

PRINCETON MUNICIPAL LIGHT DEPARTMENT
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**BOARD OF LIGHT COMMISSIONERS
AUGUST 8, 2018
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM.

Present were: Commissioner/Chairman - Jim Whitman, Commissioner - Chris Conway, Commissioner - Rick Rys and PMLD General Manager - Brian Allen. Also present were Phil Gott of the Environmental Action Committee (EAC) and resident John Mollica.

Agenda:

The Board voted unanimously in favor (3-0) to accept the agenda as presented.

Meeting Minutes:

- ***June 13, 2018 Regular Meeting Minutes*** – The Board voted unanimously in favor (3-0) to approve the June 13, 2018 regular meeting minutes with an amendment to the Board's request that the members of the EAC find at least 50 people in town who would be willing to participate in an all renewable energy purchase so that PMLD can move forward with NextEra to define the program. This information will be included in the Environmental Action Committee Presentation section of the minutes. A copy will be placed on file and will be available on WWW.PMLD.COM.
- ***June 13, 2018 Executive Session Meeting Minutes*** – The Board acknowledged that the June 13, 2018 executive session meeting minutes will be reviewed and approved at the September meeting.

General Manager's Report:

- ***Current Bank Balances*** – Mr. Allen presented the Board with the bank account balances report dated August 8, 2018 (a copy will be placed on file). The Citizen's Bank Operating account has a balance of \$141K, the Depreciation account has a total balance of \$998K, the MMDT Rate Stabilization account has a balance of \$826K, the Unibank Operating account has a balance of \$18K, the Meter Deposit account has a balance of \$32K. As of August 8, 2018, PMLD has \$129K listed for vendor accounts payable and is waiting for \$336K in electric customer account receivables and \$69K from Verizon account receivables. All bills are paid in a timely manner.

- **2018 Operating Budget Review** – Mr. Allen presented the Board members with a copy of the 2018 working budget analysis spreadsheet dated 08/08/2018 (a copy will be placed on file). The cashflow figures were through June 2018 with a target of 50%. Mr. Allen stated that revenues are at 49.04% and expenses are at 50.62%. Mr. Allen explained that PMLD has spent up to the limit that was budgeted for inventory due to the unplanned additional Charter make ready work, however invoicing to Charter and Verizon for those costs will offset expenses. \$25K of the \$86K billed to Verizon has been received and the entire \$90K billed to Charter was been received. Mr. Allen shared his confidence that PMLD will receive the rest of the invoice payments which will enable PMLD to manage inventory replenishment and needs through the rest of the year without issue. Mr. Allen shared that Depreciation Account funds have not be used yet this year. There were no additional concerns or issues with the budget.
- **Charter Update** – Mr. Allen confirmed that Charter, working with their contractor Phoenix, has installed the communications hut at the corner of the PMLD property at 168 Worcester Rd. Charter still needs to work with an electrician to complete the connection.
- **Wind Farm Update** – The converter in the south turbine was replaced successfully, however there are still coding errors that require Austria’s involvement. PMLD’s wind technicians have been working with Austria remotely to isolate the issue, which has been confirmed to be outside the converter. The south turbine has been offline for the month of July and the issues have been tedious and difficult issue to resolve. Mr. Allen reminded the Board that July has not had much wind production which is typical this time of year. The Board shared their concern with the length of time the turbine has been offline. Mr. Allen stated that this issue is a top priority for the PMLD crew and they are working on the issue every day and will continue to do so until it’s resolved.
- **Tree Trimming Update** – Mr. Allen informed the Board that cycle 4 of the Vegetation Management Plan which includes Worcester Rd, a half portion of Ball Hill Rd, Calamint Hill Rd South, Dowd’s Lane, Jefferson Rd and some of the smaller roads off those roads will be part of the tree trimming bid package to share with contractors this month. The scope of the work is getting smaller as compared to previous years. The bid will be advertised as required and bids will be opened at 9:00 AM on September 10, 2018 at the PMLD office, 168 Worcester Rd. The PMLD line crew still performs maintenance tree trimming maintenance all over town on a regular basis.
- **MASS Highway Route 140/Main St – East Princeton Road Project** – Mr. Allen informed the Board that he has signed the state contract associated with the work PMLD will perform. He explained that PMLD has essentially been hired by the state to do all the necessary work to replace/relocate the electrical distribution utility poles and equipment to meet the wider road specifications from the intersection of East Princeton Rd, Beaman Rd and Route 140 south to the Sterling town line. He anticipates that the project will not start until the spring of 2019. This is a large project for PMLD and the entire line crew, including himself, will be tasked with the work until it is complete.
- **West Princeton Rd, Westminster PMLD Customers** – Mr. Allen confirmed that PMLD has installed the electrical infrastructure to the 3 new houses being built on West Princeton Rd in

