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

Peter D. Dion, General Manager

WAKEFIELD MUNICIPAL GAS & LIGHT DEPARTMENT
BOARD OF GAS & LIGHT COMMISSIONERS MEETING

February 4, 2026

IN ATTENDANCE:

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

Peter Dion, General Manager
Mark Cousins, Finance Manager
Dave Polson, Engineering and Operations Manager
Joe Collins, Business Analyst
Olivia Tully, Business Analyst
Vinnie McMahon, Senior System Engineer
Paul Redmond, Electric Superintendent
Abdeer Chlil, System Engineer
Sylvia Vaccaro, Minute Secretary

PLACE:

**480 North Ave., Wakefield, MA
& Zoom Meeting**

CALL TO ORDER:

Commr. Kallay called the meeting to order at 6:33 pm. as Commr Boettcher was attending the meeting via ZOOM. She advised the meeting was being recorded

Members of the Public

Not present

Town Council Liaison

Not present

CHAIR REMARKS: Commr. Boettcher provided the Board with the positive feedback he received from a WMGLD gas customer who recently converted to all electric. The customer explained that he was confident in converting to all electric because of WMGLD’s reliability. He said that since he moved into the WMGLD area in August of 2021 there have only been 3 occurrences that his service was interrupted and the duration each time had been for less than 35 minutes. Commr. Boettcher also mentioned that another customer advised him that the WMGLD mobile app has some links that are directed to the wrong web page. Pete said that staff will address this issue. Commr. Boettcher also stated that ChargePoint sent out a notice that they will be assessing a 25-cent session charge when using a non-free charger. Dave said that he has not seen this charge on any of WMGLD’s invoices.

Commr. Daly inquired if Pete had received any follow up regarding the energy assessments performed at the Greenwood and Woodville schools, specifically around the need to upgrade heating and cooling equipment in the coming years. Pete stated that he would check in on the heating and cooling system plans. The Greenwood school had inquired about solar a few years ago but did not proceed. She also noted that one of the EV chargers at the head of the lake is not working. Dave explained that the EV company is trying to repair the charger remotely and are still working on it. Commr. Warchol said that there was a post on Facebook about WMGLD’s residential tree planting program. A customer requested a tree, but it has not been planted yet and does not know the status. Pete explained that 26 trees were planted last year, with 22 being deferred to Spring 2026 due to timing issues in completing the Burns Park project. Pete said that Brett Riley had reached out to 12 customers about the delay and will contact the remaining 10 about the delay.

COMMISSIONERS REMARKS

SECRETARY’S REPORT

Approval of January 14, 2026, minutes before the Board for approval.
Commr. Boettcher provided minor edits.

A motion to approve the January 14, 2026, minutes as presented in the Board book was made by Commr. Warchol and seconded by Commr. Prifti.

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

Vote: The motion was approved unanimously 5-0.

Electric Division Annual Update – 2025 Accomplishments and 2026 Goals.

–
Vinnie McMahon, Paul Redmond and Abdeer Chlil

2025 Engineering and Substation Review – Vinnie McMahon

- Energy Park conduit, cable, foundations, and equipment installation largely completed
- Energy Park BESS and Generator are operating as peak shavers (8.5MW)
- Applied for and awarded a \$2.8 million federal grant for system improvement and hardening
- Solar projects in process for NEMT and WMHS; bid awarded to Solect Energy for 2026 construction
- Quannapowitt Pkwy – new conduit installed and new apartments energized, partially occupied
- Continued Load balancing, transformer load management, and reliability projects

2025 Construction Review – Paul Redmond

Paul Redmond presented the Board with this review:

- Installed 800' of conduit on Hemlock Rd. Cable is set for cutover pending new switchgear for both schools
- Aging pole replacement program and Hurricane Preparation – 23 Poles were replaced.
- Added Reclosers and switches – 3 new L/B switches installed on circuit 0007
Continued Open Wire Secondary Replacements - 5800 ft replaced
- Hemlock Rd – one of two new circuits installed currently feeding NEMT and the new WMHS
- Lowell St – reconductored large part with 477mcm – 17 sections. 3 switches added. It's now feeding 200 Quannapowitt Pkwy apts.
- Pad mount transformer inspection and replacement – 154 inspected. 8 Replaced in 2025. 13 to be replaced in 2026

