

**MINUTES  
Of the  
LIGHT BOARD ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
REMOTE MEETING  
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2020  
7:30 A.M.**

**RECEIVED  
TOWN CLERK  
BELMONT, MA**

DATE: April 7, 2021  
TIME: 2:54 PM

## **I. CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Klionsky called the meeting of the Light Board Advisory Committee (LBAC) to order at 7:34am. Present were LBAC Chair Steve Klionsky, Vice Chair Travis Franck, members Michael Macrae, Jonathan Abe, David Beavers, Robert Forrester, and Ralph Jones. Also present was Belmont Light General Manager Craig Spinale, Assistant General Manager Sam Osmanovic, Energy Resources Manager Becca Keane, and Communications Coordinator Aidan Leary. Not present was Municipal Light Board (MLB) Liaison Roy Epstein.

## **II. GOVERNANCE RECAP**

### *a. Role of LBAC*

Mr. Klionsky and Mr. Spinale recapped the status of Governance from the previous meetings, with the result being nothing will be on the September 2020 Town Meeting Warrant. There will be further consideration in LBAC and MLB for a future Town Meeting. He continued to describe the history of the committee and the progression of Belmont Light staff.

Mr. Klionsky asked, given the expertise within Belmont Light, should there be any change in how LBAC considers issues and how often meetings should be scheduled. Mr. Spinale felt that MLB made their expectations of LBAC clear, with MLB letting LBAC know when they wanted their input on an issue. He suggested that perhaps LBAC did not need to meet monthly if the agenda would mirror the MLB's (for example, a General Manager Update) and perhaps LBAC could attend the MLB meeting to gain updates in those situations. LBAC could perhaps have a bi-monthly or quarterly meeting unless there were active discussions on an issue.

Mr. Klionsky said that LBAC meetings had been scheduled before MLB meetings so they could delve deeper into issues and help sharpen MLB's discussion, but this might not be needed as much anymore given the expertise available in Belmont Light.

Mr. Franck felt a change of governance is called for because MLB doesn't have the time to get deeply into issues. LBAC relying on MLB's meetings will not give him the depth of discussion and understanding for issues, so he feels the longer LBAC meetings are still valuable.

Mr. Beavers doesn't feel the Strategic Plan can be achieved without regular meetings of LBAC.

Mr. Macrae agreed that MLB meetings do not have the time to dig deeply into things like the budget or other complicated matters. He asked who is asking the question about LBAC's role.

Mr. Klionsky explained that he's trying to find a balance between when LBAC thinks they should meet, and when Belmont Light feels they need to meet.

The Committee discussed the issue at length, considering how they could handle MLB's needs, Belmont Light's resources and needs, and LBAC's charge (which was reviewed and expanded two years ago).

Mr. Franck suggested that LBAC continue to be a resource to Mr. Spinale and Belmont Light until a deeper discussion about governance can be had. Mr. Spinale agreed with Mr. Franck's suggestion. He also acknowledged that the MLAB model had worked very well. Issues arose when MLB took more ownership of Belmont Light, LBAC was created, and duplications and some confusion started to occur (he then illustrated some examples). His goal is to resolve these issues by creating the right structure of boards. He is willing to continue the way things are, but everyone should be more aware about what's appropriate for LBAC to consider.

Mr. Klionsky acknowledged that the current governance structure is not ideal, but asked Mr. Spinale to let them know if he felt LBAC is getting into things that the MLB could handle themselves.

### **III. DISCUSSION ON TIME OF USE RATE DESIGN**

#### *a. Time of Use Among Massachusetts MLPs*

Mr. Spinale provided a summary of the status of this research project. There are four municipal light plants (MLPs) in Massachusetts that have a time of use (TOU) rate for residential customers. They have talked with two, have an appointment with a third and have not had a response from the fourth. Belmont Light learned that both MLPs they spoke with have a very small percentage of their customer base taking advantage of the TOU rate. The TOU rates that seem to work best target specific items (e.g. EV chargers), rather than just being an available rate. Mr. Spinale pointed out that at this point their findings are inconclusive and that the research numbers are small. It seems that for most of the MA MLPs Belmont Light spoke with, it is nice to offer a TOU rate, but the offerings don't have widespread engagement among residents. One MLP that has TOU rates advised that it was very important to educate the public about it for it to be successful.

Ms. Keane said the effort has caused them to accelerate their outreach to out of state MLPs (including SMUD and Fort Collins) as well as larger MLPs that have had success in rolling out TOU. They hope to have more information to present at the next meeting.

Mr. Beavers asked if the other MLPs had smart meters. Mr. Spinale said that Concord has less than 10% smart meters deployed and have put the program on hold because they are getting some pushback. In general, Mr. Spinale and Ms. Keane felt that Belmont was much more advanced in the planning portion of this project than other municipalities.

Mr. Klionsky asked how much confidence there was in Utility Financial Solutions (UFS) and whether they were really needed for this project. Mr. Spinale explained that Belmont Light had asked UFS to look into some areas, and that UFS was very helpful. Ms. Keane said the biggest value UFS adds is formally looking at how the rates will impact Belmont Light financially and ensuring Belmont Light would hit all revenue targets under all scenarios. She feels it's important that they stay involved, and Mr. Spinale agreed.

### **IV. GENERAL MANAGER'S UPDATE**

#### *a. Strategic Plan*

Mr. Spinale said the draft Strategic Plan was sent to the MLB. He recognized Ms. Keane's instrumental input and value in preparing the report.

Mr. Forrester expressed his admiration for the document. He felt there were a couple of spots that held a particular point of view, which he suggested should be reconsidered if it becomes a formal, accepted document. Mr. Spinale agreed.

#### *b. First Light Cabot/Turner Falls Hydro – Purchased Power Agreement*

Energy New England (ENE) had approached Belmont Light with an opportunity for a hydroelectric power contract with First Light. First Light was gaining interest with Massachusetts MLPs as they go forward with

the project. Mr. Spinale thinks it's a good opportunity for Belmont because it comes with Maine Class II renewable energy certificates (RECs), the cost of power is very low, and eliminates congestion costs because it is local. He feels there is room in Belmont Light's energy portfolio while still meeting the previously contracted power purchases. He explained First Light has ponding capability so they could release water to mimic municipal usage. He plans to put this on the MLB agenda and hopes to have a joint MLB/LBAC executive session to go into the financial details. Mr. Spinale answered various questions from the members.

Mr. Macrae asked if a Maine Class II REC counts toward the Massachusetts Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS). The group discussed that this topic needed further research and that Belmont Light could get firm documentation from ENE regarding ME Class II RECs and CES to present at a future meeting. Mr. Macrae feels that, while Maine Class II is allowable by state standards, it is not a credible claim to renewable energy based on Massachusetts definitions.

Mr. Klionsky asked if Belmont Light is on track to meet the 100% renewable goal for the end of 2022, to which Mr. Spinale said they are. Mr. Klionsky also asked about the energy supply hedge for 2021. Mr. Spinale said they are a little under right now but that was intentional so there would be flexibility to take advantage of opportunities like this one. But as the date approaches, they should get more aggressive in reaching that goal.

Mr. Macrae asked about the term of the contract with First Light. Mr. Spinale said it is a 10-year contract at 2 megawatts for the first 3 years, and then 3 megawatts for the remaining 7 years.

*c. OMS Go Live 9/21 – 9/25*

A new outage management system (OMS) will go live the week of September 21, 2020 as a soft start. They will not advertise its existence to customers so there is time to update the website, advertise, etc. The OMS will allow Belmont Light to share data on what's happening with a power outage, how long it will take to restore power, use phone numbers to call and text, etc. It will also allow Belmont Light to easily collect all the information about outages which will help make future decisions about repairs, etc., and it also make it easier to report metrics.

