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Peter D. Dion, General Manager

WAKEFIELD MUNICIPAL GAS & LIGHT DEPARTMENT

BOARD OF GAS & LIGHT COMMISSIONERS MEETING

March 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
Raven Fournier, Senior System Engineer
John Riley, Gas Superintendent
Sylvia Vaccaro, Minute Secretary

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

CALL TO ORDER:

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

Members of the Public

Li Li Allen
33 Oak Street

Town Council Liaison

Not present

CHAIR REMARKS: Commr. Boettcher wanted to thank the team and staff for the preparation they completed ahead of the blizzard, which helped ensure there were no outages. Their ongoing attention to detail and willingness to remain on standby is greatly appreciated.

COMMISSIONERS REMARKS: None

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Approval of February 4, 2026, minutes before the Board for approval.
Commr. Warchol provided minor edits.

A motion to approve the February 4, 2026, minutes as amended was made by Commr. Kallay and seconded by Commr. Boettcher.

Vote: The motion was approved unanimously 5-0.

Gas Division Annual Update – 2025 Accomplishments and 2026 Goals
Raven Fournier and John Riley

John reviewed the construction projects for 2025

PHMSA FY22 Grant Project Water St & Crescent St Project
~replace 1.37 miles

- Application submitted - August 2022
- Awarded - April 2023
- Environmental Assessment – July through December 2023
- Engineering & Planning – Spring 2024
- Bidding Materials & Labor – Spring 2024
- Construction Phase – Fall 2024 through Spring 2025
- Completed in MONTH YEAR

DPW Coordination Project Yearly Dead Main Project – Main St Replacement Project

- Project replaced 7380 feet (1.39 mi) of steel main on Main St
- Work started March 2025
- 90% Complete

John noted that this was not completed due to staffing issues. Pete explained that the Gas Department was down three people in the 4th quarter of 2025 due to a varity of issues.

John explained that over the past 5 years there has been a 2-3% increase in plastic mains thereby decreasing the number of bare steel mains. The number of coated steel mains is going to start trending down due to new State safety codes that apply to cathodic protection, so we will be accelerating the retirement of our coated steel mains. He said most of those services are outside already so the move out meter numbers will start to slow down.

Raven provided an overview of the system leak data. In 2018, there were 47 Class 2 leaks, which have been reduced to 1 in 2025. Class 3 Significant Environmental Impact (SEI) leaks decreased from 20 in 2018 to 1 in 2025. In 2018, there were 70 Class 3 non-SEI leaks, which have been reduced to 10 in 2025. Overall, total system leaks have decreased from 137 in 2018 to 12 in 2025.

She reviewed the following information with the Board:

New Code Requirements
- In Oct 2024, Mass DPU issued new set of Safety Codes
- Working with SME contractor to implement into plans & procedures
- Working to Implement new codes in field

Coated Steel Replacement
- Coated Steel in Wakefield system is Cathodically Protected
- Requires testing
- New Mass. State codes require either
- Reestablish CP levels within 1 year (repair)
- Replace pipe within 2 years
- Significantly Reduced number of main test points needed
- 2021 - 33 test points
- 2025 - 17 test points
- After 2026 project completion → 14 test points

Raven also reviewed the planned work for 2026

Planned Work 2026 Yearly Dead Main Project Replace mains on Mansfield Dr, Sesame St, Hancock Rd, Avon Ct, & Edwards Ave
- Currently in Bidding Process
- Work to start Spring 2026
- Project will replace 3740 feet (0.71 mi) of steel main
- Project focuses on replacement of coated steel mains and services
- Aligns with DPW paving plans

Pleasant Street Service Replacement Project Replace steel services on Pleasant St
- Address 13 Cathodic Protection failures
- Replace 10 Bare Steel services

Commr. Warchol requested that the Board discuss the General Manager's report prior to discussing Old Business. He asked whether the 54 residential tree planting sign-ups included the 22 requests remaining from last year. Dave clarified that the 22 leftover requests from last year are in addition to the 54 new sign-ups, bringing the total number of trees scheduled for planting this year to 76.

