

Paxton Municipal Light Department
578 Pleasant Street
Paxton, MA 01612-1300
Light Commission Special Meeting
October 10, 2023

- I. Call to order: The meeting was called to order by Chairwoman Orell at 5:32 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: Benoit motioned to approve the September 12, 2023, meeting minutes; Wheeler seconded. Motion passed 3-0.
- IV. Public Comment: None
- V. Manager's Report
 - A. Operations and Electric Systems Updates:
 1. The linemen:
 - Ran URD pipe and wire for a new construction home on Davis Hill.
 - Replaced a house knob on Asnebumskit Rd.
 - Installed a meter for a new commercial customer on Asnebumskit Rd.
 - Performed quarterly streetlight patrol, finding lights needing repair on: Grove St., Mower St., Baxter Dr., Sherbrooke Dr., Mt. View Dr., Pleasant St., Richards Ave., Maple St., Red Oak St., and Marshall St.
 - Trimmed trees on South St. and Pleasant St.
 - Disconnected and reconnected a house service for a contractor on Brooks Rd.
 - Installed a cover over the service drop lines for roofers working on a house on Suomi St. and for another contractor on Mower St.
 - Removed the old streetlights and installed the new streetlights on Olivia Knoll.
 - Repainted the URD streetlight cover at the end of Alrene Dr.
 2. They checked the batteries at the substation and cleaned the connections.
 3. The linemen continued replacing meters throughout town with AMI meters.
 4. TJ fixed the lights on the chipper truck that were not working properly.
 5. The foreman attended a Foreman's Roundtable at NEPPA.
 - Outages:
 - September 16th: West Street. There was a tree on a pole. Cutout had to be refused. Lasted 1 hr. and 15 mins, affecting 111 customers.
 - October 5th: Tractor trailer took down lines on West St and Nanigan Rd. causing a fuse to blow on Major Moore Circle. Lasted 50 mins affecting 40 customers.
 - B. Office and Operations
 1. 90 days past due balance is \$4,062.85. Last year at this time, it was \$7,790.87.

2. The sixth and final round of shutoff notices went out, there were 11 18-day notices and 55 3-day notices. In the end, there were no disconnects.
3. The Manager attended a NEPPA GM roundtable at Reading Light Department.
4. The Friends of Richards Memorial Library, a 501-3c non-profit organization that supports the programs at the library, reached out to ask if they could include an insert with our monthly billing. There is no municipal budgeting for library programs, this org. donations support Performers, summer reading, and half day craft programs. Currently they send out direct mailers to existing supporters, they would like to expand the membership by reaching out to all residents to ask for donations and inform the public of what they do.

The board discussed the request and concluded that in the past they have not allowed any non-department organizations to include mailers in with the monthly billing. Allowing this request would open it up for others to ask for similar considerations. Wheeler suggested they contact Paxton Center School, since they usually are very open to such suggestions.

5. Power Manager has not increased their annual fee since COVID began, to make up for this the 2024 bill will increase by 29%. They have recently merged with Harris. PMLD will not be affected by the merger.
6. At a prior meeting, the Board discussed changing the rebate process to include a credit on the electric bill versus sending out a prepaid credit card. Do we still want to do this? Peabody Light Department handles rebates in this manner. Benoit stated that in his opinion, PMLD should have a policy in place that addresses how rebates would be processed and how rebates would be handled concerning customers with large outstanding balances. The Board feels that rebates should not be honored in that case. The Manager will work on a policy to be approved by the board by year end.
7. The Town of Spencer Interim Superintendent came in to discuss renegotiating an agreement between PMLD and the Town of Spencer for streetlight maintenance. The Manager asked for more clarification on their needs since they converted all their streetlights over to LEDs. The Manager also explained to them that in the past PMLD purchased stock for Spencer but if an agreement is made, Spencer will have to provide their own stock to PMLD. The Manager will provide Spencer with quotes for two options: monthly maintenance fee or on a per call basis agreement.
8. The Accounting Assistant will be out indefinitely. In the meantime, the Manager is doing the work, and the Billing Clerk is handling all customer service. Benoit asked about the use of a temp. The Manager feels that this position is not easily filled with a temp but may ask for help from Shrewsbury Light on a mutual aid basis.

C. July Financials

Operating revenue increased from June by \$90,241. Power costs decreased by \$7,323. Non-Operating income increased by \$4,765. Net income increased by \$110,326. All rate classes had substantial increases in electrical sales.

D. MMWEC Updates

Berkshire Wind: Availability and capacity percentages continued to decrease. Software issues, supply chain interruptions, and parts delays are the driving factors. The August availability factor was 51.74% and the capacity factor was 14.7%. Several towers have blade damage which will be addressed in Sept. These repairs will further decrease the availability.

