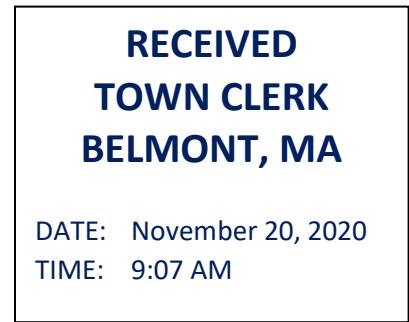


Minutes
Town of Belmont
Belmont Municipal Light Board
Virtual Meeting on Zoom
Monday, June 15, 2020
5:00pm



I-CALL TO ORDER

A meeting of the Light Board was called to order at 5:01pm by Chair Roy Epstein. Vice Chair Adam Dash and Board Member Tom Caputo were present. Belmont Light General Manager Chris Roy was present.

II-APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- May 18, 2020: Epstein suggested several minor edits for clarity, to the paragraph preceding Section V.
Motion: To approve the Belmont Municipal Light Board regular session minutes of May 18, 2020, as amended. (Vote passed 3-0; roll-call vote: Roy Epstein, Adam Dash, Tom Caputo)

III-APPOINTMENTS TO LBAC

Michael Macrae and Shirley Wang both had terms expiring on June 30, 2020. Macrae wished to be reappointed; Wang did not seek reappointment. Macrae had only been recently appointed within the past year to fill a vacant position. Epstein commented he had been a great asset to the Committee during his time.

Motion: To reappoint Michael Macrae to the Light Board Advisory Committee for a three year term. (Vote passed 3-0; roll-call vote: Roy Epstein, Adam Dash, Tom Caputo)

IV-DISCUSSION WITH INTERNAL GM CANDIDATE

Epstein introduced candidate Craig Spinale: Spinale had been at Belmont Light since 2012, first in the role of Director of Engineering and Operations. In 2017, he had taken over as acting General Manager with the resignation of Jim Palmer, and subsequently served as Assistant GM during the tenure of Chris Roy. Spinale had worked on a wide range of projects during his time, including the Blair Pond substation, upgrade to 13.8KV service, negotiation of union contracts, and more.

Epstein proposed a roundtable format of question and answer by the Light Board, followed by potential questions from the public.

- *Epstein:* What are the greatest priorities for Belmont Light and how would you address them?
Spinale: Two other employees in important roles are departing (in addition to GM Roy) – need to fill these roles quickly. Other projects of priority are completion of Phase 2 of the fiber project and the incinerator site.
- *Caputo:* How do you see the role of Belmont Light in achieving Belmont’s goals of sustainability, renewable energy, climate action, etc.?

Spinale: Want Belmont Light to be the expert / 'go-to' organization for the community in achieving these goals. Important to solicit input from LBAC and Energy Committee when putting programs in place.

- *Dash:* How do you view the GM role in terms of collaborating with other Town bodies (Light Board, LBAC, Energy Committee, etc.)?

Spinale: Pride myself on collaboration. As acting GM, worked proactively with LBAC and Energy Committee to refresh the Power Supply Policy. Utility world has changed and is fast-paced – necessary to have input from the community as well as relying on expertise of BL employees.

- *Epstein:* How do you view the current atmosphere of labor-management relations at BL?

- o Spinale: Involved in the last labor contract negotiations – operational group was pleased and felt it was a fair contract. There is some concern with upcoming contract negotiations (this year), as the Town is facing some financial challenges; there is some concern on the labor side that this may have an impact. Look forward to the process and working out a fair contract.

- *Caputo:* Started the Strategic Planning process with GM Roy. How do you view the process and how would you move things forward?

Spinale: Believe in the process and think it is necessary; had been talking about strategic planning when Roy arrived at BL. Don't see any major hurdles remaining, committed to seeing through to completion.

- *Dash:* What is your approach to budgeting?

Spinale: Concentrated on developing business-side skills more over the last three years, including budgeting. See it as a collaborative process through a series of meetings, working closely with finance manager and staff accountant.

- *Epstein:* Belmont is in a unique situation with high penetration of Smart Meters. Thoughts on how to utilize the data, specifically for Time-of-Use (TOU) pricing?

Spinale: Haven't yet dived into TOU models personally – would look to NEPPA and APPA for successful models. Important to embrace use of data for making business decisions; could envision a repurposed data analyst role to leverage the large amounts of data available.

- *Caputo:* How do you view the role of GM in its relationship to the Light Board?

Spinale: See the relationship with the Light Board as well defined, however things can get complicated with other advisory committees and boards. Necessary to clearly define roles and scope of interactions.

- *Dash:* How does Belmont get greener without driving up rates?

