

PRINCETON MUNICIPAL LIGHT DEPARTMENT
P O B O X 2 4 7
1 6 8 W O R C E S T E R R D
P R I N C E T O N M A 0 1 5 4 1
T E L : 9 7 8 - 4 6 4 - 2 8 1 5
F A X : 9 7 8 - 4 6 4 - 5 3 7 7

**BOARD OF LIGHT COMMISSIONERS
MARCH 13, 2019
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 PM.

Present were: Commissioner/Chairman - Jim Whitman, Commissioner - Chris Conway, Commissioner - Rick Rys and PMLD General Manager - Brian Allen. Also present were PMLD Staff – Brian Booth & Mary Veinotte.

Agenda:

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

Meeting Minutes:

- **February 13, 2019 Public Meeting Minutes** - The Board voted unanimously in favor (3-0) to accept the meeting minutes as written. A copy will be placed on file and will be available online at www.pmlld.com.

General Manager's Report:

- **Current Bank Balances** – Mr. Allen presented the Board with the bank account balances report dated March 13, 2019. A copy will be placed on file. The Citizen's Bank Operating account has a balance of \$398K, the Depreciation account has a total balance of \$1M, the MMDT Rate Stabilization account has a balance of \$839K, the Unibank Operating account has a balance of \$9K, the Meter Deposit account has a balance of \$36K. As of March 13, 2019, PMLD has \$150K listed for vendor accounts payable and is waiting for \$250K in electric customer account receivables. All bills are paid in a timely manner. Mr. Allen shared with the Board a snapshot of the PMLD account balances from October 2011 (Operating Acct was in the negative, Depreciation was at \$12,000.00 and Rate Stabilization was at \$500.00 & Accounts Payable was at \$863,000.00) to show the successful efforts over the past 6 ½ years to restore the financial stability of the department. The Board discussed the significant events that attributed to the financial strains of the department.
- **February 26th Wind Storm** – Mr. Allen explained that PMLD's distribution system once again held up very well in the recent wind storm. There were just 4 private services (Bigelow Rd, Rocky Pond Rd, Mirick Rd & Esty Rd) that lost power due to private property trees coming down on their overhead services. Additionally, there was one large pine tree on Calamint Hill Rd S, which was confirmed outside the range of the vegetation management plan, that came down onto the main distribution line and across the road knocking out power to a number of homes on Calamint Hill Rd

and Ball Hill Rd. Once the tree was cut up and cleared by PMLD and Highway crews PMLD repaired the broken cross arm and wire and had power restored, all within an hour.

