



WMGLD

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Peter D. Dion, General Manager

Philip Courcy, Chair

Thomas Boettcher, Secretary

Kenneth J. Chase, Jr.

Jennifer Kallay

John J. Warchol

## WAKEFIELD MUNICIPAL GAS & LIGHT DEPARTMENT

### BOARD OF GAS & LIGHT COMMISSIONERS MEETING

September 2, 2020

### MINUTES

#### IN ATTENDANCE:

Commrs. Phil Courcy, Chairman  
Thomas Boettcher, Secretary  
Kenneth J. Chase, Jr.  
Jennifer Kallay  
John J. Warchol

Peter Dion, General Manager, WMGLD  
Mark Cousins, Financial Manager  
Dave Polson, Engineering and Operations Manager  
Sylvia Vaccaro, Office Manager

Julie Smith-Galvin, Town Liaison

#### PLACE: ZOOM MEETING

#### CALL TO ORDER:

Chair. Courcy called meeting to order at 6:32 P.M. and informed the Board the meeting is being recorded. There were no members of the public in attendance.

**Chair Remarks:** Commissioner Courcy commented that WMGLD has had a very busy month with heat waves, tropical storms, mutual aids and a dig in.

**Commissioner Remarks:** Commr. Kallay noted the Town applied for a META grant, a technical assistance grant, with the focus on backup power resilience for Town Hall. Julie Smith-Galvin said that she does not know the details of the grant. Pete Dion stated that he did offer his assistance to Joe. Commr. Kallay explained that a customer has moved out of town and has donated their EV charger to the Town of Wakefield for Town use. Julie Smith-Galvin said that she is going to pick up the charger and bring it to the Town.

## **Town Council Comments**

Julie Smith-Galvin stated she had nothing to report. She offered her thanks to WMGLD for all the work that has been done in town.

## **Secretary's Report**

Approval of minutes from the July 15, 2020 meeting was before the Board for approval. Commr. Chase noted on page 8 under Covid, the word that is repeated and should be omitted. Pete Dion stated that Commr. Kallay had the following edits:

Page 4, the 4<sup>th</sup> paragraph down, to add we do not need to adopt the renewable trust charge.

Page 5, the 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph after at that time should be followed by a comma not a period.

Page 7, under New Business the heading should read The Energy Section of the Resilient Wakefield Dashboard

Page 8, second paragraph insert the word available after the phrase safety classes will be

No further amendments.

**A motion** to approve the minutes of the July 15, 2020 meeting with the proposed changes was made by Commissioner Chase and seconded by Commissioner Boettcher.

**Vote: The motion was approved unanimously.**

Pete Dion echoed Commr. Courcy's account that it has indeed been a busy month. Two weeks ago, Sunday, we experienced a storm that swept through leaving devastation and outages in its path. For the first time, we had to call in Mutual Aid. Georgetown, Groveland, Rowley, and Middleton assisted us in restoring power. We would not have been able to do it without their help. The storm hit at 5:30 on Sunday and by the next morning, all but 50 customers had their power restored. By the end of Monday, all customers were restored. Commr. Boettcher commented that he received nothing but positive feedback as to how quickly and professionally WMGLD responded to the storm. Pete noted that Tom Walsh, the Town's Emergency Management Director, will be setting up a storm debriefing meeting to review processes and discuss potential areas of improvement. Pete stated that during the storm he was able to go out and check in with both the police and fire departments, allowing him to see where emergency personnel were dispatched. This was important to note, so police and fire, could be freed up and moved to where they were needed next.

Pete also mentioned that WMGLD provided Mutual Aid to Westfield and Chicopee a few weeks earlier, when a Tropical Storm Isaias storm hit their area.