Spinale: First step is the Cost of Service Study, which has been completed. Use this to identify areas for revenue generation and cost savings. Important to move towards strategic electrification. Also, push forward with initiatives that can be revenue generating, e.g. fiber project.

- *Epstein:* How important is it that BL gets a new building?

Spinale: Think it would be a great opportunity for growth. Looking into the incinerator site as a possible location. Maxed out at the current location in terms of storage / staffing. More space could allow for cost savings (e.g. purchasing equipment/supplies in advance

at a good price and putting in storage vs buying on demand) and hiring additional staff for projects that could be revenue generating.

- *Caputo*: With respect to fiber, how would you take the community through the process of getting such a project implemented?
 - Spinale: First thing to address is completion of Phase II (installation along Concord Ave.), which would provide enhanced service for Town and School buildings and provide the backbone for future development. Hold lots of public meetings to get input, and work on a pilot project to get data and develop a business case for more widespread roll-out.
- *Dash*: What did you learn as acting GM and what makes you a different candidate this time around?
 - o Learned to understand/appreciate the community and what it wants to accomplish in terms of clean energy goals. Participated in an executive coaching program to further develop business and leadership skills. Focused on strategic initiatives as Assistant GM.

[Open to public for questions/comments.]

- *Steve Klionsky (Chair, LBAC)*: Delighted that Spinale put his name forward and think he would make an excellent GM. Was a strong candidate last time around, and has only developed in the role of Assistant GM over the past several years.
- Travis Franck (Vice Chair, LBAC): 1] What is the likelihood of a solar project at the incinerator site at this time? 2] What would you see as the hardest part / challenges of being GM at Belmont Light?
 - o Spinale: Interest is there for a solar project at the incinerator site, would like to pursue this option as a possible way to get more solar into the BL portfolio. Challenges at BL are the interaction of the GM with various town boards and committees – adds an additional layer to the job that is not present at other utilities.

[Close public comment.]

Epstein indicated the Board would like to act on the candidacy at its next meeting. Any additional questions for Spinale could be communicated in writing via HR Director Porter.

V-DISCUSSION ON GOVERNANCE

Epstein explained that this issue had been raised and discussed in great detail at the last LBAC meeting, i.e., the relationship between the Light Board, LBAC and Belmont Light GM, and more generally the governance structure of Belmont Light. Epstein was previously unaware of the problems raised and expressed a desire to work through a process in the near term (~1 year) towards resolving the matter, ultimately via putting the question to Town Meeting.

Roy gave a summary of the documents he had presented at LBAC, highlighting the main issues: three independent studies since 2004 had recommended that an independent body be established to serve as the Light Board, because the current model of having the Light Board be constituted by the Select Board was fundamentally dysfunctional for the governance of Belmont Light; the creation of the Municipal Light Advisory Board (MLAB) in 2005 was originally intended as a vehicle to help transition the governance to this new body; the transition to a new form of governance had been help up over the years, and the

dissolution of MLAB , leading to the creation of LBAC in 2015, had in some ways further complicated the governance structure.

Ultimately, Roy was recommending for Belmont to complete the transition to a new governance structure, as has been proposed since the formation of MLAB in 2005. He had commissioned legal counsel KP Law to create a document outlining a step-by-step process for doing so, including a sample Warrant Article that could be adapted for Town Meeting.

Epstein pointed out that what was currently lacking in order to move forward on the matter was a vision for the new governance structure, and he offered a commitment to undertake the necessary process in the near term to iron out what this would look like.

Dash pointed out he had raised the issue numerous times over the last several years in his time on the Light Board. He had even proposed a model for the new body, having the current Light Board augmented by adding the chairs of LBAC and the Energy Committee, as nominated by those bodies. Dash disagreed with Roy's analysis of Light Board governance.

In general, Dash and Caputo were both supportive of undertaking a process for identifying the new governance structure and moving forward with the consideration .

VI-UPDATE ON BUDGET VS ACTUALS

Rebecca Keene (Energy Resources Manager, Belmont Light) gave an update on how the adjusted budget projections due to COVID were playing out in comparisons with actual sales. Sales were closely in line with what had been projected, within a few percentage points. Residential sales were actually slightly higher than anticipated, offset by decreases in other categories such as commercial and municipal. Belmont was in a good situation overall compared with some other utilities, due to a heavy residential base. It would be important to keep a close eye on sales over the summer and adjust the model as necessary.

VII-FUTURE MEETINGS

- July 13 2020: Chris Roy's last day as GM of Belmont Light.

VIII-PUBLIC COMMENT

[None.]

IX-ADJOURNMENT

Motion: To adjourn at 6:33pm. (Vote passed 3-0; roll-call vote: Roy Epstein, Adam Dash, Tom Caputo)