- **2019 Cashflow Budget Review** – Mr. Allen presented the Board with the first copy of the 2019 approved budget detail dated 03/11/2019. A copy will be placed on file. The cashflow figures were for January 2019 with a target of 8.33%. Mr. Allen stated that revenues were at 10.21% and expenses were at 9.11%. The Inventory expense line item came in at 44% (\$31K) due to the large inventory purchase PMLD made to replenish stock, specifically a 300 KVA transformer to have on hand for the Thomas Prince School. Mr. Allen reminded the Board that the 2019 budget allows for up to \$70K in funds to be transferred from the Depreciation Account to the Cash Account to offset the inventory expenses. Mr. Allen reminded the Board that the Thomas Prince School diesel generator is taken care of by Town Hall/Fire Department personnel and provides electricity to the entire school which is used as a command center/shelter during a state of emergency.
- **PMLD's 2018 Electric Power Source Footprint** – Mr. Allen presented the Board with a copy of the electric power source footprint PMLD bought in 2018 through NextEra. A copy will be placed on file. The power sources PMLD purchased in 2018 were made up primarily of Natural Gas at 35% and Nuclear at 29% along with Coal, Oil, Hydro, Wind & Solar coming in at 6% to 2% respectfully. The remaining percentages ranging between 1% and fractions less than 1% were in the biomass, biogas and less conventional categories.
- **PMLD's 2018 Retail Rate Allocations** – Mr. Allen provided the Board with a pie chart allocating the year-end 2018 budget expenses into percentages of the retail rate (\$0.2475 per kWh) to provide a snapshot of how the rate relates to the major budgetary categories. A copy will be placed on file and posted on PMLD's webpage. No significant changes compared to 2017. The Wind Farm Debt & Operations still came in around the \$0.05 average.
- **Sick Time & Part-Time Employee Human Resource Policy Manual Changes** – Mr. Allen explained that the part-time employee changes will not be discussed or changed. He presented the Board with just the sick-time leave changes. A copy of the February 15, 2019 Inspector General's (IG) letter and report regarding Sick-Leave Policies and Payouts at Municipal Light Plants (MLPs) to each Commissioner. A copy will be placed on file. Mr. Allen explained that when he received the letter and report he reviewed the PMLD sick-time policy. The IG report calls attention to financial burdens that MLPs need to address in their policies to limit policy abuse and extraordinary pay-outs. PMLD was not named in the report and PMLD's policy already has limits and pay-out restrictions that do not allow for abuse. He explained that he did however find some areas where the wording needed to be revised to be more consistent with how employees are defined and how the sick-leave is managed. A copy of Section 4.0 of the PMLD Human Resource Policy Manual was presented with red-lined changes and reviewed in detail. The IG's recommendations for changes were reviewed and Commissioner Rys expressed his desire to compare those recommendations for change consideration. Mr. Allen reminded the Board that PMLD employees have not abused the policy and asked them to carefully weigh their decision to make changes that take away or reduce benefits. Commissioner Conway stated that the current PMLD policy is fair and appropriate. The Board agreed to revisit the issue and vote on the changes at the April 10th meeting to allow the Board more time to review the report.

- **2018 DPU Report and Audit Update** – Mr. Allen asked the Board to sign the signature page to confirm their position as Commissioners in 2018 as part of the Department of Public Utilities (DPU) annual report requirement for submission before March 30, 2019. The 2018 audit review with Goulet, Salvidio & Associates PC will be done at the April 10th meeting.
- **EV Charging Stations**– Commissioner Rys put together a one-page list of EV charging recommendations for Princeton. Mr. Allen will send the list to the other Board members. Commissioner Rys explained how he manages EV charging for his Tesla electric car in and out of town and the realistic use of EV charging stations. The Board acknowledged that in-town electric car owners would likely go home to charge their vehicles, while out-of-town electric car owners would be the ones who seek out charging stations in Princeton. Locations were discussed and municipal buildings were not the ideal location. Users would require sites that can afford space to be occupied for a while and spend a few hours at the location to charge their vehicle. Everyone agreed that the Audubon and it's walking trails would be an ideal location to meet the realistic requirements of use.

Other Business:

- **Wicked Local Article “Climate Action Column: Does a Trade Association Really Run Local Electric Departments?”** – Mr. Allen provided a copy of the February 24, 2019 article that Commissioner Rys’ agreed to be interviewed for when Charlotte Kahn, a retired researcher/writer, reached out to him via phone. Mr. Allen expressed his disappointment with what Commissioner Rys’ did and called out Rys’ quote “nearly impossible to claw my way into a MEAM meeting” which was inflammatory and inaccurate. Mr. Allen reminded Rys that he had no grounds to say that and in fact both of them attended the November 2017 and September 2018 MEAM meetings together. Commissioner Rys said he was misquoted. Mr. Allen explained that the meetings are always open to Commissioners and explained that his attendance is infrequent and only when topics that may impact Princeton are up for discussion. Chairman Whitman and Commissioner Conway expressed their disappointment and told Commissioner Rys’ to send a letter asking them to rescind his comment and clarify what he meant to say. MEAM was established in 1953 to provide a forum for managers and commissioners to discuss the municipal electric business and work together to protect ratepayers through legislation and local control.
- **Town Administrator Update** – Nina Nazarian announced her decision to take a new job. She will be leaving in May and the Selectboard will be looking for a new Town Administrator.

At 6:06 PM the Board voted unanimously in favor (3-0) to adjourn the meeting.

*Respectfully Submitted,
Christine Trudeau
Recording Secretary*