Old Business

Project Updates

Energy Park

Pete stated that Dave and Vinny McMahon, Senior Systems Engineer, have been working on a backup plan for the switches that have continued to face delivery delays. They have also been regularly meeting with both schools to coordinate planning. At this time, the vendor is expecting the switches to be supplied by May 2026, so the team is developing alternative plans in case the equipment is not delivered on time, as the project has an established in-service date. Dave said in the meantime, work has focused on programming the microgrid controller and completing some physical preparation work, including making connections, where the switches will eventually be installed. Crews have also been performing both overhead and underground work at the park. Some of these activities have slowed due to recent weather conditions but are expected to ramp up again soon. He reported that the project remains on track to meet the in-service goal for the high school in order to support their temporary occupancy permit anticipated at the end of April. Dave said if the switch delivery date does slip again, it is not expected to cause a major issue right now, as there is still some flexibility in the schedule. Pete explained that we have applied considerable pressure and indicated that we would elevate the issue to the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources (DOER), if necessary, since this project has some visibility. While Wesco bid the project, the delay appears to be with SNC switch manufacturer.

Commr. Boettcher inquired about scheduling a ribbon cutting ceremony for the Burns Park rededication. Pete explained that Ann Hadley will reach out to Judy Wallace, the family's representative, to help coordinate a date for the event.

Winter Rate Update

Pete said that rates increased last month due to the extremely cold winter and the cost of the commodity was very high. Based on the February conditions, we were able to reduce those costs. For the next set of bills, commodity charges will decrease by roughly two-thirds. The electric fuel charge, which had been increased by 1.5 cents, has been reduced by 1 cent and is now only a half cent for February. On the gas side, the cost of gas charge was lowered by $0.20, bringing it down from $1.69 to $1.44, which is close to where it had previously been. Pete said while the office has received some customer calls regarding the higher bills, staff have been working with customers to explain the increase. Unlike a similar situation 8-10 years ago when the rate adjustments were delayed, we responded more quickly this time. Adjusting the rates during the same period as the cold weather made it easier for customers to see the connection between higher usage and higher commodity costs. He also said that although February bills from suppliers have not yet been received, discussions with MMWEC and Sprague indicate confidence in lowering the charges for February usage on the upcoming March bills. Accounts Receivables appear in good shape, though the next few months will provide a clearer picture as there is typically lag following the winter season.

Large Load Rate Discussion

Pete stated that Jenn and Sharon had shared information on this topic. He thought this should begin as a policy discussion, including reviewing concerns, guidelines, and overall objectives before even establishing a rate.

Joe reviewed the following with the Board:

Benefits of a data center in Wakefield
- High consistent load
- Steady state load during peak periods (known quantity)
- Could pay for infrastructure upgrades
- WMGLD has available capacity on our system

Other considerations for attracting/ siting a data center in Wakefield
- Impact on all rate payers
- 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) deal with the Town (Chapter 121A)

Contractual/ Tariff Design Considerations
- Financial responsibility of initial and ongoing system upgrades
- Duration of contract
- Minimum capacity requirement for rate eligibility
- Monthly minimum contracted demand charge
- Early exit fee
- Customer Class specific rate – i.e., Data Centers
- Onsite renewable energy and DERs
- Green Initiatives and renewable energy portfolio
- Customer Credit rating and collateral
- Attracting large-load customers

Helpful resource: US DOE Berkeley Lab January 2025 Article – Electricity Rate Designs for Large Loads: Evolving Practices and Opportunities - https://eta-publications.lbl.gov/sites/default/files/2025-01/electricity_rate_designs_for_large_loads_evolving_practices_and_opportunities_final.pdf

Common Inclusions in Large Load Contracts/ Tariffs
- Financial responsibility of initial and ongoing system upgrades – not always specifically spelled out, but rates are designed to protect against cost burden to ratepayers and stranded cost of upgrades
- Duration of contract 12-20 Years
- Minimum capacity requirement for rate eligibility varies widely – 25MW (low end) 500MW (high end)

• Monthly minimum contracted demand charge 60%-90% of contracted demand
• Early exit fee varies
• Customer Credit rating and collateral – Good rating, deposits, performance guarantees
• Customer Class specific rate – i.e., Data Centers (Ohio Power example)
• Onsite renewable energy and DERs
• Green Initiatives and renewable energy portfolio
• Attracting large-load customers – Flexible rates (lower per kWh charge), expedited interconnection, and reliability

