



July 25, 2023
STERLING MUNICIPAL LIGHT DEPARTMENT
REGULAR SESSION
MEETING MINUTES



DATE: July 25, 2023

LOCATION: SMLD, Rear Board Room
50 Main Street, Sterling, MA

BOARD MEMBERS: Joe Curtin (Curtin), Chairman
Eric Darlington (Darlington), Vice Chair
Andy Gonsorcik (Gonsorcik), Clerk

SMLD STAFF: Matt Stelmach (Stelmach), General Manager
Bill Underhill (Underhill), Network Coordinator

MINUTES: Patty Page

6:03 pm. Meeting called to order; Curtin stated that the meeting is subject to audio and video recording.
Roll Call Attendance: Darlington present, Gonsorcik present, Curtin present.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Board members in attendance pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America.

Safety Announcement - Equipment in office.

Approval of Agenda - Darlington made a motion to approve agenda as written. Gonsorcik seconded, no discussion, all in favor, Gonsorcik aye, Darlington aye, Curtin aye. (3-0).

Manager's Report

1. The meeting is being recorded using the new "Meeting Owl" camera and the recording can be uploaded for possible future broadcast on SLCT cable. Tonight will be a test of the recording system.
2. There have been inquiries from two customers regarding power supply. There is increasing pressure on businesses to become carbon neutral. Stelmach circulated an SMLD fuel mix chart for 2022 in a format similar that the one used by ISO-NE. Stelmach noted that SMLD does not yet own the renewable attributes for some of the non-carbon generation.
3. SMLD/LAMB now has on-call service for fiber techs for emergencies. There are also bids being solicited from 3 contractors for disaster recovery services.
4. Vendor BlueWave met with the Town Administrator, Planner, Fire Department, and Assessor – very productive meeting. Project details are still in executive session.
5. Stelmach has obtained the latest schedule for SMLD vehicle replacements. He will review and present at a future meeting.
6. NEPPA Conference August 21/22 in Connecticut. Stelmach asked Board members if they were interested in attending – not at this time.

7. NetZero program – staff attended a meeting in Shrewsbury. Looking into adding more options for commercial customers. Also recommending a financial analysis of the program as costs to SMLD increase. May be time to look at adding an energy efficiency fee to customer bills.
8. Promotional Bulletin – SMLD has a policy regarding mailers and the sign outside. The policy is 10 years old and limits who can put mailers in. Stelmach brought up the discussion because there was a reaction by a customer. Stelmach recommends that future requests be reviewed by the Board.
9. Stelmach will be out the first week of August.

Unfinished Business

- a) ERP Billing Software – NISC gave a demonstration of the GIS/mapping tools. Stelmach and Underhill attended along with Tim Gray from electric operations. Both electric and fiber are open to it but want to see it in action. Stelmach will arrange visits to other utilities for demonstrations and noted that Shrewsbury is rolling out NISC mapping for electric but not for fiber.
- b) 2015A Update – Another snag – fuel strainers contained metal. They believe this is because they are using older fuel piping. Pushed commercial operation to 9/1/23 – no cost impacts and no ISO penalty.
- c) Website Redesign RFP – 3 consultants interested. Proposals are due 8/11/23.
- d) Manager Vehicle Allowance – department vehicle is preferred to personal vehicle.
- e) 50 Main Street Repairs – front porch steps have been repaired; exterior building painting has been awarded; slate roof repairs have been awarded.
- f) New Bucket Truck – The vehicle under consideration by SMLD was sold to another utility. Kiley is building two more in the fall. SMLD to get a new quote based on our exact specifications.

New Business

- a) Fiber Update – Mr. Underhill updated the Board on the number of customers: 256 customers installed. 991 fiber ready (potential customers). Surveys indicate that 384 are interested. In the last 12 months, \$178,000 has been billed. Residents are mostly signing up for the 250MB option. Crews are running 432 cable along Chace Hill Road. They've already put up two 10,000 foot reels and are currently working on the third. All pole work has been completed. By the end of August, it will be all up from Rota's to Meadowbrook. Still working with Northgate Meadows and building 2. Also continuing to work on getting Sholan Terrace up. Staff will continue to add door hangers which now have QR codes that will bring customers right to the sign-up page. Curtin recommended more staff interaction with the customers to continue the personal touch and the normal responsive and customer friendly way.
- a) Energy Committee – Darlington put his name in to represent the Light Board on the Energy Committee. Gonsorcik made a motion to nominate Darlington to represent the Light Board on the Energy Committee, Curtin seconded. Curtin aye, Darlington aye, Gonsorcik aye. Vote 3-0.
- b) Berkshire Wind Tour/Climb – Gonsorcik will attend.
- c) Request for Abatements – there are 2 types of abatements. One for \$531.12 for a motor vehicle accident in 2019 – 3 years have passed. The second is four electric accounts that are uncollectable (2 bankruptcies and another 2 customers left the area with no forwarding information) which amounts to \$1,831.64. Darlington made a motion to abate a total of \$2,362.76. Gonsorcik seconded. Curtin aye, Darlington aye, Gonsorcik aye. Vote 3-0.
- d) Depreciation Transfer – Darlington made a motion to transfer \$225,729.47 from depreciation to operation. Gonsorcik seconded. Curtin aye, Darlington aye, Gonsorcik aye. Vote 3-0.
- e) AP Clerk – Stelmach presented the new job description for Accounts Payable / Administrative Support which changes this position from part time to full time. Additional responsibilities have been added. Time

will be spread over AP, operations, payroll, inventory, and databases. Additionally, the Office Manager is looking for cross-training of staff to continue to provide excellent customer service. Curtin made a motion to change the part time AP Clerk position to a full time Accounts Payable / Administrative Support position with full benefits at the same hourly rate. Darlington seconded. Curtin aye, Darlington aye, Gonsorcik aye. Vote 3-0.

APPROVAL OF PAST MINUTES: Gonsorcik made a motion to approve the 6/27/2023 regular session minutes as written, Darlington seconded, no discussion, all in favor. Darlington aye, Curtin aye, Gonsorcik aye. Vote 3-0.

Customer Comments: None at this time.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS AND SCHEDULE NEXT BOARD MEETING: Future agenda items to include ERP Billing, 2015A Project, Fiber Update, Website Redesign, and new bucket truck.
Next meeting August 29, 2023 @ 6 pm.

At 6:41 pm Darlington made a motion to adjourn. Gonsorcik seconded. All in favor, 3-0.

ATTEST:


Andrew Gonsorcik, Clerk

DATE:

9/18/2023

BOARD APPROVAL FOR RELEASE:


