

**Minutes
Town of Belmont
Belmont Municipal Light Board
Monday, October 26, 2020
5:30 P.M.**

**RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK
BELMONT, MA**

DATE: April 6, 2021
TIME: 2:34 PM

I. CALL TO ORDER

A meeting of the Municipal Light Board was called to order at 5:30 p.m. by Chair Adam Dash. Vice Chair Tom Caputo and Member Roy Epstein were present. Belmont Light General Manager Craig Spinale was also present.

As a point of order, Chair Dash stated that the meeting agenda would be restructured for future meetings so that public comment would occur at the beginning and minutes approval and the LBAC liaison report would occur at the end.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES DATED OCTOBER 5, 2020

Dash raised the question as to whether the name of a renewable energy project for which a contract was approved at the October 5, 2020 meeting could be named in the minutes. The Board asked that Spinale research this question and make any changes necessary. Epstein suggested a minor deletion. The Board agreed to put off approval of the October 5, 2020 minutes until the following meeting.

III. LBAC LIAISON UPDATE

Chair Dash stated that LBAC had been working on assessing time of use (TOU) rate proposals, with an eye on making a recommendation to the Light Board in December or January. The Light Board would then hold public forums on the subject before implementing TOU rates. Dash said the idea was to have a soft yearlong pilot rollout with a voluntary 2-tiered rate.

IV. VOTE ON APPROVAL OF MOORE STREET SMALL CELL ANTENNA

Chair Dash introduced the topic. There was an application from Extenet to put a small cell antenna on a pole at 19 Moore Street in Belmont Center. The Select Board had already granted the location and now an agreement had to be worked out with Belmont Light, which is the owner of the pole. Spinale that Belmont Light and Extenet already had a master agreement in place which laid out which poles were open for attachments.

Colin Robinson of Extenet reviewed the company's application. This would be a new decorative pole, replacing an older pole that existed already at the location. Radios would be located on the side of the pole with an antenna on top. It is a 4G facility. Epstein asked what the fiber backhaul would look like and what the impact of construction would be. Arthur Pino, senior construction manager for Extenet, said the application was being initiated on behalf of AT&T, who had most

likely contracted with Verizon for access to its nearest fiber manhole. Epstein asked whether there would be excavation, to which Pino and Robinson answered that since this is a streetlight, there would likely be excavation, although the distance would be short. Epstein also asked who would be responsible for patching the street after excavation. Pino said Extenet would patch the trench for power and AT&T would patch the trench for fiber. Epstein stressed the need for high quality patching, to which Pino replied that would happen.

Epstein noted that this application was for 4G equipment and asked whether there was a review process if AT&T wanted to upgrade to 5G equipment or if AT&T had the right to upgrade the equipment without seeking approval. Robinson said that the Belmont Light-Extenet contract contained language that required Extenet to put in another application to Belmont Light before changing any equipment. Conversation ensued on the process that would take place should AT&T desire to upgrade to 5G equipment on the pole. Larry Washington, counsel for Extenet said that while there may be a review process through the Select Board due to added equipment for 5G, that the Town was limited in its ability to deny the upgrade. Dash said that point was understood, but that it would still be important to have a public process. Caputo said he was comfortable approving the application as it currently stood, but said that Belmont Light counsel and Town counsel should get together to put forth a process for applications such as this going forward.

Epstein moved approval of the application to install a small cell antenna at Moore Street as summarized in the application from Extenet received for that evening. Dash amended the motion to add that it is 19 Moore Street. Caputo seconded the motion and the motion was approved by a vote of all in favor (3-0).

V. Q3 FINANCIAL UPDATE

Spinale opened by pointing out that the Light Board approved a new Power Cost Adjustment (PCA) tariff in December 2019. The tariff included the statement, "...the base rate, while maintaining a reserve balance" to cover short-term power supply issues. Spinale said that Belmont Light's auditors have cautioned them that this language means Belmont Light must set aside the overage of the PCA. Spinale said based on that, comparing year-to-year figures, it appears that Belmont Light is not making as much money as the previous year, which is not the case. Spinale said he had provided the Board with two sets of income statements – one including the PCA and one without.

Spinale said Belmont Light is right on projections in terms of revenue for the year. The COVID-19 pandemic had not had a major impact on the financials, although residential revenues were higher and commercial and municipal revenues were lower for the year. Spinale said that while the rest of the year was uncertain, Belmont Light was where it wanted to be at that point.

Dash noted that Belmont Light is on a calendar year, while the Town is on a fiscal year, starting in July.

Caputo asked Spinale to summarize for the public what the PCA was. Spinale defined PCA as a mechanism like a bank that Belmont Light uses to smooth out rates based on the under- or over-collection of customer rates versus Belmont Light's power costs. There is a true-up at the end of the year to determine whether there will be a charge or a credit to customers.

Epstein said there was talk previously about a v-shaped or w-shaped recovery due to the pandemic and asked whether there had been any financial dip for Belmont Light. Spinale said that that year's budget was updated to reflect a w-shaped recover, expecting a dip in the fourth quarter. Spinale said there hadn't been such a dip, fortunately.

Dash asked about the Rate Stabilization Fund. Spinale said the Rate Stabilization Fund acts much the same way as the PCA in that Belmont Light can tap into this fund in the event there is under-collection for a certain year. The Rate Stabilization Fund holds approximately three months of power supply costs.

VI. DISCUSSION ON GOVERNANCE

Dash said that he wanted to go about the governance discussion in a rational way that allowed for buy-in and general consensus about governance of Belmont Light. He envisioned an eight-step process: 1) keep governance on the agenda for every meeting; 2) agree on the process; 3) come up with options; 4) hold a public forum to see what people think of those options or if there are other options; 5) finalize the options and put them into a matrix with evaluation criteria; 6) apply the criteria to the options; 7) have another public meeting about the remaining options; and 8) choose the final option to take to Town Meeting. Dash said this would put the discussion on track for the Spring Town Meeting.

Caputo said he favored having a set process and following it. Epstein stressed the timing aspect and suggested meeting twice per month to cover both the governance and time-of-use issues. From the audience, Phil Thayer said both time-of-use and governance are important, but that he would favor there being some structure in place to get governance before Spring Town Meeting. Dash said that was the goal and the Board could hold additional meetings if needed.

VII. GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

Spinale said Belmont Light was deep into its budget process with a hope to be in front of the Board at the December meeting. He said that the pandemic was making that process difficult, but that the team was doing as best they could.

Spinale reported recent personnel changes. Belmont Light had filled positions for Director of Engineering & Operations and Assistant General Manager and was in the second phase of interviews for a Customer Service Representative position. There was also a Procurement Coordinator position for which Belmont Light had made two unsuccessful offers to candidates, so the position was being reevaluated going forward.

Spinale reported that Belmont Light had recently implemented a new outage management system (OMS), which will provide better control over reporting statistics and better insight into which customers are affected by outages.

VIII. PUBLIC COMMENT

Phil Thayer congratulated Belmont Light on its work during a recent large-scale power outage. The Board echoed Thayer's statements and praised the responsiveness of Belmont Light.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Caputo moved to adjourn at 6:43 p.m. Epstein seconded the motion and the motion passed with a roll-call vote of all in favor (3-0: Tom Caputo aye, Roy Epstein aye, Adam Dash aye)