

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

September 6, 2023

IN ATTENDANCE:

Comms., 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
Sara Ericksen, Facilities and Procurement Manager
Sylvia Vaccaro, Minute Secretary

Julie Smith – Galvin, Town Liaison
Mike Hyland, Executive Director, NEPPA

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

COMMISSIONER REMARKS:

Commr. Boettcher noted that Councilor McLane passed on a compliment that he received from a very pleased gas customer on Converse Street. The customer commented that not only was the work performed efficiently and professionally, but the gas supervisor and his crew were both respectful and polite.

A motion to move Section E under New Business, Item #2 out of order was made by Commr. Boettcher and seconded by Commr. Prifti.

Vote: The motion was approved unanimously 5-0.

Discussion of NEPPA Annual Conference

Comm. Boettcher mentioned that he attended the Annual NEPPA Conference which was held in August. Industry experts conducted various sessions about how ISO New England and utilities are addressing the rapidly changing landscape around generation, supply, and transmission while continuing to electrify and move towards net zero goals throughout the region. Some examples of the sessions included fuel futures, technology and innovations, transmission capacity, and legislative updates.

Mike Hyland, Executive Director of NEPPA (New England Public Power) was on hand to present Pete Dion with the NEPPA Distinguished Service Award. This award recognizes individuals or organizations who have gone above and beyond providing service to a NEPPA member utility. Mike stated that Pete has been an effective public power leader. Pete has served as president of MMWEC (Massachusetts Wholesale Electric Company) for the past fourteen years and that Pete is also the president of MEAM (Municipal Electric Association of Massachusetts). Pete extended his appreciation and thanks to Mike for this honor. The Board and staff congratulated Pete on his award.

TOWN COUNCIL LIASON:

Julie Smith Galvin stated that she is the Town Council's liaison and is pleased to offer her assistance to the Board.

Public Comments

None

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Approval of the July 19, 2023, minutes was before the Board for approval.

A motion to approve the July 19, 2023, minutes with amendments provided in the Board book was made by Commr. Prifti and seconded by Commr. Boettcher.

Vote: The motion was approved unanimously 5-0.

Commr. Warchol inquired as to when a presentation on load shedding would be made available. He did state that he can provide a more detailed presentation for the Board with the ISO requirements, load shed tool functionality, and the load shed process. Comm. Warchol requested this be added to the Commissioner's request log. Pete noted that a reverse 911 call can be made to notify customers if their circuit will be affected by a load shedding event. Commr. Boettcher asked if this would only be for customers who signed up for the town's Code Red program. Pete did confirm that this is true, and that we do encourage customers to sign up for Code Red. Pete said that it is important to educate critical customers that they need to have backup systems in place to withstand a few hours without power. The critical customer list helps us to identify them if there is an extended power outage. Anything more than that, WMGLD would be proactive to help them. Dave Polson noted that critical care list customers are also identified on our GIS system. Commr. Kallay inquired as to how circuits would be prioritized for load shedding. Pete stated that it depends on how much load needs to be shed and the load on the circuit. Dave noted that there is not a prioritization of circuits but an order and a rotation.

OLD BUSINESS:

Project Updates

Energy Park

Pete stated that Representative Kate Lipper-Garabedian was incredibly helpful in shepherding the Home-Rule petition through the House and it is now in the Senate. Pete noted that he reached out to Sen. Lewis's office for help to shepherd it out of the Senate. Pete commented that staff is working on bids for the various equipment all while being careful not to commit before the Home-Rule petition is passed. He mentioned that we are approaching the deadline to order equipment.

Facilities and Procurement Update

Sara Ericksen shared an update on the Facilities and Procurement Department activities. She stated that order lead times have improved slightly over this fiscal year. WMGLD's fleet now includes a new hybrid trouble truck. Two electric transit vans for the gas department have also been added this year. She explained that in January of 2021 she ordered a Ford EV Lighting pickup truck that still has not been received. Ford has now changed this to a 2023 model and it should be built this Fall. A Hyundai Santa Fe hybrid vehicle will be added to the fleet next year.

Sara noted that WMGLD is looking to add a hybrid bucket trucks going forward and is working on specifications. She mentioned that the State of Massachusetts has recently recognized the difficulties municipalities are experiencing when ordering vehicles, so they have removed the vehicle list from their website that you were required to utilize when procuring vehicles. She stated that, as long as you can prove you have done your due diligence, you may procure a vehicle from wherever one is available. Sara commented that based on the numbers since we acquired the new hybrid trouble truck in June 2023, we are anticipating that we will save approximately 1,100 gallons of diesel fuel and 13 tons on carbon emissions, annually. Pete noted that the lift system as well as the heating and cooling of the cab can also be powered by the battery. When the battery runs down and switches to diesel it simultaneously charges the battery. He mentioned that the new trouble truck is equipped with JEMS (Jobsite Energy Management System) that provides a method to eliminate idling. Altec's software program called Altec Connect will be able to provide detailed reports on real-time fuel and carbon emissions costs and savings.

