

**MINUTES  
TOWN OF BELMONT  
BELMONT MUNICIPAL LIGHT BOARD  
SELECTMEN'S MEETING ROOM  
TOWN HALL  
Wednesday, September 30, 2015  
8:00 AM**

RECEIVED  
TOWN CLERK  
BELMONT, MA

2015 DEC -3 AM 9:27

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

*Chair Baghdady called a regular meeting of the Municipal Light Board (MLB) to order at 8:15 A.M.*

Present:

MLB- Chair Sami Baghdady, Vice-Chair Mark Paolillo, Member Jim Williams

Temporary Net Metering Working Advisory Group (NMWAG or Working Group)-  
Chair Roy Epstein, Vice-Chair Steve Klionsky, Clerk Jake Jacoby

Belmont Energy Committee- Roger Colton

Belmont Light- General Manager Jim Palmer, Staff Becca Keane

**II. GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT**

**a. Update on substation and transmission project**

Palmer reported that much progress has been made on the substation building at 20 Flanders Road. The building foundation is in and the steel frame would be going up in the next week. The building will be weather tight by December 9th and major tools and equipment needed will be delivered soon thereafter. The final contract will soon be signed for the transmission line bid. Belmont Light had a kickoff meeting with the contractor in mid-September and they have been working on the MBTA application process. The project team is hoping to have construction along the railway completed by March 21st. If the contractor does not finish work by this deadline, they would be liable to Belmont.

Palmer stated that Belmont Light will be working very closely with Eversource in coordinating the installation and energization of the cable. He also said that the overall project is still on track for June 2016 energization. Palmer said that this is a very aggressive timeline, but active monitoring by the Belmont Light team will help keep the project move along.

Paolillo asked about the MBTA application. Palmer explained that anytime you work on the MBTA line, you need to apply with a construction plan showing the timeline of the project as well as the areas that will be worked on. Palmer doesn't expect any surprises and believes the application will go along smoothly.

Williams asked about funding of the project. Palmer noted that everything is currently on-budget, but that he will know by January if the project will require more money, which will

ultimately come from Eversource. Baghdady explained that if this occurs, it will be more an issue of coordinating cash flow and ensuring that Eversource reimburses Belmont for the project.

Williams asked about the decommissioning of other the older substations in town. Palmer said the substation at 450 Concord Ave. will be the first to be addressed. It will take at least five years to start the decommissioning process after the current project is complete. Belmont Light is developing the master plan for decommissioning and will have the project cost estimates in a few months. Palmer noted that the substations would be decommissioned in a series so that there is less risk.

## **II. DISCUSSION & POSSIBLE VOTE ON UPDATED EMISSION-FREE RENEWABLE GENERATING FACILITIES POLICY & BUYBACK TARIFF**

Baghdady asked members of the Temporary Net Metering Working Group (NMWAG) to come to the table. He explained that NMWAG met frequently throughout the summer to complete and submit a thorough, 20-page report advising the Light Board on Belmont Light's policy and pricing for solar customers.

Epstein noted that as NMWAG drafted the report, they reviewed a lot of material and encouraged public participation. He then described the final report's major recommendations. The first recommendations suggests that the new tariff apply to all residential and commercial solar interconnections with an installed capacity of 250 kilowatts or less. The second recommendation is that solar customers pay the same amount that non-solar customers pay for any power they take from the Belmont Light system. If a solar customer generates any extra power, the solar host would be paid 11 cents per kWh sold back to Belmont Light. The buyback price would be fixed and in effect until the end of December 2016. After that date, the buyback rate would adjust once a year based on changes in electricity prices. The adjustment would be formulaic.

The third recommendation is that Belmont Light implement an aggregate, system-wide solar PV capacity limit of 1,000 kW. If there is widespread adoption under the new tariff, safety and reliability issues may arise. The limit is intended to mandate a pause where the Light during which the Light Board could assess whether technical or economic issues would occur under further PV growth. If needed, the limit could be raised. Currently, there is about 280 kW of installed capacity in town, which means there is a lot of capacity left before this proposed limit is reached.

Another point addressed by NMWAG is whether or how to compensate existing solar customers for the transition to the new rate. This is the one area where NNWAG members had a difference of opinion. The majority recommendation is that compensation be limited to solar customers who installed before November 2011, which is the date the current tariff was implemented. Under this recommendation, customers who demonstrate to the Light Board that they will not recoup their investments after 15 years given the new tariff would be eligible for up to a \$3,000 rebate. Klionsky presented the minority recommendation, which is that there should be no distinction between systems before and after 2011 and that all existing customers should instead

continue on the current net metering rate for three more years. Klionsky stated that this scenario would be simpler to administer.

Epstein noted that the last recommendations address how to get solar implemented on a larger scale than it currently is. NMWAG recommends that a solarize-like campaign be started immediately to help with this effort. Other towns have experienced great results because of these campaigns. The campaign should get underway immediately so people can take advantage of the federal tax credit before it expires at the end of 2016.

Williams asked about the solar cross subsidy issue. Roy responded that he does not see this as an issue under the new tariff.

The Board, NMWAG members, and Palmer further discussed NWAG's recommendations, the different options at hand, and the logistics for filing a new tariff. Palmer also called the Board's attention to a change that was made during the preparation of the new tariff and policy documents regarding power purchase agreements (PPAs) because of legal counsel's concerns over retail choice. The Board discussed this matter briefly and agreed to discuss it in more detail at the next meeting.

Baghdady then opened the meeting to comments from the audience. Several residents indicated that the new tariff might make it difficult for existing solar customers to recoup their investments. The board responded by agreeing to further address compensation for existing customers topic at the next meeting.

*Paolillo moved to accept the report from the NMWAG. Williams seconded and the motion was approved with a vote of all in favor (3-0).*

*Paolillo moved that the policy and tariff on emission-free renewable generating facilities presented to the Board at this meeting be adopted by the Board and that the General Manager be directed and authorized to file the tariff with the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources today and to implement the policy as directed by the Board, with the understanding that the issues on how to compensate existing solar customers and the power purchase agreements be revisited later. Williams seconded and the motion was approved with a vote of all in favor (3-0).*

#### **IV. BELMONT SOLAR CHALLENGE**

Baghdady stated that by initiating a solar challenge, the Light Board, the Town, and residents can create solar awareness and encourage more adopters before the federal tax credit expires at the end of 2016. Baghdady felt that Keane's experience with another solar challenge could help the group. Keane helped lead a solar challenge in Stow, MA and believes a similar effort will be even more successful in Belmont.

Keane and Colton noted that the release of an RFP would be the most important step in launching a solar challenge. The group discussed the logistics for coordinating an RFP and that it might be best for a town committee to lead the effort. The Board agreed that the Energy

Committee would be the best choice, and that Belmont Light could support their efforts. Baghdady would like for Colton to work on getting the campaign started quickly. Colton noted that along with solar, there are other important climate projects that the Energy Committee is working on moving forward, including creating awareness about energy conservation.

#### **V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES DATED 8/28/15**

Baghdady noted that he had a few small changes to the draft August 28<sup>th</sup> minutes, so their approval was deferred until the next meeting.

#### **VI. FUTURE MEETINGS**

The group decided to share available meeting dates with each other to determine the next meeting date.

#### **VII. ADJOURNMENT**

The Board adjourned at 10:00 AM.