



October 18, 2023
 STERLING MUNICIPAL LIGHT DEPARTMENT
 REGULAR SESSION
 MEETING MINUTES



DATE: October 18, 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 - ABSENT

SMLD STAFF: Matt Stelmach (Stelmach), General Manager

MINUTES: Patty Page

5:10 pm. Meeting called to order; Curtin stated that the meeting is subject to audio and video recording. Roll Call Attendance: Darlington present, Curtin present, Gonsorcik absent.

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 the agenda. Curtin seconded, no discussion, all in favor, Darlington aye, Curtin aye. (2-0).

Manager’s Report

1. MMWEC Residential Rate Comparisons – Report runs July 2022 to June 2023. SMLD has consistently been in the bottom 1/3 of utilities, not the most expensive and not the least expensive.
2. MMWEC voted on their proposed Administrative and General Budget - \$12.9M down \$100K from 2023. They are still working on Sterling’s contributions.
3. Tree trimming bid – Pricing varied greatly. Contract was awarded to the low bidder, Enviro Arbor Solutions.
4. There is an upcoming public hearing on 10/23 in Leominster regarding SMLD installation of fiber on Research Drive.
5. Update on SMLD hydroelectric power sources – Visited Mechanicsville in Thompson, CT. Working on extending contract and negotiating for renewable energy credits. Visiting Baltic Mills in Enfield, NH on 10/19. Contract is now expired. Working on renewal but PSNH is offering significant incentives to renewable energy providers.
6. Sean Hamilton will hit hourly maximum next week and will no longer be available for direct consulting to SMLD in 2023.
7. Stelmach will be on vacation 11/2 thru 11/7.
8. Veteran’s Day is on Friday, 11/10. SMLD office to close at 11:30AM on Thursday 11/9.

Unfinished Business

- a) ERP Billing Software – Underhill will be the lead on the first part of the data conversion. Estimated timeline remains for financials go live first in May following with service and billing go live in November. Remaining issues with Meridian on liquidated damages which could delay data conversion. Working with our attorney on a resolution.
- b) 2015A Update – Commercial operation scheduled for 11/16 on liquid fuel. Gas service remains an issue. Still no penalties from the ISO associated with the delay.
- c) Website Redesign RFP – Going with static html completely controlled by vendor. Working on contract. Looking at a November start with go-line in January or February at best.
- d) Employee Handbook – Being reviewed by Starkweather & Shepley, HR consultant recommended by PURMA. Will include new smoking policy. First draft expected this week.

New Business

- a) Fiber Update – 310 subscribers, 275 residential and 35 commercial. Still lots of interest.
- b) Fiber Marketing – Stelmach believes that the challenge lies more with installation than with marketing. We have only 2 installers whose focus up to recently was on getting the grant fiber in the air. Need to push installs and marketing has to be more than “door knockers”. Chace Hill loop has the potential for 600 customers. Curtin said there should be more follow-up with the potential customers. Stelmach says they are working on mapping coverage. Curtin said if we need additional marketing resources, let the Board know. Also would like to see more financials at the next meeting.
- c) Storage Building Conceptual Study – Haley Ward to define scope, but Stelmach has had a hard time reaching them to move this forward.
- d) Depreciation Transfer - Darlington made a motion to transfer from the Depreciation Fund to Operating Cash the amount of \$206, 677.33. Curtin seconded, no discussion, all in favor. Darlington aye, Curtin aye. Vote 2-0.
- e) NYPA Committee Designated Voting Representative and Alternate – Darlington made a motion that the NYPA Recipient Town of Sterling, pursuant to Section 5..1.4 of the Agency Agreement between the Massachusetts Department of Telecommunications and Energy (MDTE) and the Massachusetts Municipal Wholesale Electric Company (MMWEC), hereby designates Matthew Stelmach (its manager of municipal lighting) as its Designated Voting Representative on the NYPA Recipients’ Committee, to vote and execute written instruments or proxy vote, on its behalf relative to the reviewing of administrative reports, and reports of current issues and/or proposed litigation , to elect the Executive Committee, stand for election as a member of the Executive Committee and to serve, if elected, and to discuss and take any other actions on behalf of the NYPA Project Power Recipient cities and towns as may be described in the Agency Agreement and to make appropriate recommendations on issues affected the delivery of Project Power to the MDTE and/or MMWEC; and that Andrew Gonsorcik, a member of the Municipal light department board is hereby designated as an Alternate Designated Voting Representative for the Town of Sterling, who shall, in the absence of the Designated Voting Representative, have all the power conferred upon the Designated Voting Representative except those additional powers conferred (if any) related to serving as a member of the Executive Committee. Curtin seconded, no discussion, all in favor. Darlington aye, Curtin aye. Vote 2-0.
- f) MMWEC Designated Voting Representative and Alternate – Darlington made a motion that the Town of Sterling, pursuant to Article III, Section 6 of the Massachusetts Municipal Wholesale Electric Company (MMWEC) By-Laws, as revised and amended, and Section 3(b) of Chapter 775 of the Acts of 1975 hereby designates Matthew Stelmach (its manager of municipal lighting), as its Voting Representative, to vote and execute written instruments on its behalf relative to adoption, amendment, or repeal of MMWEC By-Laws, the election of President and Directors of the Corporation, and other action by the Member cities and

towns of MMWEC; and that Andrew Gonsorcik (a member of the municipal light board) is hereby designated as an Alternate Voting Representative who shall, in the absence of the Voting Representative, have all the powers conferred upon the Voting Representative, and that Joseph Curtin (a member of the municipal light board) is hereby designated as an Alternate Voting Representative who shall, in the absence of the first designee and second designee, have all the power conferred upon the Voting Representative, and that Eric Darlington (a member of the municipal light board) is hereby designated as an Alternate Voting Representative who shall, in the absence of the first designee, the second designee, and the third designee, have all the power conferred upon the Voting Representative. Curtin seconded, no discussion all in favor. Darlington aye, Curtin aye. Vote 2-0.

APPROVAL OF PAST MINUTES: Darlington made a motion to approve the 9/18/2023 regular session minutes, Curtin seconded, no discussion, all in favor. Darlington aye, Curtin aye. Vote 2-0. Darlington made a motion to approve the 9/18/2023 executive session minutes to be released, Curtin seconded, no discussion, all in favor. Darlington aye, Curtin aye. Vote 2-0-.

Customer Comments: There was some discussion regarding the insertion of flyers with the bills. Stelmach reiterated that the SMLD Board Policy allowed the Board of Health to use this avenue of communication with the public. Also, a suggestion was made to include mention of system reliability in the next issue of Light Lines.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS AND SCHEDULE NEXT BOARD MEETING: Future agenda items to include unfinished business items on this agenda plus the storage building conceptual study. Next meeting November 29, 2023 @ 5 pm.

At 5:46 pm Darlington made a motion to adjourn. Curtin seconded. All in favor, 2-0.

ATTEST: 
Andrew Gonsorcik, Clerk

DATE: 12/5/2023

BOARD APPROVAL FOR RELEASE: 11/28/2023