

**MINUTES
Of The
LIGHT BOARD ADVISORY COMMITTEE
REMOTE MEETING
WEDNESDAY, March 10, 2021
7:30 A.M.**

**RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK
BELMONT, MA**

DATE: August 18, 2021
TIME: 3:04 PM

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Franck called the meeting to order at 7:31am. Present were Chair Travis Franck, Vice Chair Michael, Macrae, Members Jonathan Abe, David Beavers, Bob Forrester, Ralph Jones, and Steve Klionsky. Also present was Municipal Light Board Liaison Adam Dash, Belmont Light General Manager Craig Spinale, Energy Resources Manager Becca Keane, Energy Specialist Ben Thivierge, and Communications Coordinator Aidan Leary.

II. TIME OF USE

a) Rate Design Discussion

Mr. Spinale reviewed his team's work on this issue since the previous meeting, including reviewing the buyback for solar customers and how they would be impacted by Time of Use. Among other things, they found some discrepancies in the UFS paperwork which influenced all the rate groups in a positive way. Ms. Keane was reviewing the data for other errors.

They also realized that low-income customer's savings were based on the entire residential rate class, not the low-income class (this is a minor adjustment). Because of these errors, there is not a lot of new information on the rates to offer today. They will be verifying the low-income rates and looking at the buyback situation for solar customers.

Mr. Franck asked if Mr. Spinale had a top-level view with the impact of the corrections, especially the rate chosen for the pilot. Mr. Spinale said the actual design did not change for peak and off-peak as costs did not change. What changed was the actual savings people would experience without any habit changes (it's actually higher savings). Mr. Franck asked if someone does "better", would someone else suffer because of it? Mr. Spinale said it depends on people changing habits: with no change in habit there's an average cost savings, while with changes the best cost savings can be achieved.

b) Pilot Program Discussion

Mr. Spinale and his team have been looking at the information they've collected and believes a good pilot program should consist of about 1.5% of total customers of Belmont Light (other municipalities use between 1-2% on average, although Fort Collins uses 3% but admitted that was above their target). Using these numbers would call for about 150 Belmont Light customers for the pilot. This would allow them to have about 50 regular use and about another 100 using a variety of DER devices. They feel this would be a good test group for the program. The team also believes people should commit to 1 year for this program so that data from all seasons are included in the pilot.

Mr. Klionsky asked how Mr. Spinale deals with the issue of people who are very motivated to participate because they'll "win" but who might not be representative of the general customers in Belmont. Mr. Spinale said keeping the group small should help eliminate the issue.

Mr. Franck asked if June 1 was still the goal to start the program. Mr. Spinale said that the data they have from the AMI system has some 'holes' where the smart meters won't provide input from their reads. It is not a big issue now because they just need start of month and end of month information to bill customers in the current system. With Time of Use, they will need more detailed data on when people are using service. They will need to look closely at where these holes are actually coming from.

He believes the timing will be impacted by this, especially the public forum since they won't have the data needed to answer questions. The June date was self-imposed for several reasons, but the pilot can start at the beginning of any season. He feels that waiting would be better than staying with the June 5 date.

Mr. Beavers asked if it was possible to read the meters twice a day to get useful data (rather than 15 minutes rates). Mr. Spinale thought this was possible.

Mr. Franck asked if any customers would be asked to be on the demand response system or if that would be separate. Ms. Keane said this had been discussed. She suggested that they encourage customers to be on it, but not require it. No messaging has been developed that will tutor people on how to control their usage.

Mr. Beavers suggested a variety of customers would be beneficial for the pilot but that afterwards a mandate of some type might be appropriate.

Mr. Klionsky asked if Mr. Spinale had a new target date. Mr. Spinale said his hope is that he can provide a better answer once they determine the answers to the questions mentioned above. Belmont Light was also investigating the data issues with their enterprise resource planning (ERP) vendor, NISC, but that there is a 4-month process before Belmont can be scheduled for Time of Use. But because of this, he expects to have issues resolved in that timeframe, which means the best case is July 1. He mentioned that they could start signing up customers before the pilot is fully ready to go, just to start collecting data but this could be explained at the public forum.

Mr. Dash left the meeting at 7:59am.

Ms. Keane answered Mr. Franck's question about whether one customer loses if another wins. The answer is no.

Mr. Macrae mentioned that individuals can purchase sense monitors which now include a Time of Rate feature. Suggested this might offer another data point for the pilot.

c) Public Forum Discussion

This discussion was tabled for a future meeting.