40101(d) Grant- Vinnie McMahan

- WMGLD has been awarded \$2.8 million in federal grant money to be used for grid resiliency and innovation
- We are using this money in five project phases (over four years), centered around the new Energy Park
- Upgrades include Energy Park infrastructure and over 22,000ft of underground and overhead cable reconductoring
- Cable sizes are all being increased to boost circuit capacity and to accommodate distributed energy resources

Energy Park – 2026 Goals

- BESS and Generator are currently operational as peak shavers, totaling 8.5MW
- Finish setup of microgrid controller and test microgrid operation this spring/summer
- Interconnect two Vista switches in May
- Create Energy Park SCADA screen
- Connect underground feeds to both schools to Energy Park switchgear

System-Wide Coordination Study - Abdeer Chlil

Working with PLM to analyze our entire system's relay settings, considering present and future DER installations.

- Tighten up settings to allow more protective devices (such as reclosers) on the system
- Make recommendations for relay replacements
- Improve fuse coordination map and develop plans for hard to-coordinate areas
- Update Arcflash Study from 2021 to account for major system changes, such as the Energy Park and some circuit reconfigurations

Solar: WMHS and NEMT

- WMGLD, with Solect Energy, is installing solar arrays
- 360 kW AC - WMHS
- 320 kW AC – NEMT
- Construction starting in May at NEMT and September for WMHS. Estimated 3 months per school.
- Construction will be largely complete before students move into the schools
- Additionally, we received 17 new residential solar applications in 2025, totaling 111kW DC

Underground Cable Replacement

- This will be bid as part of the 40101(d) Grant and done by a contractor after July 1, 2026
- We are replacing and upsizing 8,000ft of 1972 Lead-XLPE cable
- New configuration will accommodate new rotary being built in 2027

Hemlock Rd Circuit Installation

- This will be done by WMGLD crews under the 40101(d) Grant
- Install 2000' of 477mcm spacer cable from Farm St to the Energy Park
- This circuit will be a direct connection to Wallace Substation
- Installing second recloser for the Wallace circuit, allowing the Energy Park to be connected to Wallace Substation quickly
- Verizon to replace 4 poles on Farm St and relocate 1 pole
- Plans were reviewed with the crews and their input became part of the plan.

Reliability Efforts

Strategies implemented to improve reliability

- Testing specialized animal guards for load break switches
- Reviewing fuse coordination with Integrator to minimize outage impacts. Conducting a system-wide study to locate new reclosers and improve relay coordination
- Integrating mPower OMS for instant outage notifications to minimize dispatch lag

Wakefield Reaches 132 chargers (indicative of the minimum number of EVs) in 2025; Growth Slows as Tax Credits Sunset

EV Chargers & TOU Metering

- Our TOU program is highly effective in changing customer charging behavior. Residents who charge during off-peak hours enjoy the benefit of our most affordable rates.
- It's a simple way to save money and help manage peak demand in Wakefield

Impact And Focus of Electrification

- Perform continuous analysis to manage increasing load/demand
- Check capacity when customers add EV chargers or heat pumps to existing transformers
- Keeping the GIS up to date with EVs and HPs helps identify quickly growing areas for electric vehicles and heat pumps.
- Assumptions: WMGLD load growth forecast is 1.5% per year 2022 – 2025 (without electrification) Transportation projections source ISO-NE "Final 2021 Transportation Electrification Forecast" yrs. 2022 – 2030, from 2031 – 2050 WMGLD is projecting 5% growth
- Heating projections source ISO-NE "Final 2021 Heating Electrification Forecast" Forecast" yrs. 2022 – 2030, from 2031 – 2050 WMGLD is projecting 5% growth

Old Business

Project Updates

Energy Park

Vinnie provided updates in his presentation
Massachusetts Municipal Association Conference Topics

Geothermal Pilot Programs

Pete stated that the meeting was attended by commissioners, vendors and MMWEC. The focus was on generating ideas for topics of discussion at future meetings. New commissioners also had the opportunity to ask questions about their roles and to view orientation videos designed to support new commissioners. Jean- Jacques (Chairperson of Marblehead Light Department Commissioners) led a brief discussion at the end of the meeting about geothermal pilots. Pete noted that the current geothermal pilots by IOUs are not successful; one cancelled, the other failing to transition customers off gas.

