

**MINUTES
TOWN OF BELMONT
MUNICIPAL LIGHT BOARD
OPEN MEETING
Hybrid Meeting via Zoom &
BMLD Conference Room
May 8, 2025**

**RECEIVED
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BELMONT, MA**

DATE: June 16, 2025
TIME: 11:16 AM

CALL TO ORDER. Vice Chair David Beavers called the Municipal Light Board meeting to order at 7:30am.

- **Present for the Municipal Light Board (MLB, Board)** were Vice Chair Beavers and members Jessica Harrison, Michael Macrae, and Steve Klionsky. Chair Andrew Machado was present via phone, but due to technical issues could not be heard. No member was absent.
- **Present for Belmont Municipal Light Department (BMLD)** were General Manager Craig Spinale, Finance Manager Maria Makar-Limanov, Energy Resource Manager Kevin Bleau, IT Manager Robin Tillberg, and Executive Assistant Erin Lenzing.
- **Documents/exhibits used:** Draft minutes as outlined below, presentation slides on cybersecurity, summary of NEPOOL Participants Committee Meeting 05-01-2025, and S&P credit rating report.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- Regular and Executive Sessions for March 24, 2025

Mr. Beavers moved to approve the minutes from the March 24th, 2025 Regular and Executive Sessions of the Municipal Light Board. Mr. Klionsky seconded, and the motion passed 4-0 by roll call vote. Mr. Klionsky, Mr. Beavers, Ms. Harrison, and Mr. Macrae all voted aye. Mr. Machado abstained.

PUBLIC COMMENT – There was none.

IT & CYBERSECURITY PRESENTATION

This was a presentation by Nathan Rise of Integer Security (aka Integer One), BMLD's cybersecurity vendor, on the results of a recent security review conducted by them. After outlining Integer One's programs and three-tier framework, Mr. Rise explained that for the purposes of this presentation he would be focusing on Tier I.

At the end of 2023 BMLD was at 64% implementation for Tier I. In Mr. Rise's opinion, this wasn't bad but had room for improvement. He then outlined various actions taken in 2024 to increase this score, such as multi-factor authentication, an improved spam filter, annual security training for staff, reviewing admin permissions, investigating firewall rules, and implementing Intune mobile device management. One item he highlighted as a strength of BMLD was password complexity; one opportunity he identified was getting a dedicated tool for the operational technology (OT) environment such as Dragos. Because of the actions taken thus far, BMLD's score for Tier I had risen to 94% implementation.

Mr. Rise then outlined some of the top risks to supervisory control and data acquisition (SCADA) systems along with recommendations of four next steps: deploy Dragos, improve physical security, data loss prevention through Azure, and continue monitoring and vetting third-party vendors. Mr. Spinale confirmed that Dragos implementation was one of his main goals in 2025.

Discussion

Paul Roberts, a member of the Town's Information Technology Advisory Committee (ITAC), raised the recent breach of Littleton's municipal light plant (MLP) by state actors and asked about actions being taken by BMLD. Mr. Rise confirmed he and Mr. Tillberg had discussed it and had taken some actions already. There was a

short discussion about IT staffing levels at BMLD. Mr. Roberts asked if it would be possible to say conclusively that there's no state actor in the BMLD environment. Mr. Rise responded that saying 100% would be inaccurate, but he was confident in the controls put in place for initial monitoring.

Ms. Harrison asked if BMLD felt they had enough resources to implement Dragos; Mr. Spinale said he did. Mr. Tillberg gave some general background, and Mr. Roberts emphasized the importance of this implementation.

Mr. Beavers asked about infiltration of SCADA. Mr. Roberts and Mr. Tillberg explained that state attacks typically start in the IT environment and then move to OT systems like SCADA. Mr. Spinale confirmed that should SCADA be compromised, there were manual overrides in place, so it would simply be a case of providing personnel to the substation and manually operating the system. He also confirmed that there was a formal incident response plan in place.

Mr. Macrae spoke about the challenges of being a smaller organization with limited resources balancing cost, reliability, and environmental outcomes, while managing cybersecurity and physical risks to the system. He thought that it would be hard to 100% guarantee there were no malicious actors. Dave Goldberg, co-chair of ITAC, agreed that a 100% guarantee would not be realistic given current IT industry standards. He asked if the plan to implement Dragos was a fixed goal or a proposal; Mr. Spinale said it was a fixed goal and would be completed by year end. In response to a question from Ms. Harrison about preparedness drills he noted the BMLD had taken place in them in the past and would be looking for future opportunities.

Mr. Roberts expressed approval for the overall plan but also suggested hiring additional IT staff at BMLD. He acknowledged there would be a cost that might hit rates, but believed ratepayers would accept it in exchange for avoiding a four- or five-day blackout resulting from a hacking event. Mr. Tillberg and Mr. Spinale clarified that if SCADA was hacked, the manual override previously discussed would be a matter of hours not days. Mr. Tillberg also pointed out the advantages to hiring specialist vendors vs a generalist IT staff member. There was a brief discussion about comparing BMLD to other MLPs and the difficulty in getting data.

GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

Mr. Spinale updated the Board on the following:

- **Personnel update:** He was happy to report that both employees involved in the arc flash incident in April had returned to work. He also stated that the Customer Care, Marketing, & Communications Manager, Aidan Leary, had resigned.
- **Global S&P credit rating:** BMLD's credit rating was held stable at A+. However, S&P Global had focused on fixed-cost coverage, so BMLD plans to track that going forward as a KPI.

Mr. Macrae stepped away from meeting at approximately 8:30am; he returned during the Executive Session.

- **NEPOOL update:** This update was about a recent vote taken at New England Power Pool (NEPOOL) about a proposed amendment on late-stage impact studies. Mr. Spinale first gave some background on the change to system impact studies for new projects from serial to cluster studies. This was a change NEPOOL was in favor of and had proposed to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) with a suggested effective date of August 14, 2024. FERC accepted the change in April 2025 but kept the original effective date. As a result, there were studies caught in between the two processes, causing organizations to risk possible higher costs or penalties—the amendment was to allow for an exception for these late-stage studies. Although the amendment had support in the transmission committee, it did not pass the final vote. BMLD had voted in favor of the amendment. In response to questions from Ms. Harrison and Mr. Beavers, Mr. Spinale confirmed that BMLD was not impacted and that their representative at NEPOOL (Energy New England or ENE) was keeping him up to date.
- **Audit:** The annual audit was complete and had been a clean audit.
- **Ice rink:** The Town Administrator had announced at Town Meeting that BMLD was part of the project to help get a rooftop solar array for the rink. What to do with overproduction is still being discussed, but Mr. Spinale plans to meet with the Town's new rink manager to get more information.
- **Event:** A Ride & Drive event for electric vehicles will be held on 5/10 at Chenery Middle School.

EXECUTIVE SESSION to discuss trade secrets or confidential, competitively-sensitive or other proprietary information (power supply)

Mr. Beavers moved to enter into Executive Session to discuss trade secrets or confidential, competitively-sensitive, or other proprietary information as an energy supplier under Massachusetts General Law chapter 164, section 1F, and then adjourn from Executive Session. Mr. Klionsky seconded, and the motion passed 3-0 by roll call vote. Mr. Beavers, Mr. Klionsky, and Ms. Harrison all voted aye. Mr. Machado abstained.

The Municipal Light Board went into Executive Session at 9:00am and adjourned in Executive Session.

Respectfully submitted by,

Erin Lenzing
Executive Assistant