

Paxton Municipal Light Department
578 Pleasant Street
Paxton, MA 01612-1300
Light Commission Meeting
March 21, 2024

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 with agenda item #6 moved to #3; Wheeler seconded the motion. Motion passed 3-0.

III. Manager's Annual Job Performance Review:

Prior to the meeting, each commissioner completed a job evaluation form. Wheeler gave a score of 102, Orell 101, and Benoit 97. No one had anything negative to say about Rondeau. Benoit noted that many of the categories on the job evaluation do not pertain to Rondeau. Orell stated that she wrote under general comments, "Tara has conquered the day to day as presented in this format and she looks forward to a goal setting session with the board where they can set goals to ensure the reliability of assets and operations for the future." All agreed that goal setting for Rondeau should be discussed at the next meeting.

The board felt that based on the evaluations, Rondeau should receive a merit increase. They discussed whether it should be a lump sum or percentage. Benoit noted that the Manager's contract expires on December 31, 2024, which could lead to salary negotiations. Keeping that in mind, the Board decided to do a 5% merit increase.

Benoit made the motion to increase the manager's salary by 5% effective April 1, 2024. Wheeler seconded the motion. Motion passed 3-0.

At this time, 5:50 pm, Benoit left the meeting.

IV. Approval of Minutes: Wheeler motioned to approve the January 30, 2024, meeting minutes; Orell seconded. Motion passed 2-0.

V. Public Comment: None

VI. Manager's Report

A. Operations and Electric Systems Updates:

1. The linemen:

- Removed branches on the wires on Lawrence St.
- Fixed a streetlight on Crowningshield Dr.
- Performed line patrol after recent high winds.
- Removed a tree on the primary on Pleasant St. and another on Howard St.
- Removed a tree on the guy wire on Pleasant St.
- Set a pole, anchors, and transferred the equipment for a new residence on Turkey Hill Dr.
- Installed a permanent meter at a residence on West St.
- Responded to a MVA on Suomi St. which damaged a secondary riser.
- Continued tree trimming maintenance on: Camp St., Howard St., and Hemlock St.

- Performed a simulated load voltage reduction test at the substation.
 - Responded to a MVA on Laurel St. for a car side swiping a pole. It was a hit and run.
 - Completed the quarterly town wide streetlight patrol. Finding lights out on Brigham Rd., Pierce St., and Hemlock St.
 - Responded to a MVA on West St. Needed to replace the pole.
 - Responded to another report of a MVA on West St. The ground molding was broken. It was a hit and run.
 - Located a URD secondary pedestal on Shenandoah St. It was 6+' down which does not match the URD location map. The DPW assisted them with digging.
 - Continued installing AMI meters.
2. They performed oil changes on all vehicles.
 3. The linemen along with the Manager walked the Little League field taking pictures of the lights for the board to view the rot on the makeshift cross arms. The poles were assessed for rot and found sound.
 4. They met an employee from UPG at the substation to replace a broken load tap changer.
 5. The linemen worked with DeLorean engineers on battery placement at the substation and locating of URD wires.
 6. They removed the lights off the tree on the common.
 7. The linemen attended the monthly safety meeting in Holden on hoisting.
 8. They cleaned out the shed down the substation to make room for the battery. The shed housed old oil. The oil was taken to Shabo's Garage and Paxton Auto.
 9. The 2 apprentices attended NEPPA linemen's school the week of March 12th.

Outages:

- March 16th: Pleasant St and Lawrence St. Squirrel on wires blew a fuse. Outage lasted 42 mins.

B. Office and Operations

1. Accounts receivable 90 days past due is \$24,542.35. Same time last year, 90 days past due was \$19,264.09.
2. Everyone attended an active shooter training held at PMLD by the Paxton PD.
3. The Manager met with the Fire Chief, TA, and Planning Board Chair to discuss the proposed battery energy storage systems in Paxton on Rockland Rd.
4. The office staff has begun processing rebates in-house. It is going well.
5. The Manager attended the APPA legislative rally in Washington DC on February 26th and 27th with MMWEC representatives.
6. The Manager met with the new consultant for MMWEC, Sean Hamilton, to discuss issues within MMWEC. Sean was the prior Sterling GM.
7. The Manager was voted in as the Chair of the MMWEC Audit Committee.
8. Eversource has approached the Town of Chester with an offer to purchase Chester Light Department. MEAM and other GMs are rallying around the manager of Chester to assist her in any way possible. This is concerning coming on the back of the offer by National Grid to purchase Merrimac Light just last year. The townspeople rejected the offer.

9. The state is trying to pass the Clean Heat Standard. As the bill is currently written, MLPs are included. It would require all electricity suppliers to mandate that customers electrify their homes with heat pumps. The state would use our sales to set a % of conversions that would be required of the MLP each year or face a \$6000 fine. Of that percentage, a specified amount must be for low-income customers. If those numbers are not met, the state would impose a \$12,000 fine. MEAM and MMWEC are challenging this bill and the inclusion of MLPs.
10. MMWEC got an independent legal opinion on the operational system power that the proposed BESS systems on Rockland Rd. would be using. They agreed that it is considered a sale of electricity, and the operational power should be through PMLD not National Grid. MMWEC is working to set up calls with the companies and Manager to discuss this.

C. September, October, and November Financials:

September: Operating revenue decreased from August by \$269,279. This is due to a PPA adjustment of \$225,287. Power costs decreased by \$10,298. Non-operating income decreased from August by \$21,411. Net income decreased by \$278,974.

October: Operating revenue increased from September by \$160,945. Power costs increased by \$38,609. Non-operating income increased from September by \$10,615. Net income increased by \$136,468.

November: Operating revenue increased from October by \$11,399. Power costs increased by \$1,023. Non-operating income increased from October by \$20,000. Net income decreased by \$183.

- D. MMWEC Updates: They have hired a new Director of Energy Markets, Tom Barry. Prior to joining MMWEC, Barry was VP at American Electric Power, an investor-owned utility based out of Columbus, Ohio, with approximately 36,000 MW of physical generation. He was the senior manager responsible for all commercial optimization and risk management activities for the company's portfolio of generation assets, supply sources, and commodity markets.
- E. Little League Updates: The Manager sent the Recreation Dept, Light Board and Town Administrator pictures of the condition of all of poles and crossarms at the field. The poles are sound but the crossarms must be replaced. The linemen will not be able to tell if there are further repairs or replacements needed until they start to do the work. The Manager will reach out to the Rec. Dept. and TA to collaborate.
- F. Battery Updates: DeLorean is ahead of their proposed construction schedule. They are combining all work and deliveries with Holden to save on time and costs. DeLorean anticipates being operational for the summer peak. The shed down at the substation had to be cleaned out and moved to make room for the battery.

VII. Other Business:

1. The TA has enquired about the logistics of shutting off the town's streetlights. She is looking for all possible avenues to save on the budget before cutting jobs. The Manager enquired about how similar past requests from the Town were managed. Orell stated that at one point they turned off 1/3 of the streetlights. That did not last long because of the volume of complaints. Orell also thinks that the Police Chief would have a say for safety reasons.
2. The auditors would like to present the 2023 financials at the next meeting.

VIII. Adjourn: Wheeler motioned to adjourn; Orell seconded the motion. Motion passed 2-0.

The meeting adjourned at 7:00 pm.

The Next Meeting is April 16th, 2024, at 5:30 pm.

Approved Minutes Submitted on behalf of the Paxton Light Commission

by Tara Rondeau on 4/16/24 Tara Rondeau