

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

Peter D. Dion, General
Manager



Jennifer Kallay ,
Chair
Elton Prifti ,
Secretary
Sharon Daly
Thomas
Boettcher
Lili Allen

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

July 15, 2026

IN ATTENDANCE: Commrs., Chair Jennifer Kallay
Elton Prifti, Secretary
Thomas Boettcher
Sharon Daly
Lili Allen

Peter Dion, General Manager
Mark Cousins, Finance Manager
Dave Polson, Engineering and Operations Manager
Joe Collins, Business Analyst
Olivia Tully, Business Analyst
Mike Capraro, 1st Class Lineman
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. She advised the meeting was being recorded

CHAIR REMARKS: Commr. Kallay commented that over the past year, WMGLD has been proactively discussing the increasing number of data center proposals and construction projects nationwide and considering what those trends may mean for our community and WMGLD. As part of those discussions, the Board has explored the need for a community-wide conversation about data centers, as well as the policies and practices that other utilities across the country are implementing to address similar issues.

On July 2, 2026, WMGLD received an inquiry from a customer requesting information about our ability to serve their location if their electrical load were to increase. WMGLD explained that additional details would be needed to evaluate the request, and we have not yet received any further information.

Given this customer inquiry, Commr. Kallay stated that it makes sense to expedite the broader community discussion regarding a data center. She noted that she intends to recommend that Town Council host this discussion and explicitly include, at a minimum, representatives from WMGLD, the permitting and zoning boards, the Board of Health, and the Conservation Commission, along with any other interested stakeholders.

She stated her intention to discuss this approach with the Board and receive feedback from Commissioners and other interested parties. She also requested that the Large Load agenda item be moved to the beginning of the agenda so that members of the public and interested stakeholders have the opportunity to listen and participate.

She stated that she will pursue any next steps that receive the Board's support and will continue to keep the Town informed if the customer provides additional information.

Finally, she noted that the Board will not be discussing any customer specific details this evening. WMGLD does not yet have sufficient information regarding the request, and any customer-specific discussions, if necessary, may need to occur in executive session.

COMMISSIONERS REMARKS: Commr. Allen reported that the Environmental Sustainability Committee has been working on plans for an EV Showcase. She stated that she has been working with Tiana Veldwisch on the event and would like to explore ways to collaborate more closely to increase participation. She stated that attendance at past EV Showcase events has been lower than anticipated, and the committee is considering creative approaches to improve turnout. One possibility is collaborating with a neighboring community, and she has begun reaching out to representatives in Reading and Melrose to learn about their experiences and determine whether a joint event might be feasible. She also noted that previous Showcase events focused primarily on electric vehicles and suggested incorporating vendors or other attractions could help generate greater public interest. The committee is evaluating potential ideas and the timeline needed to secure vendors and other participants.

Commr. Boettcher congratulated the department on receiving the Energy Innovator Award from the American Public Power Association (APPA). The award recognizes excellence in energy innovation and efficiency development. He noted that the recognition is a testament to the outstanding work of the WMGLD staff, particularly their efforts in developing the Energy Park and collaborating with the local schools.

He also highlighted the recent rededication of the former Burns substation site as Burns Park on Ballard Road. As part of the Energy Park land swap, the former site was remediated, and the property was transformed into a park for the community to enjoy. He encouraged residents who have not yet visited the park to do so, noting that it has become a beautiful community space.