Seabrook: August availability factor was 87.92% and the capacity factor was 84.02%. The decrease in availability was caused by the forced outage on July 30th that did not go operational

until August 9th.

Stonybrook: The peaking and intermediate units August availability factors were 100%. Peaking capacity factor was less than 1% and intermediates was 0%. There were no runs on the intermediate units in August. Peaking 2A ran on Aug 13th, 18th, 20th, and the 21st. Peaking 2B ran on Aug 13th, 18th, and the 20th.

Millstone: in August, units 3's availability factor was 100% and capacity factor was 97.6%. On August 31st there was an unplanned power down to 92% due to a transient in the B train feedwater heater. In September, it was brought back to 100% power. There is a planned fueling outage scheduled for Oct. 19th expected to last until Nov. 25th.

Eagle Creek: is made up of six run-of-the-river hydroelectric facilities located in NH. The capacity factor was 49% which is a 667% improvement over the same time last year. This is attributed to the very rainy summer.

Hancock Wind: availability factor was 99% and capacity factor was 21%.

ISO: 2024 RNS costs will be increasing 9% due to a 2.6% decrease in regional network load from 2021 to 2022 leading to a shortage in cost recovery in 2022 which will need to be recovered as well as an increase in capital additions and improvements forecasted. MMWEC projects that RNS costs will go from \$154 mW in 2024 to \$194 mW in 2028.

General News: MMWEC is currently working on some hydro and wind deals. There is no further information to report. Next month, the Board will need to go into Executive Session to discuss some other deals and issues.

Bruce McKinnon informed the Manager that a company has filed with ISO to install a large battery installation in Paxton. PMLD was not informed and not included in any of the correspondence. The Manager has reached out to ISO for an update and to be included in all further meetings. 2 other municipals have had battery companies reach out regarding battery installations. These companies want to connect directly into the transmission lines and sidestep the light depts. The Manager feels that this could become a problem and a legal issue. Benoit suggested the Manager speak with the Planning Board.

E. AMI Updates: To date, 1400 meters have been installed. Nothing new to report.

VI. Net Generation: Cap, Policies Review

The Manager provided the Board with an updated spreadsheet detailing each year's electrical sales in kWh, the number of solar customers, credits provided to them, and estimated sales and revenue lost by their solar installations from the years 2012-2023. Power costs were also added to the spreadsheet. What the trend shows is that PMLD has had an 8% increase in load growth but at the same time a 29% increase in the costs of power. The Manager feels that PMLD should continue to control the number of solar installations in our territory by allowing for small incremental increases to the cap. A boom in solar installations at one time could significantly impact all PMLD rate payers if PMLD was forced to increase its rate to pay the power bills due to a large loss of sales from customers going solar. The board agreed that this needs to be addressed and handled prudently while still allowing for a reduced carbon footprint. Benoit asked the Manager to provide the board with the profit and losses associated with various solar rate structures. In his opinion, due to inflation and staffing, it may be time to look at all the rate classes. Changing the solar rate structure could be in conjunction with a restructuring of other rate classes. PMLD should investigate tiered rates, unbundling etc.

At the bottom of the spreadsheet is a list of all solar customers, their installation dates, and the

ones that were grandfathered under the last policy update in 2018. The Board asked the Manager to look into how other municipalities have handled the grandfathering of solar customers under different rate structures. It does not seem fair that some solar customers are receiving money from the state as well receiving a larger credit than others.

VII. Other Business:

1. The Manager informed the board that she did not have time to look into what the impact would be, if any, of the adoption of the stretch code on utilities.
2. The Manager asked the Board if they knew if there was a spare transformer at the substation. The Manager recollects someone telling her that it was removed when the substation was refurbished in 2012 but MMWEC noticed that on PMLD's last DPU report issued in 2022, a spare transformer is still listed. The Board agreed with the Manager that it was removed.
3. The Manager asked the TA about getting a dumpster through Pellegrin. The TA will look into it and get back with an answer.
4. The Board may have noticed sales tax charged on many of the invoices lately, notably Verizon and Microsoft. Both companies are making it quite difficult to get this rectified, but the Manager and IT are staying on top of the companies.

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

The meeting adjourned at 6:55 pm.

The Next Meeting is November 14th, 2023, at 5:30 pm.

Approved Minutes Submitted on behalf of the Paxton Light Commission

by Tara Rondeau on 11/14/23 Tara Rondeau

RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE
PAXTON, MA
2023 NOV 16 A 9:35