*d. Monthly Water Billing*

Mr. Spinale explained that Belmont Light was on track to transition water/sewer billing for DPW Water Division customer from a quarterly to monthly basis starting in November, but the Select Board had not approved this. It will be on one of the Select Board agendas in October.

*e. Incinerator Site*

Belmont Light was disappointed to learn, after meeting with Town personnel, that the entire incinerator site requires a cap. Belmont Light will work with the Town to determine which cap will best meet our needs and any future needs at the site, possibly capping only the area for the battery storage and solar array before the rest of the site. This will delay the battery storage project. No timeframes are available at this time.

*f. Personnel Changes*

Mr. Spinale told the committee that Mr. Osmanovic had been promoted to Assistant General Manager, and that Kerri Benson, a Customer Service Representative had been promoted to Senior Customer Service Representative because of a resignation. There are currently postings for Director of Engineering & Operations, Customer Service Representative, and a Procurement position.

Mr. Franck asked for an update on the Chenery Solar Project. Mr. Osmanovic said they had gone out to bid, and SunBug Solar has been selected. They have been working with the vendor and Belmont's Facilities Group but there is an unexpected roadblock – the metal roof where the array will be located needed some repairs, which has been taken care of. Mr. Osmanovic also mentioned that the upper roof needs to be replaced within 18-24 months which impacts the infrastructure for the array. This issue is still open and is

being worked on. It appears that Facilities and School Departments now seem to have some reservations about the project as a whole, so Belmont Light is waiting for their input. There was a discussion of the history of the project, funding, and process. Ms. Keane pointed out that there is a time pressure because of the MLP Solar Rebate for the project. The program runs through December 31, 2020 and the array has to be erected within a year of the award (August 17, 2021).

## **V. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES**

*Mr. Forrester moved to approve the minutes of the July 22, 2020 meeting as presented. Mr. Klionsky seconded the motion and it passed unanimously, with Mr. Abe abstaining.*

Mr. Macrae asked if the minutes of August 19, 2020 should include language reflecting LBAC's agreement at the meeting that the TOU analysis so far found that the costs for strategic electrification technologies were less under a TOU strategy than they would be under a non-TOU system. He wanted to make the point that this was the perfect outcome, as it demonstrated that there was no creating subsidies, playing favorites, etc., just assigning marginal costs to marginal causes and that the strategic electrification technologies were winners. After some discussion it was decided not to amend the minutes for August 19, 2020, but to have the sentiments reflected in the current minutes.

*Mr. Macrae moved to approve the minutes of the meeting of August 19, 2020. Mr. Franck seconded the motion and it passed, with Mr. Abe abstaining.*

## **VI. FUTURE MEETINGS**

- October 5, 2020 Joint MLB/LBAC Meeting planned
- October 21, 2020
- November 18, 2020

## **VI. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Mr. Phil Thayer asked for an update on the National Drive Electric Campaign, and the possibility of getting solar on the McLean Development. Mr. Spinale said they have met with the McLean people and they are interested in doing something, but nothing firm has been decided. The developer seems most interested in a replacement for their generation, possibly gas which doesn't fit into Belmont's electrification goals. Regarding the National Drive Electric Campaign, Mr. Leary explained that the pandemic had prevented any type of public event, but Belmont Light is looking for alternatives for the upcoming National Drive Electric Week. This year they are teaming up with the Reading Municipal Light Department on a video project asking local EV owners to film themselves talking about their EVs, do a filmed test drive, talk about how they use the cars, why they bought an EV, etc. They plan to create a database of these materials for other municipalities to use, and they're reaching out to other MEAM utilities to share. This is being advertised through various outlets to reach EV users/owners.

## **VII. ADJOURNMENT**

*Mr. Franck moved to adjourn the meeting, which passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 9:25am.*

Respectfully submitted by,  
Susan Peghiny