Town Council Liaison

Not present

Members of the Public

There were several members of the public present both in person and via ZOOM. Below are the members that made public comments:

Rada Frohlichstein	9 Rochelle Drive
Steve Fantone	385 Summer Street, Lynnfield
Sue Kassoy	9 Collins Road
Eric Wages	22 Warren Avenue
James Cerone	33 Oak Street
Bronwyn Della-Volpe	8 Cyrus Street
Brendan Higgins	40 Brewster Road
Joe Marini	11 Spaulding Street
James Horne	1055 Main Street
Ryan O'Malley	Senate Candidate, Malden
Kate Davis	30 Salem Street
Thomas West	15 Morgan Avenue

Each member expressed their concerns that the potential large load customer that contacted WMGLD could be a data center. Their concerns included but were not limited to water consumption, wastewater produced, environmental impact, cost to ratepayers for upgrades to the infrastructure and distribution lines, noise, and other potential large load customers such as ICE facilities. They stated that WMGLD was not being transparent with the public regarding the identity of the potential customer and requested more customer-specific details such as the customer's name, address, and type of business. They also asked for details on the content and timing of WMGLD's large load policy and WMGLD information sessions/FAQs on large loads/data centers for the public.

Pete explained that a customer contacted WMGLD on July 2, 2026, to inquire what capacity would be available to serve their site if they were to expand or sell their property. Pete stated that the department told the customer that they would need to formally submit its specific service requirements to WMGLD in writing before the department could evaluate the request. As no such information has been received, there are no additional details to report or discuss at this time. He also noted that Massachusetts law prohibits WMGLD from disclosing confidential customer information.

A motion to move the Large Load Discussion currently under Section D5 to Public Comments was made by Commr. Boettcher and seconded by Commr. Prifti.

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

Vote: The motion was approved unanimously 5-0.

Commr. Boettcher explained that, before any facility receives utility service – whether electric or gas it must first satisfy all applicable town requirements, including building codes, zoning, and approvals from appropriate local boards. He noted that the identity of any customer requesting service is confidential at this stage. Commr. Boettcher stated that earlier this year he initiated discussions with the Board and the utility staff to develop a policy governing large electrical loads, which could include data centers, manufacturing facilities, and other high energy users. He explained that the goal of the policy is to ensure that existing rate payers are protected, that any large-load customer does not negatively impact the system or existing customers, and that any new load provides mutual benefits to both the department and the electric grid. He added that these policy considerations are currently under development.

Commr. Kallay added that some municipalities have established temporary or permanent moratoriums to prevent data centers from locating in their communities.

Pete mentioned that ISO New England is also addressing the issue of defining a large electrical load and has preliminarily identified 20 MW as the threshold. He noted that any new load exceeding 20 MW would require a full ISO New England system impact study to evaluate not only Wakefield's ability to serve the load, but also the capacity of the upstream transmission system. He emphasized that this is an important consideration for the Board, as projects of this size cannot be implemented quickly or in isolation and require extensive regional coordination. He explained that any large electric load, such as a data center, should not have a direct or indirect negative impact on Wakefield ratepayers. He noted that Wakefield's current power portfolio is approximately 58% non-carbon emitting, and that adding a large load without additional clean energy resources could dilute that percentage. He stated that any large load project would require an appropriate power supply agreement to ensure sufficient additional renewable or non-carbon emitting power is secured, protecting the Town's clean energy goals and avoiding adverse impacts on existing ratepayers. He said that such an agreement could potentially be negotiated through MMWEC or another power supplier. He also noted that historically any cost for system upgrades is borne by the developer. He explained that when DRT (former data center customer) came to town 15 years ago, the company identified the distribution upgrades needed to serve its facility. As a result, the department received contribution in aid of construction of \$1.5 million from DRT to fund those distribution system improvements. He added that DRT also contributed toward the cost of undergrounding utilities at the head of the lake and the preliminary engineering for the Wallace Substation before the company ultimately relocated. Although DRT is no longer using those facilities, the department continues to benefit from the infrastructure improvements that were funded through those contributions.

Commr. Boettcher noted that through Executive Order 654, the current state administration has directed the Department of Public Utilities (DPU) to ensure that data centers bear the full cost of energy supply, infrastructure upgrades, interconnection, and all facility-related energy costs. He suggested using the state's direction and any resulting DPU guidance as the foundation for developing the department's policy, while incorporating Wakefield's specific needs and priorities into the final framework.