III. 2021 DEMAND SIDE MANAGEMENT PROGRAMMING UPDATE

Energy Specialist Mr. Thivierge presented on the 2021 Demand Side Management programs, outlined some results of a virtual public event held on February 18 and highlighted existing programs and updates to those programs, as well as new programs for 2021.

Solar Rebate Program: The total pledge is \$470,000, with just over \$28,000 now available. 45 applications have been submitted to the DOER with 23 systems installed & approved and 13 have been approved but are waiting for installation. Another 9 have been submitted and are working through the process. He continues to get a lot of calls about the program but feels this is the maximum funding for this year.

Mr. Thivierge then reviewed the existing programs:

Residential:

- Appliance Rebate Program
- Home Energy Assessment Program
- MyEnergyXpert
- Air Source Rebate Program

Commercial:

- Electrification Incentive Program

General Access:

- Cordless Yard Equipment

He then outlined programs that have been expanded or adapted:

- Residential Battery Storage added, \$500/system, a limited program.
- Residential Weatherization Incentive Program. Expands the reach of the program, targeting all customers but may be changed to target non-gas heating customers in the future (because of the MassSave relationship). Customers must only submit invoices, \$500 for air sealing, and \$500 for insulation.
- Commercial Electrification Program: currently offered to any customers who are interested. Could be EV chargers, expansion of HVAC equipment, and updating refrigeration units, etc. Hope to expand this in the future.
- Residential and Commercial Cordless Yard Equipment Rebate Program: up to one device (hedge trimmers, lawnmowers, etc.).
- Residential Appliance Rebates: now includes induction stoves. Electric to electric change: \$100, gas to electric change: \$500, new construction \$500. For portable induction cooktops the rebates are 50% of cost, up to \$75.
- Heat Pump Water Heaters: dropped wi-fi requirement because some models do not have wi-fi which would exclude the customer from the rebate. Approved devices must now be on the NW Energy Alliance Qualified Products List. Tier 1 or 2: \$250, Tier 3 or 4: \$500.

Mr. Franck asked how far back the new incentive are applied. Mr. Thivierge responded that it was 6 months from date of installation or date of purchase (this is true of all programs).

Mr. Klionsky asked how rebate amounts were determined. Mr. Thivierge said he looked at what other utilities were using, what's available on the market, and ROI calculations. Mr. Klionsky asked about how products are deemed appropriate for the program. Mr. Thivierge explained that every year he looks at historical data of past updates, what devices are available, and any changes in the literature about what is eligible.

Mr. Franck asked how it works for commercial customers. Mr. Thivierge said as long as they're a customer of Belmont Light, they are eligible. For the McLean development, they would qualify during construction (although the stoves would be under the Commercial Electrification Program). Mr. Franck expressed concern about a lot of installations being done all at once. Mr. Franck also asked about electric snowblowers. Mr. Thivierge responded that this is being discussed at the inter-municipal level but none of the group has added winter equipment, although all MLPs all are looking into it (equipment qualification, appropriate amounts, etc.).

IV. GM Update

a) Net Zero Planning Grant Project with MAPC

Ms. Keane updated the group explaining there is a new grant project for towns with MLPs through the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC). The scope of the project is for MAPC to help with net zero planning for the Town, using its expertise and toolkits. Ms. Keane said Belmont is already way ahead of other towns in the grant program, having already completed its Climate Action Plan (CAP) and roadmap to decarbonization. Belmont's scope of work in the grant program is to first, have MAPC update the Town's emission inventory and suggest changes. The second half will focus on strategy and implementation of goals from the Roadmap. Ms. Keane said Belmont specific meetings are coming up and she invited members to participate.

Mr. Klionsky asked for the amount of the grant. Belmont is paying \$4,000 to MAPC, with an additional \$4,000 being paid by the Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs.

Mr. Franck asked if this this was new or part of another effort. Ms. Keane said that MAPC approached them and she and Mr. Thivierge felt it was a great opportunity and also may be especially helpful for the Energy Committee.

Mr. Klionsky asked if MAPC's methodology is different from the Energy Committee's and whether they are in sync. Ms. Keane said this will be reviewed during the program. Mr. Franck explained that part of the Energy's Committee's discussion was how much time and energy to spend updating the inventory, or how much time to spend on the analysis of the Roadmap. Ms. Keane is thinking of incorporating the commercial sector into the Roadmap, which is a big job. She feels most of the work will be on the Roadmap.

