

*Paxton Municipal Light Department*  
*578 Pleasant Street*  
*Paxton, MA 01612-1300*  
*Light Commission Special Meeting*  
*August 21, 2023*

- I. Call to order: The meeting was called to order by Chairwoman Orell at 5:30 p.m. Members present: Yvette Orell, Emerson Wheeler, Michael Benoit, and Tara Rondeau, Manager. Public Attending: None.
- II. Approval of Agenda: Benoit motioned to approve the agenda; Wheeler seconded the motion. Motion passed 3-0.
- III. Approval of Minutes: Wheeler motioned to approve the June 20, 2023, meeting minutes; Benoit seconded. Motion passed 3-0.
- IV. Public Comment: None
- V. Manager's Report
  - A. Operations and Electric Systems Updates:
    1. The linemen:
      - Set a new pole on Walnut St., old pole was rotted.
      - Replaced a pole on Pleasant St. due to a MVA.
      - Ran a new house service on Pleasant St. Old service ripped down by falling branches.
      - Set 2 poles on Turkey Hill Dr. and transferred lines. Upgrading poles.
      - Replaced an undersized transformer on Howard Ave.
      - Ran new primary wire and upgraded the size of the transformer on Brigham Ave.
      - Resagged low hanging wires on Pleasant St.
      - Performed streetlight maintenance on Briarcliff Lane, Birch St., and 2 on Grove St.
      - Trimmed around primary on the Brigham Ave.
      - Installed AMI meters.
      - Disconnected a residential service on Ledyard Rd. at the request of the wiring inspector.
    2. They performed vehicle maintenance on trucks #61 and #62.
    3. The linemen held a pole on Glen Ellen Rd. for the DPW.
    4. They pumped out the vault at the substation numerous times. The underground pumps have failed. Working on quotes for new ones.
    5. The linemen took down the bunting on the Town Hall.
    6. They worked with the engineers at the substation to do boring tests for the battery.
    7. The linemen responded to an outage alert from one of the AMI meters. The service had been cut, the seal broken, and the meter was removed. The homeowner was having the service upgraded and no permits were pulled. The service has now been disconnected at the pole until the homeowner gets the new updated service in compliance and pays the fines for breaking PMLD's seal and removing the meter.

Benoit questioned whether PMLD should have fees established and outlined in our Terms and Conditions for calls such as these regarding AMI alerts, especially if it entails any overtime for the linemen. The other board members agreed. The Terms and Conditions will be revised.
    8. They investigated 2 meters with no readings. Both meters were the second meter for old hot

water heaters. The homeowners were having the service upgraded and the meter socket removed.

Outages:

June 23<sup>rd</sup> on Pleasant St. N. Lasted 4 hours, affecting one customer. Due to a MVA.

July 2<sup>nd</sup>: Boynton Parkway. Lasted 1 hour and 35 min., affecting 8 customers. Caused by transformer failure.

July 14<sup>th</sup>: Marshall St. Lasted 35 mins. affecting 35 customers, weather related, suspected lightning blew fuse.

July 14<sup>th</sup>: Brigham Rd. Lasted 2 hrs. and 20 mins affected one customer. Tree limbs took down house service.

July 14<sup>th</sup>: Pleasant St. and lower Davis Hill Rd. Last 30 mins., affecting 26 customers. Primary fuse blew.

July 22<sup>nd</sup>: Grove St. Last 4.4 hrs. affecting one customer. Submersible transformer failed after manhole filled with water. They moved the transformer to a pad mount.

July 27<sup>th</sup>: Grove St. Lasted 1 hr. 50 mins affecting 38 customers. Tree fell breaking a pole and taking down wires. Had to set a new pole.

July 30<sup>th</sup>: Pleasant St. Lasted 1 hr. 15 mins affected one customer. Transformer fuse blew. .

