

**MINUTES
TOWN OF BELMONT
MUNICIPAL LIGHT BOARD
OPEN MEETING
Hybrid Meeting via Zoom & BMLD Conference Room
February 10, 2025**

**RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK
BELMONT, MA**

DATE: April 2, 2025
TIME: 2:53 PM

CALL TO ORDER. Chair Michael Macrae called the Municipal Light Board meeting to order at 7:30am.

- **Present for the Municipal Light Board (MLB, Board)** were Chair Macrae, Vice Chair Andrew Machado, and Members David Beavers, Travis Franck, and Steve Klionsky. No member was absent.
- **Present for Belmont Municipal Light Department (BMLD)** were General Manager Craig Spinale, Assistant General Manager Sam Osmanecic, Finance Manager Maria Makar-Limanov, Customer Care, Marketing, & Communications Manager Aidan Leary, Energy Resource Manager Kevin Bleau, and Executive Assistant Erin Lenzing.
- **Documents/exhibits used:** Draft minutes as outlined below, a detailed chart of the proposed TOU rates, updated redlined Power Supply Policy, General Manager's 2025 goals document, and a letter from MEAM responding to DOER building regulations.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- Regular Session for December 12, 2024

Mr. Klionsky moved to approve the minutes from the December 12th, 2024 meeting of the Municipal Light Board. Mr. Beavers seconded, and the motion passed 5-0 by roll call vote. Mr. Beavers, Mr. Klionsky, Mr. Franck, Mr. Machado, and Mr. Macrae all voted aye.

RATE HEARING ON TIME OF USE (TOU) RATE

Mr. Macrae gave a brief overview of the rate hearing process for the public.

Mr. Franck moved to suspend the regular session of the Municipal Light Board and open a public rate hearing to discuss possible rate revisions. Mr. Klionsky seconded, and the motion passed 5-0 by roll call vote. Mr. Franck, Mr. Beavers, Mr. Klionsky, Mr. Machado, and Mr. Macrae all voted aye. Regular session was suspended at 7:42am.

Mr. Spinale outlined the three changes being considered by the Board to the TOU rate:

- An increase to the fixed customer service charge and concurrent decrease to the distribution charge. The thought was to incentivize electrification but keep Belmont Light whole.
- A change to the summer on-peak hours from 1pm-7pm to 2pm-7pm. This would shorten the on-peak window in the summer and thus change the generation charge.
- A decision to move the rate towards cost of service (COS) via an increase to the transmission charge.

The Board took turns sharing their feedback. Mr. Klionsky agreed with moving the summer hours but suggested the other items could be addressed in the context of general rate increase. He also noted the customer charge was high compared to other utilities. There were a few clarifying questions from the Board that Mr. Spinale addressed. He also stressed that the two proposed rates that were presented in the detailed chart were possibilities only and the Board could make decisions on each point separately.

Mr. Macrae opened the floor for public comment. Initially there were no comments in the meeting, so a short conversation about comments that were previously submitted by email ensued. In response to questions from Stephen Polit the Board and Mr. Spinale spoke about how the TOU rate aligned with BMLD's goals and the

need to keep the rate simple for educational, administrative, and pricing purposes. They also acknowledged comments received from two other members of the public, Marty Bitner and Darrell King. Mr. Polit then asked some additional questions in the meeting that the Board and BMLD staff answered.

Mr. Franck then asked about ways to lower the fixed customer service charge, which prompted discussion about what the charge covered, other municipal light plants (MLPs) increasing their charge, billing, and the costs of smart meters vs basic meters.

Mr. Beavers suggested focusing on the proposed change to transmission due to rising transmission costs. After a brief conversation, Mr. Macrae also raised the question of changing the summer on-peak hours. The general feeling from the Board was that they were in favor of both changes. Mr. Macrae opened the floor again for public comment, but hearing none, moved to close the rate hearing.

Mr. Macrae moved to close the public rate hearing and return to the regular session of the Municipal Light Board. Mr. Franck seconded, and the motion passed 5-0 by roll call vote. Mr. Beavers, Mr. Klionsky, Mr. Franck, Mr. Machado, and Mr. Macrae all voted aye. The Board returned to regular session at 8:28 am.