Pete explained that the discussion regarding large load customers was initiated because the utility currently has available capacity at the Wallace Substation that could potentially accommodate a large load customer. At the time this substation was built, a data center in town was using approximately 2-3 megawatts with plans to expand to 15 megawatts, which helped justify the investment. That data center has left town. As a result, the system has surplus capacity and noted that attracting an appropriate customer could allow the utility to generate additional revenue. Based on current system planning, the Wallace substation could support approximately 25-30 megawatts of new load, which could potentially be accommodated for at least the next 15 years without significantly impacting long-term goals. Commr. Boettcher noted that the industry is evolving and may begin developing smaller "boutique" data centers, sometimes referred to as neo-cloud facilities. The Board discussed establishing clear policies before pursuing such opportunities:

- Define what size customer constitutes a "large load".
- Determine how far in the future system impacts should be evaluated (for example, 10-20years)
- Establish cost responsibility so that large load customers do not shift infrastructure costs onto existing ratepayers.

It was agreed that the current discussion is intended to begin developing a framework for evaluating large load customers. The Board discussed possibly bringing the topic before Town Council to gather feedback.

New Business

MMWEC / Lightshift Agency Agreement

Mark explained to the Board that the original arrangement had been executed as a two-party agreement between MMWEC and WMGLD; however, because Lightshift operates and dispatches the battery, the arrangement should have been structured as a three-party agreement. The proposed agency agreement with MMWEC will formalize services that have already been occurring, with Lightshift responsible for operating and dispatching the battery while MMWEC manages the billing and true-up processes. It was noted that the agreement is expected to stay in place for the duration of the Battery Storage System agreement, which is estimated to be approximately 20 years. The agreement includes a 5% cost-based administrative fee, and a minimal monthly fee (currently about $50 per contract.)

A motion was made by Commr. Kallay to approve parts 1,2, and 3 as written in the agency agreement and seconded by Commr. Prifti

Vote: The motion was approved unanimously 5-0.

2025 Results / 2026 Goals

The subcommittee of Commrs. Kallay and Daly met last month to review the 2025 performance versus goals and develop 2026 goals. The Board discussed how safety metrics factor into performance bonuses. Commr. Prifti stated that the safety metric for accidents should always be zero. Commr. Warchol stated that he thought certain safety measures should be reported to the Board but not tied directly to performance scoring. Discussion ensued that the term "target" may imply an acceptable number of incidents and suggested alternative wording that better reflects a zero-tolerance safety culture while recognizing that incidents occur. The Board will review industry safety guidelines and will discuss the matter further at the next board meeting.

Any other matter not reasonably anticipated by the Chair

Commr. Warchol inquired about soil testing being conducted as part of a project to install bathrooms near the Veteran's Field parking lot. Pete explained that the lake remediation project was completed in the late 2000's following the identification of contamination related to historic coal gasification. The site remains under an interim solution with ongoing monitoring requirements. WMGLD's environmental consultants, Brown and Caldwell, serve as the Licensed Site Professional (LSP) and conduct annual monitoring, with reports submitted to the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). Pete stated that the Town's LSP has been coordinating with Brown and Caldwell regarding the recent test pits. The test pits were completed earlier in the week with an LSP present, and the locations were selected to avoid interference with WMGLD's existing monitoring wells. At this time, no issues have been identified. He said that if any contamination is identified as part of the Town's work, WMGLD will address the matter.

Executive Session if necessary

A motion was made by Commr. Kallay and Commr. Warchol to enter executive session for the purposes of discussing the 2025 goals and performance evaluation, and to vote on the minutes from the previous executive session regarding the Stage 2 grievance. Returning to open session solely to report the performance evaluation findings and to adjourn the meeting seconded by Commr. Prifti.

Vote: The motion was approved unanimously 5-0.

The Board returned to open session, at which time Commr. Prifti reported that General Manager Pete Dion had achieved a rating of 95% on the review of the goals outlined in his performance review.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Commr. Prifti at 10:59 pm and seconded by Commr. Kallay.