B. Office and Operations

1. 90 days past due balance is \$5,105. Last year at this time it was \$9,192.
2. The fourth round of shutoff notices went out, there were 46 18-day notices and 48 3-day notices. In the end, there was only one customer who was disconnected.
3. The office was closed on July 27<sup>th</sup>. All employees participated in a tabletop Winter Storm Disaster Recovery exercise that was like the ice storm of 2008. The exercise focused on efficiency, communication, safety, and mutual aid.  
Benoit stated that one thing that was established during the ice storm was the need for accurate and well-documented paperwork. Orell agreed.  
Benoit also pointed out that an old phone that plugs into the jack without the need for electricity is important to have during such an event.  
Benoit stated that all employees should have FEMA training. None of the staff at PMLD have had any training. The Manager will check with the EMD regarding the training.
4. The Manager will be attending a 3-day MMA training in Oct. on Supervisory Leadership Development. The training was suggested by the TA for all Dept. Heads to attend.
5. It was brought to our attention that one of the linemen has not had union dues taken out of his check since he started. The manager confirmed with the Treasurer that the union had not been paid for the linemen. This has since been corrected. Benoit noted that the linemen should have said something sooner when he noticed it had not been taken out of his check.
6. FYI, to promote energy efficiency, the govt. has banned all sales of incandescent light bulbs.
7. PMLD's report published in the Towns annual report, was not printed as provided to them. In the original, the chart was readable and there were no typos.
8. This year, PMLD is donating the lights for the holiday tree in the center of town. The number of lights provided to PMLD does not cover the tree properly. We will be putting up double the amount provided to us last year.
9. The Manager renewed PMLD's FCC radio license for another 10 years.

10. Per IT, the Chromebooks have reached their updating limit. They can no longer be updated. Chromebooks are cheaper and meant to be more disposable.

C. April & May Financials

April: Operating revenue increased from March by \$100,248. Power costs decreased by \$78,810. Non-Operating income increased by \$12,108. Net income increased by \$119,900. This is from increased revenue and lower power costs. All rate classes had substantial increases in usage.

May: Operating revenue decreased from April by \$117,444. Power costs decreased by \$50,497. Non-Operating income decreased by \$6,014, due to Reserve Trust investment losses. Net income decreased by \$84,428. All rate classes had substantial decreases in usage.

D. MMWEC Updates

At the most recent board meeting, MMWEC talked about the challenges in predicting the peak. This past year, ISO NE and National Grid have had a few months where they did not agree on the peak. This forces MMWEC to try and predict 2 separate peaks. MMWEC is investigating why this is happening and how they get better software to solve the problem.

MMWEC and other Joint action agencies from neighboring states, have joined together to put in a filing with FERC to investigate the Mystic costs. In the last year, RMR (Reliability Must Run) contract costs for Mystic were \$524 million. There is still another year left of the contract. ISO is not being transparent on how the costs are being allocated and exactly how the money is being spent. MMWEC is hoping FERC will force an investigation into the issue. Some have questioned why on December 24<sup>th</sup> when there was a deficiency, Mystic was not called on to run especially since that is supposedly what all these exorbitant charges have been for. ISO's response was that it wouldn't have been economical.

NEPOOL: ISO revealed that they have a new capability to better forecast winter reliability. With this new forecasting, they now believe that NE has enough capacity through the year 2027. This adds further confusion to the ongoing exorbitant charges for Mystic.

In 2024, RNS charges will increase \$14 to \$154.35/kW. This increase is due to a decrease in regional network load caused by more renewables coming online and an increase in transmission costs for new projects as well as asset conditions that need updating. MMWEC predicts that RNS costs will continue to rise each year and potentially peak in 2027 at \$190/kW. To combat this, MMWEC is pushing for state rule changes that would allow municipalities to own transmission.

- E. AMI Updates: To date, 1350 meters have been installed. Benoit asked if there has been an increase in sales with the installation of the new meters. The manager informed the board that there has been an increase in sales but it is hard to determine at this point if it is due to the new meters or the humid weather. Benoit suggested comparing the losses from the DPU report as well as the monthly reads from the substation.

Benoit suggested that if sales have increased with the installation of the new meters, a long term replacement plan should be created to prevent future loss of sales due to outdated technology or slower meters.

- F. Fiber Update: Nothing to report.

VI. Other Business:

1. One solar customer has threatened to sue PMLD for infringing on his right to have solar. He was informed that he currently has solar and his system is the the max size allowed for

residential solar in Paxton. This customer is upset because he tried to get the wiring inspector to pass a ground mounted solar system without PMLD's approval. The wiring inspector notified PMLD.

2. In the last month, there have been numerous requests for solar installations.

Benoit asked with the increased sales, if it is worth looking into increasing the cap for residential solar installations. The Board asked the Manager to provide suggestions at the next board meeting.

Benoit suggested that in the future there could be the potential for PMLD to own a solar farm. Wheeler commented that PMLD could possibly lease land.

3. The Manager has spoken with the TA about the online permitting process and adding something on there for solar.

VII. Adjourn: Benoit motioned to adjourn; Wheeler seconded the motion. Motion passed 3-0.

The meeting adjourned at 6:27 pm.

The Next Meeting is September 12<sup>th</sup>, 2023, at 5:30 pm.

Approved Minutes Submitted on behalf of the Paxton Light Commission

by Tara Rondeau on 9/12/23 Tara Rondeau

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