

**Minutes
Town of Belmont
Belmont Municipal Light Board
Virtual Meeting on Zoom
Monday, February 8, 2021
5:30pm**

**RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK
BELMONT, MA**

DATE: May 18, 2021
TIME: 10:01 AM

I. CALL TO ORDER

A meeting of the Municipal Light Board (MLB) was called to order at 5:30pm by Chair Adam Dash.

Present: MLB Chair Adam Dash, Vice Chair Tom Caputo and Board Member Roy Epstein were present. Belmont Light General Manager Craig Spinale, Energy Resources Manager Becca Keane, Communications Coordinator Aidan Leary, and Light Board Advisory Committee (LBAC), Chair Travis Franck were also present.

II. COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

- a) Belmont Light 2021 Energy Programs Virtual Event – February 18
Mr. Dash read a description of the event and invited the public to attend.

III. DISCUSSION AND VOTE ON BELMONT LIGHT GOVERNANCE

Dash explained that this was the last meeting to vote to put an article on this year's Town Meeting Warrant, that there had been a lot of discussion around this issue, and said he felt it was time to decide if the Board would advance the idea to Town Meeting. Epstein and Caputo agreed.

Dash was still concerned about the lack of efficiency if these boards are broken out and possible disputes with other boards/departments. Dash then invited public comment.

Resident Phil Thayer said he attended both public forums and highlighted that LBAC had voted unanimously in favor of a 5-member elected board. He also stated that the Chair of the Governance Structure Review Committee recommended an independent board. Thayer felt that overwhelming support at the forums was for the 5-member elected boards and strongly urged the MLB to vote unanimously to give it the best opportunity for passage at Town Meeting. Dash explained that that night's goal was to vote to include it on the Warrant and would vote for favorable or unfavorable action later.

Resident Brian Saper spoke in support of the 5-member elected MLB since that opens the opportunity to people in town who have technical background to offer advice.

Epstein moved that the Light Board recommend for inclusion on the Warrant an article to create an elected light board consisting of five individuals. Caputo amended the motion to include having the specific article to be developed by the Town Administrator and Belmont Light General Manager and approved by the Select Board. Caputo seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved (Roy Epstein aye, Tom Caputo aye, Adam Dash aye).

IV. DISCUSSION ON CHENERY SCHOOL SOLAR PROJECT

Mr. Spinale told the gathering that there was a meeting with the Light Department, Facilities Department and School Department to understand the status of the solar array installation on Chenery Middle School.

Mr. Spinale reviewed the history of the roof situation – there had been concern about the condition of the lower roof on which the solar installation would be placed. Repair work had been completed but the Town and Belmont Light had not yet received the documentation from the repair vendor. They expect to get a letter from the Facilities Department soon that they will then provide to the solar installer. Once that issue is settled,

Belmont Light will go to the Planning Board for a full Site Plan Review, keeping the School Committee involved.

Spinale mentioned that there was a question of ultimate ownership of the array – should it be the Schools or Facilities Department? Spinale met with Superintendent Phelan, and they will work on a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on the responsibilities of each department and will involve Town Administrator Garvin in the process.

Dash gave a short history of the entire project, pointing out this is not really a cost issue for the Town.

Caputo explained that there will be a need to redo the Chenery Roof but pointed out the array is going on the metal section of the roof, not the section that will need replacement. He noted that there are benefits that will come from this project – specifically generating electricity so there should be cost savings to the taxpayer in time.

Epstein shared some comments and concerns from Steve Dorrance, the former Facilities Director, and asked if all these concerns had been addressed. Spinale said that the indemnity waiver is the letter that the solar installer is waiting for (mentioned above). The other issues would be included in the MOU.

Dash welcomed public input.

Resident Phil Thayer said he was glad that things seem to be back on track and reminded the group that the project needed to be complete by the end of 2021, so it needed to be in the queue for a full Site Plan Review as early as April. He asked if the inspection could be completed this week or if there was need to hire a third party to conduct it. Spinale said they expect to get the information from the current contractor so there is no need to hire a third party.

Energy Committee Member Roger Wrubel said he would like to see it move along as fast as possible and asked Mr. Spinale to notify him if the letter from the roofer is not received by Friday, and he will follow-up.