VOTE ON PROPOSED RATE

Mr. Franck moved to change the TOU rate to follow the numbers in Proposed Rate 2 columns for 2025 and 2026 for generation and transmission for both summer and non-summer periods but retaining the current customer service charge and distribution charge for both summer and non-summer. Mr. Machado seconded, and the motion passed 5-0 by roll call vote. Mr. Beavers, Mr. Klionsky, Mr. Franck, Mr. Machado, and Mr. Macrae all voted aye.

After the vote, the Board asked to see a memo from BMLD with the final rate numbers, which Mr. Spinale confirmed they would bring to the next meeting. The Board will decide then if they want the new rate to go into effect on May 1st or June 1st. There was also a brief discussion on opening the TOU program to additional customers, which Mr. Bleau and Mr. Spinale confirmed BMLD is already looking into.

POWER SUPPLY POLICY WRAP UP

This agenda item was intended to be a wrap-up of the Power Supply Policy that Board had approved on 11/6/24 with two caveats, one being the definition of electrification.

Mr. Spinale explained that on review with legal counsel they suggested that the word “electrification” might not be correct for power supply budgeting as it could bring in items from a distribution budget like heat pumps. After a brief discussion, Mr. Spinale stated that BMLD would seek a second legal opinion and bring the issue back to the Board once they had investigated it further.

GENERAL MANAGER’S GOALS

Mr. Machado asked if there was any feedback on Mr. Spinale’s 2025 goals. A few members of the Board expressed their thanks or called out goals that they were happy with. There were no changes requested.

Mr. Klionsky moved to adopt the General Manager’s goals as outlined in the meeting materials. Mr. Beavers seconded, and the motion passed 5-0 by roll call vote. Mr. Beavers, Mr. Klionsky, Mr. Franck, Mr. Machado, and Mr. Macrae all voted aye.

SOLAR ON TOWN RINK

Mr. Macrae left the meeting at 8:52am.

This was a short conversation on the topic of the Town asking BMLD to help them complete a solar project at the new ice rink. In response to a question from Mr. Machado, Mr. Spinale stated that his understanding was that BMLD would meet a funding gap of about \$250K, to be paid out over the course of two years, in exchange for Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs) from the solar array. There was also some thought of having any excess energy that was generated put back on the grid, but this needed to be explored further.

The Board took turns giving some initial thoughts, mainly about how the return value from the Town could be accounted for (strike price, value of RECs on the open market, via a debit-style account), the possible length of the repayment, the importance of data access, and if the goal should be for BMLD to recoup every dollar spent. A member of the public who serves on the Energy Committee, Roger Wrubel, clarified some numbers and commented that he thinks BMLD should get back what they put in, possibly with interest. BMLD will continue talks with the Town and will report back to the Board as needed.

GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

Mr. Spinale updated the Board on the following:

- **Letter from the Municipal Electric Association of Massachusetts (MEAM):** The State is enacting new programs that MEAM believes MLPs are exempt from. Mr. Spinale wanted to highlight that while BMLD planned to voluntarily participate, MEAM had sent a letter to the State on behalf of their members advocating that MLPs should not be forced to participate.
- **Small grid power purchases:** He announced that two purchases in December 2024 had saved BMLD and the ratepayers about \$30K total.
- **Leonard St transformer:** This is an ongoing issue as the vendor who won the contract was unable to meet the specifications for a round transformer. BMLD is investigating other avenues, including possibly using a pole-mounted transformer on Alexander Ave, which came up during routine survey work. A resident had reached out the Board with concerns, but no decision has been made yet.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Klionsky moved to adjourn the meeting of the Municipal Light Board. Mr. Franck seconded, and the motion passed 4-0 by roll call vote. Mr. Beavers, Mr. Franck, Mr. Klionsky, and Mr. Machado all voted aye. The meeting was adjourned at 9:20am.

Respectfully submitted by,

Erin Lenzing
Executive Assistant