Pete raised concerns about a potential geothermal pilot for WMGLD. Not only technology maturity, but the ongoing responsibility for limited customers. If the pilot does not expand then WMGLD would be responsible for 20-30 years for only a few customers. Commr. Prifti noted that customers should take ownership of their own systems. Commr. Kallay said that Jean-Jacques mentioned Marblehead's recent application for a Mass CEC technical feasibility grant for geothermal networks with potential interest from other MLP towns. He inquired whether WMGLD would be interested in providing a letter of support for Marblehead's application to share learnings. The WMGLD Commissioners discussed the consideration of customer types beyond residential, highlighting applicability to commercial, industrial, or multifamily housing depending on gas metering. Pete stated that we can file a letter of support for learning the results. Commr. Kallay said she will update Jean- Jacques on tonight's discussion. Pete informed the board that he voted for the following topics for future Massachusetts Municipal Association meetings:

- The future of the gas business and its impact on municipalities and the region amidst political and market changes
- Suggested to invite state- level discussion on ongoing and future roles for gas in the energy mix, noting doubt about a gas-free system by 2050 and what that would look like

Discussion on Employee Handbook Policies and Procedures

The Board provided minor edits to the Employee Handbook Policies and Procedures and discussed the potential for some additional content. Pete stated that the edits would be incorporated and a revised version would be provided to the Board for review.

Winter Rate Update

Pete explained that the fuel charge has increased due to the second coldest winter in 20 years not only in New England but also in the Mid-Atlantic and South, which in turn makes the usually inexpensive gas from Tennessee flowing through our restricted pipeline more expensive. He noted that gas prices have increased significantly over the past 45 days. Mark Roberts from Sprague Energy has been in contact two or three days a week about gas pricing. The gas fuel charge is \$2.30, which remains below both Grid and Eversource rates including recently approved/required discounts. The discounts for IOUs include a combination of refunds from alternative compliance payments and temporary delays or deferrals in payments. Pete said that the electric rate increased by 1.5 cents, still 2 cents below the IOUs. These rates are temporary with expectations for possible relief next month. He noted that staff are working on a press release about the increase in the fuel charge and even with increase WMGLD rates are still competitive. If customers have questions about the IOU's 25% discount, staff will address those on a case-by-case basis. WMGLD has offered delays and or deferrals in payments in other years and is actively monitoring the need for this in 2026.

New Business

Data Center Rate

Joe Collins shared data he received while researching other data centers models in muni and IOU territories

Benefits of a data center in Wakefield

- High consistent load
- Steady state load during peak periods (known quantity)
- Could pay for infrastructure upgrades and/or support with the town's economic development efforts
- WMGLD has available capacity on our system

Considerations:

- Limited job creation
- Cost shifts to other rate payers
- Interconnection requirements (such as priority status for reconnection after an outage) and backup power
- Self-supply support for renewable energy goals
- Environmental impacts, potentially related to fuel types used for backup power
- Siting and permitting considerations and community input (to be flagged for the town)
- What does a rate look like?
- How do we get the word out?
- What makes Wakefield an attractive option?

- Rates
- Reliability
- Possibility of PILOT (instead of property taxes) dealing with the Town (Chapter 121A)

Discussion ensued about future data centers and protecting rate payers to ensure that they are not burdened with any data center costs. There was also an interest in bringing this topic to a future Town Council meeting to solicit broader community input and to ensure the town has the opportunity to establish guidance/requirements for data centers.

Any other matter not reasonably anticipated by the Chair.

Executive Session if necessary

1. Association Grievance Procedures
2. Executive Session Meeting Minutes – Approve minutes for 11/14, 11/25 and 12/5
3. Adjournment

A motion to enter into Executive Session for the approval of minutes for 11/14, 11/25, and 12/5 and then exit from Executive session for the sole purpose of closing the public meeting was made at 8:14pm by Commr. Warchol and seconded by Commr. Prifti.

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

Vote: The motion was approved unanimously 5-0.

A motion to come out of Executive session was made by Commr. Daly at 8:50 pm and seconded by Commr. Prifti.

Vote: The motion was approved unanimously 5-0.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn open session was made by Commr. Prifti at 8:52 pm and seconded by Commr. Warchol.