Resident Claus Becker expressed concern about the situation and urged that it move forward. He also advised that one of Dorrance's concerns is not a serious issue.

V. EV CHARGING DISCUSSION

Spinale explained that there was an opportunity for a state grant to purchase more EV chargers, including DC fast chargers, and Belmont Light would like to apply for two DC fast chargers through the grant. First, Spinale said that there was the need to solidify the EV charging rate that has been under discussion. Currently, the Town receives the parking fees, but the electric consumption of the chargers is not billed out by Belmont Light.

Spinale was also seeking input on where these chargers should go. He suggested that the fast chargers could go at the current location of other EV chargers in the Claflin parking lot or in Waverley Square to drive business there.

Dash asked for details of the grant. Spinale explained that it would be for 100% of the cost of the equipment and installation, up to \$50,000 per charger. Chargers must be placed in a public lot that is always publicly accessible or else the grant amount falls to 80% of the costs. Caputo supported the idea of applying for the grant. He said they should also consider what fees are assessed when someone leaves the car on the charger after they are fully charged. Epstein agreed that it's a great opportunity and felt that Claflin was a superior location because it's the most centrally located spot.

Resident Claus Becker explained that the biggest hurdle for apartment dwellers to own EVs is the ability to charge, so he suggested putting the new chargers in Waverley or other places with apartment buildings. He raised an equity issue since there is about a \$1,000 per year savings by driving and the people living in those areas would likely benefit more from these savings than people in other parts of the town.

Spinale also spoke about the importance of getting people to disconnect from fast chargers once they are done charging. Mr. Epstein said there has to be flexibility because it doesn't seem fair to penalize people if the car finishes charging late at night. Mr. Spinale said the bigger concern was people unplugging from the charger but remaining in the spot which would be a more traditional ticketing process. There was some discussion about this issue.

LBAC Chair Travis Franck recommended putting the fast chargers in areas with a higher density of renters as opposed to the Claflin lot where there are more single-family homes which are more likely to have their own chargers.

Epstein asked about the possibility of a non-municipal location. Spinale said there would be a reduction in funding if the charger is not a publicly accessible lot 24/7, but there would still be some funding. Once the fee schedule is determined Belmont Light will do more research into charger locations beyond the ones available from the grant. The Beech Street Center, Belmont High School, and parks were discussed as options.

Resident Phil Thayer said he was thrilled with the forward thinking of Belmont Light on the grant. He said he had suggested to the Capital Budget Committee that EV's and electric trucks have many benefits over gas vehicles. He proposed having a fast charger at the DPW lot at some point.

Resident Darrell King asked about the cost difference between a fast charger and a level 2 charger and suggested that it would be better to have more Level 2 chargers around town since it might be more "bang for the buck". Keane said Level 2's cost about \$10,000-15,000 (equipment and installation), and Fast Chargers are \$30,000 for just equipment and up to \$50,000 installation per unit. She explained that the grant is what makes this opportunity so attractive.

Mr. Dash asked for Belmont Light to provide a recommendation on where new EV chargers should be located and what the fee structure should be.

Resident Priscilla Hunt stated that cars are changing fast, so Level 2 charges would be a better investment. She agrees that Waverley Square is a good location.

VI. LBAC LIAISON UPDATE

Dash reported that Time of Use (TOU) and governance were discussed at the most recent LBAC meeting.

For TOU, it looked like there would be an opt-in pilot program. There would be a public forum on this topic. Franck added that the target for the pilot is June 2021. Dash asked for a final recommendation from LBAC. Epstein asked if the TOU will be revenue neutral. Spinale said the pilot is set up to be revenue neutral and it will let Belmont Light staff know if they are on the right track.

VII. PUBLIC COMMENT

Resident Phil Thayer asked that the wording for the warrant could be shared. Dash said could not do that as they voted to have the Town Administrator and the General Manager create the warrant wording.

VIII. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mr. Epstein moved to enter Executive Session to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining (IBEW, Local 104). Mr. Caputo seconded, and the motion was passed unanimously.

The Board adjourned in Executive Session.

Respectfully submitted by,

Susan Peghiny