Mr. Macrae asked how the emission inventory is done, where the values come from and how they are derived. Mr. Franck and Ms. Keane explained the methodology behind the inventory.

b) Operational update

Research Budget:

- Great Blue Research Survey should start in May or June. Mr. Forrester asked if it was possible for someone from Great Blue to address the group. Mr. Spinale said that would happen for both LBAC and MLB (possibly a joint meeting). Ms. Keane feels this survey is very important because many KPI's from the Strategic Plan come right from this survey.
- Off Hour Coverage: Currently at 4:00 p.m. Belmont Light's phone system goes to the Dispatch Center at the Police Department (to receive no power calls, etc.). This becomes an issue during no power events because the lines get swamped. To solve this problem, Belmont Light is bringing on a call center, Cooperative Response Center (CRC) from Minnesota. This location was chosen because they are unlikely to experience the same power out events and the dialect is closer to the Boston area one. CRC is a large vendor with many customers and has the experience customers will need. He feels this will greatly improve customer service.
- February Outages:
 - Thursday, February 18th: caused by a large racoon getting onto a power transformer. This size of outage was unusual (about 2000 customers were out for about 2 hours). This is because it was a substation transformer level outage that had 4 separate circuits impacted. He went over the work involved in resolving this issue.
 - Tuesday, February 23rd: the outage was caused by a cable failure at the Belmont High site. Certain equipment didn't operate as designed so about 3000 customers were impacted for a couple of hours. Because they had to de-energize the sub-station there was a short second outage.
 - Friday February 26th: was caused by another cable failure, which unfortunately impacted some of the same customers impacted by the previous outage (660 customers).

None of the outages were unusual but they sadly happened close to each other and the last two affected customers from Station 3. Mr. Spinale explained that they took a close look at Station 3 and will replace some equipment to avoid future issues.

Mr. Franck asked if Belmont Light had communicated with the public about the problems. Mr. Spinale explained that Mr. Leary is very good about sharing info on social media and our

website, and that there is a heat map on the website that provides information quickly, although there is no individual customer outreach. Mr. Franck suggested a friendly letter to the press might be a good idea. Mr. Leary said he is always in contact with the Belmont Citizen Herald, Belmontonian, and other media regarding power outages, although he cannot control what those individuals publish or don't publish. Following every outage event, Mr. Leary emails a report detailing the details and causes to the media and posts across social media.

Mr. Forrester asked if reliability statistics are provided to anyone outside of the department. Mr. Spinale said that yes, this information is collected and reported to and publicized in different places.

Mr. Franck asked that Mr. Spinale give an update of the voltage conversation and substation decommissioning project. Mr. Spinale explained that Project C, as Belmont Light calls it, relates to converting the system and covers their day-to-day operations. He outlined some of the activities they do in support of this. Their goal is to do the best they can to convert and remove the load from the main substation in Belmont Center. This allows them to transfer load from Station 1 over to the Blair Pond Substation in order to get out of Station 1 as soon as possible.

Mr. Forrester asked for a status on the Construction Fund to document the use of the money was consistent with Town Meeting. Mr. Spinale said that they are in step with Treasury regarding the bond.

Mr. Franck asked if there was a date for Station 1 would come offline. Mr. Spinale said they are still several years away from it.

V. DISCUSSION OF STRUCTURAL CHANGE IMPACT GROUP AND BELMONT LIGHT

Mr. Franck explained the goals of this one-year committee aimed at uncovering ways to generate ideas that increase revenue, decrease town expenditures, and improve delivery of services. The committee held a public forum the previous week and has an input form on the Town's website. He invited Belmont Light to be part of this conversation.

Mr. Forrester reminded Mr. Franck about the effort to sell Belmont Light and that it may come up in this focus group. A short conversation about the unlikability of that possibility followed.

Mr. Franck reiterated that Belmont Light could benefit from the results of the groups work (for example, battery storage at the incinerator site). Mr. Spinale discussed some of the issues surrounding battery storage (ownership vs leasing, site locations, etc.).

Mr. Beavers suggested that Time of Use rate be considered for the schools.

Mr. Klionsky said that broadband was suggested at the forum and that this might have a big impact on Belmont Light. Mr. Spinale said Belmont Light was still considering broadband as a business model.

Mr. Jones spoke about previous structural change initiatives and how long they took.

Ms. Keane asked if the goal was to save residents money or the town (or both). Mr. Franck said that anything that eventually saved residents money either directly or through Town efficiencies is good.

Mr. Franck said that he would put this agenda item on the next meeting agenda for a deeper discussion and briefly talked about some Belmont Light-related items he would like considered by the focus group.

VI. FUTURE MEETINGS

- a) April 7, 2021 | 7:30 A.M.
- b) May 12, 2021 | 7:30 A.M.
- c) June 16, 2021 | 7:30 A.M.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Klionsky moved to adjourn the meeting, which passed unanimously at 9:17am.

Respectfully submitted by,
Susan Peghiny