Commr. Boettcher stated that he **The Environmental Sustainability Committee (ESC)** just completed the greenhouse gas inventory for the Town and would like to have this information forwarded to the ESC (~~Environmental Sustainability Committee~~) to show the Town's reduction in greenhouse gas **as tracking GHG reductions is a requirement of being** a Green Community. Commr. Boettcher stated it would be great to have the hybrid trouble truck with the price saving printout and the gas service van at the upcoming EV showcase event.

Sara noted the completion of the garage door installation and the maintenance on the WMGLD roof in preparation for the solar project. The solar project is expected to start installation in the late fall with completion next year. She explained that during the pandemic many long-term contracts were simply extended but now we have gone out to bid and are now back on schedule on all the major recurring contracts such as paving, tree trimming and custodial services.

2023 Strategic Planning Discussion

Pete reached out to Jon Wortmann and he cannot make the October Board meeting, but would be available for October 17, 2023. The Board discussed the calendar for the remaining year and decided to have Jon Wortmann conduct a separate strategic meeting on October 17, 2023.

Community Solar Program Discussion

Pere stated that the Board has discussed the structure of the program in the past and there was concern about the delta between low and non-low income being too disparate. Pete said that he shared the spreadsheet with the Board so they could review and adjust the numbers to have further conversations about the program. A discussion ensued as to how to adjust the rates and sign-up fees to make this beneficial for all customers. It was agreed that the payback period should be

approximately seven years. Pete mentioned that it is best to keep the program as simple as possible and we also must consider the parameters of our billing system. He said that he and the staff will look at the numbers again and get back to the Board. The program would roll out in the beginning of next year along with marketing/educational sessions for customers with a program start date of April 1, 2024.

New Business

2023 Goals and Objectives Mid-Year Update

Pete and staff provided a mid year update on the 2023 Goals and Objectives.

He noted that there has been one loss time accident and 2 personal injuries to date. He stated that operational performance objectives are on target and ahead of most goals. He said that the key metrics that an electric utility is measured on are SAIFI (System Average Interruption Frequency Index) and CAIDI (System Average Interruption Duration Index). WMGLD has reduced the average number of outages per customer to one every two years. On the gas side we have reduced the class 3 leaks down to 40 already and will be below the target by the end of the year. WMGLD has replaced 792 gas meters and are on target to replace 935 meters.

Pete explained that we continue with awareness of energy efficiency programs through improved marketing. Commr. Kallay inquired if we could have materials available about WMGLD forums at upcoming events like the EV event, Wakefield 101, and Town Day. Commr. Boettcher asked if it is possible to have a QR code available for people to scan so they can easily register for these forums. Pete said that he will have Jeff Morris investigate this. Commr. Prifti suggested tiered rebates, for example, if a customer is installing a heat pump plus installing insulation and or windows. Pete advised that any reductions in other rebates could potentially be applied to the tiered rebates. Commr. Kallay stated that she would like to see community feedback on the community solar project before the program rollout. Julie Smith- Galvin suggested a focus group with perhaps the new Housing Trust Committee may be beneficial. Commr. Warchol suggested an in-person session at the library. Pete said he will plan an event for the beginning of December.

Moving on to the financials, Pete stated that we are on target for most financials but are still behind on having 3 months of cash on hand because of the high prices last year. Commr. Boettcher inquired about the solar project for the Americal building. Pete noted that the DPW had other projects that came up, so this will probably be delayed until next year. Commr. Daly informed the Board that the DOE (Department of Energy) announced formula funding has been released for Massachusetts in the amount of 9 million for fiscal year 2022-2023 and the Massachusetts CEC (Clean Energy Center) is going to have a solicitation process for disbursement of funds for projects. She will forward this

announcement to Joe Collins and copy the Board. Pete explained that on the capital plan the electric side is 100% on track. The gas side has seen the reprioritization of some streets due to changes from the Town. The streets submitted for the grant will be pushed to next spring because of requirements of the grant. He noted that we will be caught up with all the dead mains by the end of September. He said that WMGLD is applying for a new federal grant to complete gas main replacement for the Greenwood side of Town for the 2026 timeframe.

Pete stated that requiring new single-family construction to be all electric will be helpful. Commr. Boettcher said that the utility needs help in getting the town to meet the State's 2050 Net Zero goals and that is where the building code with the specialized opt in code has given the municipalities the pathway to the 2050 goals. Pete stated that unless you marry the utilities policy with another policy then the builders will take the least cost option.

Environmental Sustainability Committee Representative

Commr. Boettcher advised the Board that due to changes in his job, he will not be able to continue as the liaison to the ESC. Commr. Daly volunteered to be the liaison.

A motion to nominate Commr. Daly as the liaison to the ESC was made by Commr. Boettcher and seconded by Commr. Prifti

Vote: The motion was approved unanimously 5-0.

A motion to adjourn was made at 9:03 pm by Commr. Kallay and seconded by Commr. Boettcher

Vote: The motion was approved unanimously 5-0.