Westminster. 2 of the homes are now owner-occupied and have established electric service with PMLD, the last home is still being built. Mr. Allen is working with National Grid to install the metering equipment on the main line and simplify and finalize the contracts associated with the transfer of customers and assets.

- ***September Senior Luncheon*** – PMLD employees and commissioners will host their 2nd annual senior citizen luncheon at PMLD on Tuesday, September 25, 2018 at NOON at PMLD. The Princeton Council on Aging Director will include the information in their upcoming newsletter. Mr. Allen asked the Board for ideas on a presentation at the luncheon. Chairman Whitman asked Mr. Gott to talk to the EAC members about topics for the luncheon that the Board could consider.
- ***PMLD Interconnected Generator Policy*** – Mr. Allen shared his thoughts about revising the policy to include new and updated information about inverters. He sent the policy to an engineer, David Columbo to take a look at it and provide feedback on how new technologies in the industry should be incorporated. Commissioner Rys agreed with previous discussions that battery back-up storage is allowed and that wording within the policy should be improved. Mr. Allen will share Mr. Columbo's report once it's received. Commissioner Rys shared his desire to change the net metering compensation to customers who produce solar energy and asked Mr. Allen to share with Mr. Columbo the report he put together regarding net metering that he presented to the Board back in April/May of this year. Commissioner Rys shared his suggestion to provide \$0.11 per kilowatt as compensation for generation because Princeton has the lowest penetration in the state and expressed that purchasing residential solar generation will offset PMLD's costs. Commissioner Rys made a motion to change the policy and allow for compensation for excess solar generation. Chairman Whitman seconded the motion. The Board agreed to discuss the motion on the table. Commissioner Rys reinforced his position that each kilowatt put back into the distribution system has a value and customers who generate energy should be compensated. The Board discussed how changes to the net metering compensation would affect the business, customers, contract with NextEra and Princeton's green report card. The Board agreed unanimously (3-0) to table the motion for more discussion at the September meeting.
- ***Home Energy Loss Prevention Service (HELPS) Q2 Activity Report*** – The Board received a copy of the Princeton HELPS 2018 Q2 Report. To date 16 audits and 12 rebates have been provided to residents, for a total cost of \$3,540.
- ***Massachusetts Climate Action Network (MCAN) Request for Information*** – Mr. Allen presented the Board with a copy of a letter and questionnaire he received from MCAN asking for detailed information about the department as it operates within policies and standards relating to green energy, reductions in greenhouse gases, energy efficiency and renewable energy programs to aid them in creating a green scorecard for all municipal light departments. Commissioner Rys acknowledged that he has had some involvement with MCAN and has attended various meetings and webinars but has not done any professional work or speaking for the organization. Commissioner Rys and Mr. Gott, EAC member, explained that MCAN is a non-profit, dues-based membership organization that has been around for about 4-5 years. The Board reviewed the letter and questionnaire and agreed that Mr. Allen should complete the questionnaire on behalf of the department and send it back and that there is no need to

schedule a Board meeting with MCAN. A copy of the responses will be made available once completed.

