

# WEST BOYLSTON MUNICIPAL LIGHTING PLANT

4 Crescent Street, West Boylston, Massachusetts 01583

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## **Board of Light Commission, Regular Session Meeting Minutes, 5:00pm, February 6, 2024**

**Present:** Commissioners Win Handy, Tony Meola, and Jim Pedone were present. WBMLP GM Fitch and Assistant GM Allen were present.

The meeting started at 5pm.

**Agenda:** The Board approved the agenda without any changes or corrections.

**Meeting Minutes:** The Board reviewed and approved the attached October 3, 2023 meeting minutes.

**Customer Issues:** The Board and staff discussed WBMLP's 15% early payment discount for residential seniors. Staff let the Board know that a Facebook discussion took place between customers who didn't know about the senior discount. A few customers called to request the discount. Some customers requested a credit for the discount going back to when they turned 65. WBMLP cannot and does not know when customers turn 65. It is up to customers to contact us to request the discount and then we verify age. The availability of the discount is online and on the back of each monthly bill.

The Board and staff also discussed how some solar installers tell our customers that solar installations are not allowed in town. It's easier for contractors to say this verse saying the economic payback is longer in West Boylston because of our low rates. Solar is allowed and (18) systems are already installed in West Boylston.

**Financials:** GM Fitch let the Board know the 2023 financial audit was underway.

**Substation Loan:** WBMLP staff provided the Board with an update on the \$2M borrowed at 2% interest rate in 2012 to construct the new substation. Only (4) more annual payments are left to pay off the loan at the end of 2027.

**Temple Street Solar Loan:** WBMLP staff provided the Board with an update on the \$4.7M borrowed at 3.15% interest rate in 2017 to construct a 1.8MW solar system. Loan repayments will last until 2032.

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**2023 Actual and Forecasted Power Supply:** The Board discussed and reviewed WBMLP's 2023 energy supply and the updated 2024/2025 energy supply budget forecast. The Board reviewed and discussed the attached "2023 WBMLP Power & Transmission Costs" and "2023 Energy Supply" spreadsheets. The Board reviewed and discussed the attached "2024 energy and transmission budget" 2024/2025 Energy Forecast spreadsheets.

**Worcester Regional Retirement System (WRRS):** Staff provided the Board with the attached FY2025 assessment calculated by WRRS. WBMLP's assessment is approximately \$324,479 and is due July 1, 2024. This is approximately a 9% increase from last year. The Board reviewed and discussed the attached list of actual and forecasted annual WRRS assessments.

**Cooling Degree Days:** The Board and staff discussed how January 2024 was much colder than the same month last year, which is the primary reason for increased electricity consumption. The Board reviewed the attached "heating and cooling degree day chart". Additionally, January 2024 was the month we converted to the new billing system which led to a 32-day bill period. This is 3 days longer than the January 2023 bill period.

**Clean Heat Standard:** Staff informed the Board that it was monitoring MassDEP's potential regulation called the Clean Heat Standard (CHS). The CHS would be applicable on all utilities, delivered fuel companies, and MLPs. The CHS would start in 2026 and require MLPs to fully electrify the HVAC systems for a calculated number of homes annually to meet the standard and GHG reduction requirements.

**Electricity Rates:** WBMLP provided the Board with an update on a future rate study. WBMLP requested quotes from PLM and Utility Financial Solutions, LLC for the cost of service (COS) study. The goal of the COS is to review existing rates and rate structure to ensure they achieve the appropriate rate of return (up to 8%). The rate study will also discuss options for early payment discounts, increasing fixed customer charges, consolidating bill line items, PPA, etc. The COS is approximately \$20,000 - \$27,000 and takes (10-12) weeks to complete. The Board will continue to discuss this at future meetings.

**Project 2015A:** The Board and staff discussed special project 2015A a 55MW, natural gas balancing and peaking/capacity resource. The tentative commercial operation date is now April 5, 2024. Commissioning on oil is essentially complete.

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Natural gas metering and interconnection has had issues and delays, but MMWEC is slowly making progress. Commissioning on natural gas will hopefully start after March 3, 2024.

**New Garage:** Staff provided the Board with a project update. The Board reviewed the attached project budget update.

**NISC Enterprise Software:** Staff let the Board know that our new billing and customer service platform went live on January 3, 2024. The new bills were mailed on February 2<sup>nd</sup> and customers should start receiving them this week.

**Battery Energy Storage System (BESS):** Staff provided the Board with a project update. The 3MW/9MWh BESS project is under construction and expected to be completed in fall 2024.

**Municipal Fiber Network:** WBMLP staff and the Board discussed the progress to date on the municipal building fiber design and cost estimate. The design and cost estimate will be used to apply for the Municipal Fiber Grant program in early April 2024. This grant program supports municipal networks. We expect the grant to assist in the provision of fiber and equipment to each municipal building with headend equipment at WBMLP.

**Other:** Commissioner Handy wanted to know the status of discussions with MWRA to acquire the energy output from Oakdale and the Clinton dam hydro facilities. GM Fitch told the Board he will meet MWRA with ENE on March 8, 2024 to begin discussions.

The meeting adjourned at 6:30pm.

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Win Handy

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Jim Pedone

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Tony Meola