## **Old Business:**

## **Project Updates**

### **COVID 19**

The department has been closed to the public since March 18th. Customer service personnel are split up with some working remotely and others coming in on alternating days. Gas and Electric crews remain separated in to two groups originally with focus on responding to emergencies and limited routine work, but have been aggressively working on construction projects within the capital plan since June. Workers that are exposed to someone who has tested positive are being quarantined for 14 days. Workers that have flown are quarantined and must have a negative COVID test before returning to work.

A remote work policy and a modified vacation carry over policy for 2021 has been created to adjust to the impacts of the pandemic.

### **NGRID 345KV Project**

Pete Dion explained that this past Monday there was a dig in on an intermediate pressure gas main on Montrose Ave. Police, Fire, and WMGLD crews were immediately on the scene. The leak was isolated quickly. The marks were clear, but United Civil dug into it. The work practice they used was not correct. United Civil used mechanical equipment, when they should have hand scraped the top of the pipe. Commr. Boettcher inquired as to what the ramifications of this incident would be. Pete stated there probably would be fined, plus they will have to pay our costs. Commr. Courcy stated the project has been shut down, while there is an investigation. He also stated that National Grid will have to improve their communication with the town as far as what their schedule will be going forward toward completion. The towns people are growing weary. Pete noted that Mark Pebley, from WMGLD checks in with National Grid's contractor, United Civil, every morning to review the schedule for the day and the work to be completed as a safety check. Pete said the frustrating thing was that they already knew where the pipe was located. They were using an incorrect work practice and snapped off the valve.

Commr. Kallay inquired if WMGLD is planning to have an outage map available on our website because she feels this would be of benefit to our customers. Pete Dion stated that we do have a map that we utilize in house, but we need to test it before sharing on our website. Dave Polson reiterated that it is scheduled to be tested internally in the coming months before we go live with it on our website. Commr. Boettcher agreed that this will assist customers during a storm, when our phone lines are busy.

### **McGrail Substation Upgrades**

There has been significant work done within the last 45 days. All equipment has arrived and is being wired and tested. Landscaping upgrades including stone and a retaining wall are under way. The two old 4kv transformers will be retired this fall. We are hoping to energize the transformers early in October and begin to cut over the 4kv load. Ultimately the 2 gray transformers will be gone, and the tan switch gear will go away next year into 2022.

Commr. Boettcher commented that the yard work is looking good especially the wall next to the dealership. Pete said that once all fencing is up, we will replace the sidewalk on Water Street. side and around the corner.

Pete also stated that we were able to get a lot of gas work done on New Salem Street.

### **Legislative Update**

The "Muni" language has been incorporated into the House bill and there is a conference committee working to negotiate a combined bill. The goal of both chambers is to get the energy bill approved this year. This will help us for setting the rules of the game going forward. Commr. Kallay inquired if there will be an opportunity at a future meeting to see what our base line is under the language in the House bill. Pete explained that we are at 44.6% based on the current definition in the bill. We have flow rights coming from the Hydro Quebec line and we have a proposal from MMWEC to pick up some green power at an economical rate. We will be executing this proposal, thereby bringing us to 46% of a goal of 50%. He also remarked that we will have opportunities to reach the 2030 goal much sooner.

Commr. Boettcher requested an update on the sundowning of the solar rebate program. Pete stated that we did receive the additional funding to reach a total of 250kw from DOER. To be eligible for a rebate, the work must be contracted, and application submitted by 12/31/20, however they will have more time to complete the installation. We have about 47kw remaining, translating to 6-8 more projects available. Vinny is reaching out to people that had expressed interest in the past. Commr. Boettcher stated, in the future as the solar program sun downs the Board will have to discuss what they want to do going forward and what options are available. Pete did say that he has already pushed Joe Coles of MMWEC to see if DOER will do a second project due to the success of our first project. Commr. Kallay asked if the December deadline had been moved forward. Pete responded they pushed it out from 6/30/20 to 12/30/20. Commr. Boettcher will post the solar deadlines to general forums. Pete stated that he will post on Facebook and in the Item.

