

**Minutes
Town of Belmont
Belmont Municipal Light Board
Meeting
Monday, June 21, 2021
5:30pm**

**RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK
BELMONT, MA**

DATE: August 18, 2021
TIME: 3:06 PM

I. CALL TO ORDER.

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

Present: Chair Adam Dash, Vice Chair Mark Paolillo, and Member Roy Epstein. Also present were Belmont Light General Manager Craig Spinale, Finance Manager Maria Makar-Limanov, Energy Resources Manager Becca Keane, and Energy Specialist Ben Thivierge. Also present were Light Board Advisory Committee (LBAC) Chair Travis Franck and Member Ralph Jones. LBAC Member Steve Klionsky joined remotely.

II. 5:30 P.M. FINANCIALS

a) *Transfer of PILOT*: Ms. Makar-Limanov presented a memo outlining the proposed PILOT payments showing that Belmont Light would make a payment of \$500,000 in June 2021 and another one of \$150,000 in December. Mr. Spinale answered several questions about the payments.

Mr. Epstein moved to transfer PILOT of \$500,000.00 from the Municipal Light Department Operating Cash Account to the Town's General Revenue Fund. Mr. Paolillo seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously (3-0).

b) *Q1 2021 Financial Review*: Ms. Makar-Limanov reviewed the Q1 financials, pointing out that these numbers are not really representative of the entire year. She explained that the memo presented mostly compared the Q1 numbers to what was budgeted. The numbers were close to the budget and to first quarter results from 2020, although Ms. Makar-Limanov pointed out that it's not a great idea to compare the years because of the impacts of the pandemic. She believed Belmont Light was in good shape though.

She outlined the results as follows:

Revenues

- Total preliminary 1Q2021 revenue was \$6,720,032 which was \$549,568 (or 8.9%) higher than the budget and \$533,027 (or 8.6%) higher than 2020. This was broken down as follows:
 - Revenues attributed to sales of electricity were \$6,608,016, which is \$359,099 (5.7%) higher than the budget and \$446,948 (7.3%) higher than 1Q2020;

Expenses

- Total preliminary 1Q2021 expenses were \$5,896,905 which was \$173,334 (3%) higher than the budgeted amount and \$440,239 (8.1%) higher than 2020. Details were as follows:
 - Power Production Expenses are \$3,734,848, an increase of \$188,114 (5.3%) of the budget and increase of \$366,306 (10.9%) from 1Q2020.

Financial results

- Estimated year-end operating income is expected within \$2-3 million range, but the picture will be clearer in 6-8 months.

There was a discussion about the impact of the pandemic historically and what might happen going forward. Ms. Makar-Limanov expected residential consumption to return to normal by the middle of the year, although the 6-to-8-month results would tell if this was happening.

Ms. Makar-Limanov reviewed the PCA tariff, which was changed February 1, 2021, to more accurately calculate purchase power and revenue receipts to see if there was over or under collections. She said the previous tariff caused over-collection.

Mr. Epstein observed that the accounts receivable (A/R) for the first quarter of this year was much higher than last year, which was higher than the year before. Ms. Makar-Limanov explained that Belmont Light was considering several programs to address this issue. She also pointed out that this is an industry-wide issue. Mr. Spinale added that customers have been notified that the protections from fees and shut offs are expiring July 1, 2021, and that Belmont Light would like to work with them to resolve their outstanding balances. Belmont Light was also identifying programs that can help them address the small number of customers who are consistently behind (less than 1%).

III. 5:45 P.M. DISCUSSION ON PUBLIC EV CHARGING FEE

Ms. Spinale said that there was a plan to put EV chargers at the new high school, and also said that McLean Hospital and some businesses approached Belmont Light about chargers at their locations. Belmont Light staff felt that a fee of \$1.25/hour for the Level 2 chargers and \$.20/minute for the DC chargers was appropriate. Level 2 chargers would have a 2-hour window for a customer and the cost per hour would go up to \$2.50/hour from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. to encourage turnover.

Mr. Spinale was requesting that Belmont Light be allowed to charge a fee through the charger itself. Belmont Light was currently not charging anything although the Town had been collecting a parking fee for EV spots.

Mr. Franck, Chair of the LBAC, advised the Board about charging speeds for a Level 2 charger. Mr. Epstein said he thinks 2 hours is not enough time for the Level 2 chargers and that the data he saw showed that the 4 chargers were not all in use at the same time. The Board discussed this issue.

Mr. Spinale said EV owners could stay connected as long as they like, but the fee would go up after the 2-hour window. He added that different fees could go with different locations.

Mr. Franck added that perhaps there would not be a charge for overnight or off-peak charging. Mr. Epstein agreed but suggested that overnight users should be encouraged to leave the spot early in the morning. Mr. Spinale said they could switch the existing chargers over whenever they wish.

Belmont Light had been looking at other vendors for EV chargers. Costs vary depending on infrastructure needs, etc. The proposed \$1.25/hour fee is about in the middle of what other utilities charge. Belmont Light had also applied for a grant which would offset some of the costs of new chargers.

Mr. Epstein asked if ChargePoint's billing software allows for flexibility in fees.

Ms. Keane said the 2 hours suggestion came from the current parking rules in the Claflin Parking Lot, but Belmont Light can be flexible with this. She also looked at the data Mr. Epstein referenced, and found that session durations are creeping up. Sessions had been around 2.5 hours and were now up to 3-4 hours.

Regarding fee flexibility, the limitations of the current software is why they want to have an hour & minute fee rather than a tariff.

Mr. Thivierge explained that they looked at the per hour per session model because of someone who might just use the spot while shopping and perhaps "top off" the car for a much shorter period. The spot is locked up, and without a fee per hour, Belmont Light would only receive a fee for the amount of charge used.