Commissioners discussed the value of holding informational sessions and developing FAQs to help educate the public. While expressing support for those efforts, Commr. Kallay stated that she continues to believe it is important to schedule a town- wide public discussion where residents can attend, participate, and ask questions. She noted that many of the topics extend beyond the WMGLD’s jurisdiction but are still important for the community to understand. She suggested that the forum be organized at the town level, with participation from all relevant departments, including WMGLD. She will follow up with WMGLD’s liaison to the Town Council to begin the process. She will keep the Board informed of any updates.

In the meantime, Commr. Kallay recommended initiating a draft of the large load policy. She recommended the Board begin by defining the term large load, and that the Board review this draft section of the policy during its September meeting.

Secretary’s Report

Approval of June 3, 2026, minutes before the Board for approval.

A motion to approve the June 3, 2026, minutes was made by Commr. Prifti and seconded by Commr. Boettcher.

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

Vote: The motion was approved unanimously 5-0.

Old Business

General Manager’s Report

Pete noted that the department received the Innovator Award at the annual APPA conference recognizing its accomplishments. He also noted that Dave Polson, OliviaTully, and the team hosted an open house at the Energy Park during the conference on Sunday. The event was very well received.

Pete stated that while he believed the public concern and interest in the large load were understandable, he was disappointed that some of the public comments became personal. He said that he would like to speak for himself and for other Commissioners whose character was being called out during this process as potentially being corrupt or fraudulent. He said it was inappropriate for Commissioners to be accused of corruption or fraud without any factual basis. He added that assumptions based on shared last names with vendors or the department’s longstanding membership in organizations such as MMWEC were uninformed and not constructive.

Commr. Daly stated that it is important to have on the record that the department is not permitted to disclose or share any customer information that is proprietary. She emphasized that this applies to all customers, including commercial, industrial, and residential customers. If a customer comes to the department with a project, the department is not at liberty to discuss any aspect of that project in a public forum. Commr.

Boettcher noted that proprietary customer information is private and privileged under both Massachusetts law and Department of Public Utilities (DPU) regulations.

Project Updates

A. Energy Park

Pete reported that testing of the Energy Park is in its final stages. He stated that the issues identified during testing have been addressed, particularly those related to system timing. Since the previous meeting, both switches have been installed, all loads have been transferred to the new switches, and testing has been completed using the permanent switch gear rather than the temporary configuration used during preliminary testing. Dave added that staff are currently coordinating with the school department to transfer the school's electrical load to the Energy Park. He noted that the emergency transformer was connected to the Energy Park approximately one week ago, and work is underway to transition the permanent transformers as well. He expects that work to be completed by the end of the month. Final testing will continue during the transition.

Commr. Kallay stated that the agenda packet included an email from Daniel Lieber regarding the EV chargers planned for the new Northeast Metro Tech and Wakefield High School. Commr. Boettcher reported that he had corresponded with Mr. Lieber and explained that WMGLD had fulfilled its commitment to provide five level 2 chargers to both schools. Dave explained that 3 of the 5 chargers have been delivered to Northeast Metro Tech. The high school had decided back in 2024 due to budgetary and code constraints to install two level 3 chargers.

B. Educational Program Development- Nicole Fina

Has been rescheduled due to duration of tonight's meeting

Gas Moratorium

Pete provided an update on the gas moratorium waiting list, noting that staff had intended to review the remaining customers on the list since the previous meeting. He reported that the list had been reduced from the original 103 customers to the low 90s, but the review had not yet been completed due to other operational priorities. As a result, he was not prepared to provide a final update on the status of the remaining applicants. Commr. Boettcher asked what would constitute a reasonable time frame for customers on the waiting list to install a gas service once approved, suggesting possibilities ranging from six months to several years. Pete responded that he believed a two- year time frame would be reasonable under normal circumstances. However, he noted that exceptions should be considered for customers whose projects continue to be delayed by a paving moratorium or similar extremal restrictions. In those cases, he said the Board would consider allowing additional time on a case- by-case basis. Pete said staff would continue reviewing the waiting list and anticipated completing the review by September, at which time the Board could continue its discussion on establishing an appropriate installation deadline.

