  
Sylvia Vaccaro, Minute Secretary

Julie Smith Galvin, Town Liaison

#### **Members of the Public**

Stephen Carriere

#### **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 inquired about the hiring process and communications with potential new hires. He noted that an applicant had not received communications from the department about their submission. Pete noted that it is WMGLD policy to notify applicants and he will speak to the new Office Manager to ensure that this process is followed in the future.

### **COMMISSIONER REMARKS:**

Commr. Boettcher stated that he wanted to take this opportunity to thank the department and staff for their exceptional work and their response time to the multiple outages from pole strikes in the past few weeks. He said that several people reached out to him directly to commend the department and staff on their exemplary work and response time. These incidents highlight the exceptional management and staff at WMGLD, reflecting the professionalism, outstanding training and the substantial investment made in the modernization of the grid. Commr. Daly noted that the vote to adopt the Specialized Energy Code passed with overwhelming support at the Town Meeting.

### **TOWN COUNCIL LIASON:**

Julie stated that she is interested in an update on the Energy Park.

### **Public Comments**

None

### **SECRETARY'S REPORT**

Approval of the November 1, 2023, minutes was before the Board for approval.

**A motion** to approve the November 1, 2023, minutes with amendments provided in the Board book was made by Commr. Boettcher and seconded by Commr. Prifti.

**Vote:** The motion was approved unanimously 5-0.

### **Old Business**

#### **Project Updates**

#### **Energy Park**

Pete noted that the Home Rule Petition passed both the House and Senate. It then went to the Governor's office where it was signed and sent back to the Town and Town Council awaiting approval of the easement. Attys. Mullen and McCarthy are working on the documents to transfer the land at the former Burns substation, which will be used as a park and the 2.5 acres behind Beebe substation, which will be deemed conservation land back to the Town. The Maple Way reforestation is planned for next year. Brett Riley,

WMGLD's arborist and tree planter is working with Dennis Fazio from the Town on the reforestation plan to ensure there are different varieties of trees planted. Commr. Kallay asked if Pete will be reviewing all the land transfer plans at next Monday's Town Council meeting. Pete noted that he was unsure whether the details behind the land transfer would be covered at that meeting and that the attorneys will be addressing all the requirements of the Home Rule Petition.

## **Community Solar – Discussion**

Pete noted that work continues with the WMGLD roof and completion is expected in January, 2024. An informational session for the public will be held at the Beebe Library on January 25, 2024. Joe Collins stated that a first draft of the presentation has been shared, including why WMGLD is doing it, and that it is designed for those customers that may not have the opportunity to have solar at their residence. He reviewed the slides for the session with the Board. Commr. Boettcher suggested that the info session be advertised in the Item, through bill inserts, and social media. Commr. Kallay recommended checking with the Beebe Library to see if they would add this event to their calendar and website. Commr. Prifti commented that a sample bill to illustrate to the customer what the charge would look like on their own bill may be beneficial. Joe said that interested customers can request up to 5 kWh, although the department will only offer 1 kW shares to start and increase that amount if additional capacity is available. Pete asked the Board to submit their comments and recommendations on the presentation before the info session, so the program and presentation can be tweaked before the info session. Commr. Kallay mentioned that having FAQs on the WMGLD website about this program will also be valuable. Commr. Daly noted that it would be helpful to separate the low-income and non-low-income costs and benefits of the program. Joe stated that he will work on a table that illustrates these differences.

## **2024 Energy Efficiency Programs**

Joe noted one significant modification to the program is that EV customers will now receive a rebate for a charger purchase instead of the charger itself. Customers will have the choice of three different brands of EV chargers to purchase (ChargePoint, JuiceBox, and Emporia). These brands were selected for their compatibility with the MMWEC program. Customers will still be required to sign the charging agreement to receive up to a \$650 rebate. This eliminates the need for WMGLD to purchase and inventory these EV chargers. Commr. Boettcher commented that the battery storage program is very restrictive because of the brands of batteries that are eligible for the program. He said that all the contractors he spoke to will not install these brands. Joe stated that he will mention this at this month's MMWEC meeting. Commr. Warchol inquired as what would happen if someone submitted a rebate application and the Energy Efficiency Program had already exceeded the allocated budget. Pete stated that if the rebate did not move the needle significantly on the overall EE program budget, and that we would rebate the customer and either process it and record an overspending for the current

year or perhaps hold WMGLD recovery of the cost over to the next year. Commr. Prifti remarked that the yard equipment section requires clarification on exactly how many yard equipment rebates a customer can receive per year. Joe commented that this will be addressed.

## **Strategic Planning Discussion for January Meeting**

Pete said that the questions from Jon that he shared with the Board were to get them thinking about what they wanted to discuss at the meeting. He said that the Board can give him their ideas and concerns and he will share them with Jon before the meeting. Commr. Prifti stated that perhaps a discussion on what tasks the Board wants to focus on and the time frames to complete these tasks would be constructive.

## **New Business**

### **Tariff on Bill Financing**

Ipswich Electric Light Department is piloting a Tariff on Bill financing program. Ipswich received a grant from the DOER to fund the initial pilot program for five customers and are seeking a federal grant to continue the program beyond the pilot. Pete mentioned that there are a few concerns with this type of program that must be considered before pursuing a program like this. One concern is how this program would be funded. Also, if work is completed and the customer moves before the money is paid back how would WMGLD recoup the money. Is the new owner going to assume that debt? Without a lien on the property there is no protection for WMGLD. Another issue that may arise is if the customer has financial difficulties and cannot pay their bill. Are you allowed to disconnect their service? Landlord and tenant situation is another area that would be difficult to navigate. Mark mentioned that WMGLD does offer a financing program through the Savings bank where WMGLD pays for the for the loan closing costs and buys down the interest rate by a half of a percent. To date no one has taken advantage of this program. Joe noted that MMWEC is looking to establish a financing program with a zero percent interest rate and is applying for grants from the federal government. Both Pete and Mark stated that a zero percent financing program using a pooled loan fund managed by MMWEC would be a cleaner and less risky program because the risks would not be borne solely by WMGLD and MMWEC could bring on financing program-specific expertise to develop a program that is well designed and administered. Commr. Kallay requested to see the original Ipswich presentation. Pete said he will forward the revised presentation with adjustments to reflect the current offering to the Board. He noted that Ipswich may have some results from the program to share next year.

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

Commr. Prifti remarked that a police officer was killed today, and two utility workers were injured when a car crashed through a National Grid work site in

Waltham. Pete stated that WMGLD will conduct a Safety Stand Down in the morning. Commr. Boettcher asked Commr. Prifti for an update on Order 20-80 by the Department of Public Utilities (DPU.) Commr. Prifti stated that the 20-80 order will be discussed in detail during the strategic meeting next month. He said that the DPU will not be supportive of continuing with natural gas consumption. Pete noted that it includes language about the expansion of gas systems and the need to show that all other alternatives were considered before the expansion. He explained that WMGLD does not fall under the same requirements, however we have been acting as though we do with the gas moratorium for multi-families and now with the Specialized Energy Code.

**A motion** to adjourn was made at 8:28 pm by Commr. Kallay and seconded by Commr. Prifti

**Vote:** The motion was approved unanimously 5-0.