### **Gas Supply**

Mark Roberts from Sprague provided the Board the history of gas supply in our area over the last few years as well as, a high-level overview of WMGLD's gas supply portfolio. He stated the region does not have enough pipeline capacity to meet the regions requirements 365 days a year. Tennessee Pipeline proposed a Northeast pipeline expansion program; however, they withdrew their application from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission in May of 2016. He noted the lack of commitments from prospective customers made it economically impractical for Tennessee to pipe natural gas from the fracking fields of Pennsylvania to the Northeast. WMGLD had a conservative portfolio for the winter of 2016 -2017 and saw a relatively mild winter. The 2017-2018 portfolio was the same as the previous year, however during this winter we experienced a cold snap that lasted for 18 days. This resulted in Tennessee raising gas prices and invoking serious restrictions. Requiring all deliveries to be primary firm capacity. Meaning the only ones to have capacity were utilities, with no excess to go out to the market. This was the first time that gas was not showing up to our suppliers. Fortunately, we were able to move things around and keep the Town wet but knew we would have to make other plans going forward. This situation led to bringing in Rev LNG to support our peak winter days. In 2019, we were able to negotiate lower prices and fixed costs with Rev LNG for the winter and protect the upside. Rev LNG has been able to support WMGLD, but they do require a 3-day notice and weather may cause an issue for moving trucks. Mark stated that we have worked out a deal with Exelon-Everett for peaking service with lower demand side costs and a tick up in variable side costs for the next 2 years with next day delivery. This will reduce our costs and ensure reliability. The 2020-2022 Supply Plan & Strategy will include Exelon-Everett along with our existing National Grid assigned pipeline assets He also noted that he has reached out to Tennessee Pipeline to discuss capacity. Tennessee did express an interest in discussing the possibility of WMGLD providing assistance in upgrading their system, so that they would be able to provide WMGLD capacity. Commr. Kallay inquired about using rate payer money for this. Pete explained that it would be the same concept as the money paid to National Grid when we had to upgrade some of the infostructure in order to update the Wallace substation. Mark stated everything done is to ensure the least cost and reliability for the future.

## **Strategic Planning**

Commr. Kallay previously inquired about WMGLD adopting a mission statement. Pete sent the Board members several samples of mission statements for their review. A common thread of mission statements for utilities include cost, reliability, safety, and environmental responsibility.

A discussion ensued as how the Board would approach creating a mission statement. It was decided that the members would funnel their ideas to Pete. He would then share these ideas with staff for their input and return all comments and suggestions back to the Board for further discussion and evaluation.

## **New Business**

## **Energy Efficiency Rebate Program Update**

Pete provided an update of the Energy Efficiency Rebate Program Budget to the Board. He stated that Commr. Boettcher suggested he view a presentation of a product from Sense that allows you to track the energy use in your home to help you save both energy and money. Commr. Boettcher thought it would be beneficial to incorporate this product into our Energy Efficiency Rebate Program. Pete stated he was impressed with the valuable information you can receive from this simple to install product. He suggested that perhaps we can work with them to develop a demand management tool in the future. Pete announced there is room in our Energy Efficiency Budget to add this as a \$50.00 rebate. Sense offered to match the \$50.00 rebate on their \$299.00 product, so our customers would save \$100.00. Pete also said that we would conduct a Zoom meeting this fall to introduce the Sense product to our customers. Commr. Courcy reviewed the information and budget and agreed to adding it to the program.

**A motion** to add the Sense product to the Energy Efficiency Rebate Program was made by Commr. Courcy and seconded by Commr. Kallay.

**Vote:** Unanimously in favor.

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

Commr. Kallay asked Commr. Warchol about his research into low-income rates. Commr. Warchol will forward a link to the other Board members to review. This item will be added to next month's Board agenda.

**A motion** to adjourn was made at 8:27 p.m. by Commr. Boettcher and seconded by Commr. Kallay.

**Vote:** Unanimously in favor of adjournment.