Employee Survey Goals

Pete provided the Board with a sample employee survey report to illustrate the type of information GreatBlue would provide if the survey was conducted. He noted that the estimated cost of the survey is approximately \$15,000 and that it is up to the Board to decide whether to proceed. He also reported that he had spoken with the Employee association and they expressed little interest in participating, while the Supervisors association did not offer any comments. The Board discussed having the ability to customize open-ended questions. Olivia confirmed that GreatBlue would be able to customize the survey to WMGLD's needs. The Board will work on some sample questions to discuss at the September meeting.

New Business

Credit Card Fees and Policy

Pete reported that for the past 10 years, the department has covered all credit card and electronic funds transfer (EFT) processing fees associated with customer payments. He noted that the department is now one of the few utilities that continues to absorb credit card processing fees. As a result, staff is recommending that, effective October 1, 2026, credit card processing fees be passed on to customers while the department continues to cover EFT fees. He explained that processing costs are projected to reach approximately \$200,000 this year. While part of the increase reflects the success of encouraging more customers to pay electronically, the growing processing fees have become a significant expense that is ultimately borne by all ratepayers. Mark explained that the department pays a flat fee of approximately \$0.50 for each EFT, debit card or ACH transaction. Credit card processing fees, however, vary based on factors such as card type, transaction amount, and the processor's fee structure, making the statements complex and difficult to interpret. Overall, the average credit card processing charge is significantly higher than the flat EFT fee. He stated that, if the Board approves passing credit card processing fees on to customers effective October 1, 2026, customers will pay a minimum fee of \$2.95 per transaction or up to 2.99% of the transaction amount, whichever applies. As an example, he noted that a customer paying a \$100 electric bill by credit card would pay approximately \$103. He emphasized that the department is currently absorbing those charges, which totaled approximately \$17,755 for the previous month alone. Discussion ensued.

A motion was made by Commr. Daly to change/update our credit card policy so going forward as of October 1, 2026, credit card fees will be borne by customers that use that form of payment.

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

Vote: The motion was approved unanimously 5-0.

Deposits for Low Income Customers

Commr. Boettcher noted that a recent customer issue involving a rental deposit and miscommunication from Customer Service had been resolved but prompted a broader discussion about the department's rental deposit policy. He expressed concern that rental deposits can present a financial barrier, particularly for lower-income residents seeking basic

electric and gas service and suggested exploring ways to reduce that barrier while still protecting the utility from bad debt. Pete explained that the department has had a rental deposit for many years and has maintained the same rental deposit amount for more than 15 years and has intentionally not increased it. He also noted that the department provides customers with information about assistance programs, such as Raft and LEO, which may cover rental deposits. He reported that since 2021, the department has placed liens on 29 residential homeowners accounts totaling approximately \$11,500 in unpaid balances. During the same period, 98 residential rental accounts were sent to collections after customers left with \$61,680 in unpaid bills. Commr. Boettcher inquired as to how many of those customers were low-income. Pete explained that the department does not classify or track customers by income level. Instead, the department provides information and guidance to customers who seek assistance but do not determine or verify whether customers qualify as low-income. Commr. Boettcher inquired if it is possible to divide the customer's deposit into four monthly payments. Olivia explained that the billing system is not capable of accommodating that option. Commr. Allen raised the concern that low-income customers may not be aware of the financial relief services at their disposal and advocated for a direct route to application for financial aid as opposed to requiring customers divulge their financial status to an individual at WMGLD. Commr. Daly suggested adding a notice to the department's website and service application advising customers who may need assistance with paying a required deposit to contact the department. Staff indicated that a note could be added to the service application.

Any other matter not reasonably anticipated by the Chair

Executive Session – If Necessary

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Commr. Prifti at 9:18 pm and seconded by Commr. Boettcher.

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

Vote: The motion was approved unanimously 5-0.