Other/New Business:

- ***PMLD Social Media Policy*** – Chairman Whitman reminded everyone that the Board voted in October 2017 to draft a policy to be voted on; and that the task was tabled back in November and December to be discussed at a future meeting; and after reading Mr. Rys’ latest Nextdoor post he would like to address the policy again and have the Board complete this task. The Board acknowledged receipt of the latest revised copy of the social media policy. Chairman Whitman read portions of Mr. Rys’ post and pointed out a number of incomplete, misrepresentative, and/or invalid written comments he made while representing himself as a Commissioner. Chairman Whitman shared his concern and took offense to the post as it did not represent complete information, the collective view of the Board, or disclaim it to be Rys’ own personal opinion. Chairman Whitman identified specific statements and comments and provided information that proved them to be untrue or half-truths. Commissioner Rys defended his comments that PMLD has a regressive net metering policy. Commissioner Rys challenged that the policy gave no authority to the commissioners to post at their will. Commissioner Conway and Commissioner Whitman expressed that it is appropriate and their desire to filter all posts through the General Manager for a number of logistical reasons, and that personal use is allowed so long as a disclaimer is included to declare that opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect the views or opinions of the other commissioners or employees of PMLD. Chairman Whitman challenged Mr. Rys’ comment that “Princeton was the lowest in solar penetration” by presenting the Board with the results of data analysis of residential solar information from all the cities and towns in Massachusetts. He explained that Princeton is 99% residential with no commercial solar so that is what the data collection process focused on. Key information was extracted from the SREC1 and SREC2 program reports and public data information websites for each city and town against the number of residential households/dwellings in each to calculate a percentage rating for each. Princeton had a 1.9% penetration rate compared to the others ranging from 0.02% to 14.4%. The average percentage of solar in Massachusetts came in at 4.4%. The percentage of residential solar to households/dwellings came in at 2.8%. Commissioner Rys stated that he got his information and calculation for his post from another source which he did not produce at the meeting. Commissioner Rys stated that if his data source is invalid he will accept responsibility for posting incorrect information. Mr. Rys agreed to provide copies of the ISO NE report that he based his communication on at the next board meeting. To challenge another half-truth in Mr. Rys’ post Chairman Whitman and Commissioner Conway explained in detail why the Board studied, compared and acted to change the net metering compensation back in June 2014 after months of consideration and meetings. They reminded everyone of the financial mess the department was in since 2008 with just about \$1K in the bank the Board had to take action on many issues and amending the net metering compensation for solar generation which was just one of many changes made to financially set the department back on a track to recovery. Chairman Whitman and Commissioner Rys debated the validity of the Berkley Labs equation’s application in Princeton and challenges

were made by each on the variables in the formula being independent or dependent of one another. Mr. Allen expressed his concerns with Commissioner Rys' post because he was not aware of it and was unprepared to address the calls from customers who wanted to know more. Mr. Allen explained his job to represent the Board and the need for him and the other commissioners to be informed, transparent and work together. He explained that the post did not represent the collective view of the Board. Also, the harsh comments about members of the Board were not ignored and unfortunately were a byproduct of Mr. Rys' post which are toxic to the Board and the department. Commissioner Conway reminded everyone about the social media issues that the Facilities Committee had to deal with and the reasons why that committee voted not to post any kind of information about town business on various sites, but rather implemented a policy to refer residents to review the official information about town business through the town's website. The Board agreed that residents should get information about PMLD and key business needs on the official town website. Commissioner Rys expressed his desire to be able to share his opinion about issues. Chairman Whitman reminded him that the policy allows for personal use provided that a disclaimer is included stating "*the views or opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect the views or opinions of the PMLD employees or commissioners*". Other past social media postings that involved other commissioners and employees were discussed to remind everyone of the misinformation that has inspired toxic verbal attacks against the department and individuals on a personal level.

At 8:30 PM the Board voted unanimously in favor by roll call (3-0) to go into executive session not to return to public session for the purpose to discuss contract negotiations with non-union personnel as defined by MGL Chapter 30A, Section 21.2.

*Respectfully Submitted,
Christine Trudeau
Recording Secretary*