Mr. Franck said he felt the \$.20/minute for the Level 3 charger should also be adopted.

Mr. Dash moved to implement \$1.25 per hour charging fee for Level 2 chargers and \$.20/minute for Level 3 chargers for charging at the public EV station chargers in the Clafin Lot and future locations. Mr. Paolillo seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously (3-0).

IV. 5:55 P.M. TIME OF USE PUBLIC FORUM SCHEDULE

Mr. Dash reviewed the issue and the plan to schedule public forums for outreach on Time of Use (TOU) rates.

Mr. Spinale said he would like the first one to be in late July. Belmont Light was currently gathering data, resources for the public to use, etc.

Mr. Dash suggested Monday, July 26, 2021, at 7:00pm, which was agreed to. Mr. Spinale said they will begin communicating in the next few weeks.

After the first forum, the Board and Belmont Light can review and decide about another forum in the fall.

V. 6:00 P.M. GM UPDATE

a) Accounts Receivable Balance Discussion: Mr. Spinale review the previous discussion and reiterated that the issue applies to a small number of customers who Belmont Light are focusing on.

b) Webinar with Ventana: Mr. Thivierge reviewed an upcoming webinar on Thursday, June 24, 2021 at 2:00pm focusing on Belmont becoming a net zero community with rebates, rates, programs, etc.

VI. 6:10 P.M. ACCEPT RESIGNATION OF RALPH JONES FROM THE LIGHT BOARD ADVISORY COMMITTEE (LBAC)

Mr. Jones explained that he has been on the Board for a very long time and that he feels he has accomplished a lot and it's time to step away.

Mr. Epstein moved to accept Ralph Jones' resignation from the Light Board Advisory Committee. Mr. Paolillo seconded, and the motion passed unanimously (3-0).

VII. 6:15 P.M. PROCLAMATION IN HONOR OF LIGHT BOARD ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBER RALPH JONES (LBAC)

Mr. Dash read into the record:

The Town of Belmont, Massachusetts, Municipal Light Board Proclamation:

WHEREAS: Ralph Jones has served as a member of the Light Board Advisory Committee and its predecessor the Municipal Light Advisory Board for three terms, from 2014-2021; and

WHEREAS: Ralph's guidance throughout the planning, siting, approval, and construction of the Blair Pond Substation & Transmission Line was integral to the success of the project, which was at the time the largest project in Belmont's history; and

WHEREAS: Ralph has provided invaluable input, institutional knowledge, and technical expertise that has transformed Belmont Light into a leading utility in the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS: Ralph also served as a Select Board member and Municipal Light Board member for two terms, from 2008-2014, including terms as the Liaison to the Municipal Light Advisory Board; and

WHEREAS: During his time on the Select Board, Ralph served as liaison to many committees and has always stepped forward when asked to provide the Town with leadership

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Municipal Light Board of the Town of Belmont joins with the Town in expressing our sincerest gratitude to Ralph Jones for all of his years of service. His innumerable contributions to Belmont Light initiatives over more than a decade will be remembered by all and sorely missed moving forward. Although Ralph has decided not to seek re-appointment to the Light Board Advisory Committee, we hope that he will stay close to Belmont Light developments as we build off of the achievements that Belmont realized during his service.

Municipal Light Board: Adam Dash, Chair; Mark Paolillo, Vice Chair; Roy Epstein, Member. June 21, 2021.

VIII. 6:20 P.M. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE VOTE ON LBAC APPOINTMENTS

Steve Klionsky's term on LBAC was up, and he wished to be reappointed. Mr. Klionsky asked to be reappointed, because he brings expertise to the Board including being a lawyer, having worked for a utility, and as utility regulator, as well as for the Attorney General in the state on energy matters. He feels this background will be helpful during LBAC's remaining time.

Mr. Paolillo moved that Steve Klionsky be appointed to the Light Board Advisory Committee. Mr. Epstein seconded, and the motion passed unanimously (3-0).

Mr. Dash said there were 3 people who were seeking Mr. Jones' open seat on the Committee.

Mr. Franck said all three candidates are very solid and bring a variety of backgrounds, so a recommendation was difficult. He recommended Alexandra Van Geel because of her background and also to bring diversity to the Committee.

The Board and Mr. Franck discussed the candidates.

Mr. Paolillo moved that Alexandra Van Geel be appointed to the Light Board Advisory Committee. Mr. Epstein seconded, and the motion passed unanimously (3-0).

IX. 6:25 P.M. LBAC LIAISON REPORT

Mr. Franck reported that the battery storage issue was still being discussed.

He also reported that National Grid was looking for communities for a pilot for district geothermal. Mr. Beavers, LBAC member, was pursuing that opportunity.

He said that the Chenery Solar project was moving forward.

Mr. Epstein asked about the substation near Chenery, and the group discussed this as a potential storage location. Mr. Franck said it is being considered, as is the new high school.

X. 6:30 P.M. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES DATED MAY 17, 2021

Mr. Epstein moved to accept the minutes of the May 17, 2021 meeting. Mr. Paolillo seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

XI. PUBLIC COMMENT

Phil Thayer said the audio is a little spotty and suggested the microphone volume could be increased or if it could be moved. He asked Belmont Media to work on this. The Board discussed this issue.

XII. FUTURE MEETINGS

- a) July 19, 2021
- b) July 26, 2021 Public Forum
- c) August 16, 2021
- d) September 20, 2021
- e) October 18, 2021
- f) November 15, 2021
- g) December 20, 2021

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Epstein moved the adjourn the meeting of the Municipal Light Board. Mr. Paolillo seconded and the motion passed unanimously (3-0). The meeting was adjourned at 6:40pm.

Respectfully submitted by,

Susan Peghiny
Recording Secretary