

Paxton Municipal Light Department
578 Pleasant Street
Paxton, MA 01612-1300
Light Commission Special Meeting
December 20, 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: Wheeler motioned to approve the agenda; Benoit seconded the motion. Motion passed 3-0.
- III. Approval of Minutes: Wheeler motioned to approve the November 14, 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:
 - Replaced 3 URD streetlights bulbs on Dunanderry Way and another on Lincoln Circle.
 - Replaced an LED streetlight head on Grove St.
 - Removed a meter on Hill St. for a house fire.
 - Covered a house service on Mower St. for painters.
 - Trimmed trees on Camp St.
 2. They put up the holiday lights on the tree on the common.

Outages:

- November 27th. Suomi St. Tree on wires. Lasted 1 hr., affecting 2 customers.

B. Office and Operations

1. The final lien total for the year-end was \$629.21.
2. We are moving forward with prosecuting the customer who has been stealing electricity. Legal drafted a statement for the police.
3. The Rec Dept. has determined after rereading the Little League manual that they would like to move forward with repairing/replacing the existing lights, not installing new ones. They feel that since there is a lighting system already in place at Tivnan, and the design is not changing, it is fair to approach the project as a replacement of existing fixtures. The Manager has asked that their committee meet with the Light Board to discuss the issues. They have agreed to attend the January meeting.

Benoit stated he would like the Little League President involved in the meeting. The Manager will reach out to Kathy Card to get their name and information.
4. The contracts have been finalized with DeLorean. There should be a press release coming out this week about the partnership between PMLD and DeLorean on the battery storage system. The Manager is currently working on getting sign offs on special permitting which is required by DeLorean's financiers.
5. Waste Management does not want to let PMLD out of their contract. December's invoice reflected a \$40 increase over November. The Manager replied to the invoice which had a

- clause stating that if a customer did not consent to this increase, they could put it in writing that they wanted to cancel their services. Letters were mailed to the corporation. Instead, they have offered to lower our bill to \$88 from \$224 a month if we signed a new 3-year contract. The Manager is not resigning the contract with WM.
6. Cherie's FMLA runs out on December 29th. We are waiting for a doctors' letter for return to work or asking for accommodations. The Manager thinks that coming back part time would be best until her strength returns.
 7. The contractor who owed us a substantial final payment for a home that they built on Suomi St. has completed their payment plan that they set up with us and completely paid off their back bill.
 8. The Manager would like to know how the Board would like to proceed with rebates through NextZero. We have talked about bringing the rebates in house and providing credits on customer accounts for the rebate versus issuing a prepaid credit card. This will lower our fees, which total almost \$600 a year for activating the cards and another \$5600 a year in administrative costs. The Board's concern with this is how to handle customers who might be seeking a rebate but are significantly behind on their bill. The Manager reminded them that with the current system, we are not the ones processing the rebates, so they would get a rebate. The Board asked the Manager to reach out to legal for their opinion on denying rebate claims to those with balances past 90 days. The board agreed to anything under \$100 will be a credit on the bill and over that, they will receive a check from PMLD. The Manager will write up a policy regarding this.
 9. The Town had its holiday luncheon and retirement party for Gary from the DPW on Monday the 18th. The linemen attended. The Manager was unable to attend.

VI. Preliminary Budget:

The Board was provided with a copy of the budget prior to the meeting. Before starting Benoit asked where the wage charts were. The Manager had not provided these charts to the Board in prior years but could easily provide the linemen's union agreement chart but there is not one for the office staff. Benoit stated that he is a big proponent of having steps. He knows the Town just brought back steps. Orell stated that PMLD was not included in their study.

Orell asked for the MEAM salary survey for manager salaries. The Manager will provide this for the next meeting. Regarding the budget, Orell said she had one question about why capital was so high for next year. The Manager explained that monies have been earmarked for a new chipper, poles, and transformers as well as for the balance of the AMI meters.

Current Year (FY23): Operating revenue exceeded the budget by \$269,508. This is due to \$335,808 in increased PPC charges to cover power costs. Non-operating income is \$66,237 higher than budgeted. This is attributed to an increase in Reserve Trust investments. General & Administrative Expenses are \$1,080 higher than budgeted. Overall expenses were \$313,189 more than budgeted. This was due to higher payroll expenses than anticipated for significant overtime caused by the 2 major storms last winter and more expensed payroll for maintenance work than capital work. PMLD's biggest expenses in 2023 were: Customer Accounts expenses which were \$15,623 higher than anticipated due to increased merchant fees charged by Paya. RCS expenses were \$8,254 higher than budgeted, training costs were \$2,778 higher due to mileage reimbursement not considered and a training that the manager attended which was not in the budget, and maintenance of plants was \$3,811 higher for heating repairs, etc.

Next year (FY24): Operating revenue is \$4,029,273 which is decreased from this year. All sales were kept relatively flat since we have not seen a lot of load growth over the last few years. Non-

operating income was also kept conservative since the stock market has continued to be volatile. Distribution and maintenance expenses are comparable to this year. General & Administrative expenses increased by \$72,500 due to projected increased RCS expenses for rebates per MMWEC and increased pension expenses per the auditors. Also, engineering costs were added to cover installation of the battery at the substation. Legal fees were increased to reflect the need for legal counsel to represent PMLD against the electricity theft. Per MMWEC's projections, power costs were left consistent with this year. The Manager is still trying to work out the forecasted power bill costs provided on Friday by MMWEC. Power bill costs could change. The Manager is unsure whether projected power costs typically include NG transmission costs. Looking back at the prior managers' budgets there are no costs broken out to reflect that. Orell agreed that she did not remember prior managers breaking that expense out from MMWEC's projected cost estimates. The Manager will reach out to MMWEC for clarification. Benoit stated that since this is preliminary, numbers can be adjusted before the next meeting.

As things stand, net income would be \$151,105. If NG transmission costs need to be added in, this could be essentially \$0.

Benoit made a motion to accept the preliminary budget as presented. Wheeler seconded the motion. Motion passed 3-0.

VII. Other Business: None

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

The meeting adjourned at 6:46 pm.

The Next Meeting is January 16th, 2023, at 5:30 pm.

Approved Minutes Submitted on behalf of the Paxton Light Commission

by Tara Rondeau on 1/30/24 Tara Rondeau

