

**MINUTES  
TOWN OF BELMONT  
MUNICIPAL LIGHT BOARD  
OPEN MEETING  
Hybrid Meeting via Zoom &  
BMLD Conference Room  
December 11, 2025**

**RECEIVED  
TOWN CLERK  
BELMONT, MA**

DATE: March 2, 2026  
TIME: 3:41 PM

**CALL TO ORDER.** Chair Andrew Machado called the Municipal Light Board meeting to order at 7:30am.

- **Present for the Municipal Light Board (MLB, Board)** were Chair Machado, Vice Chair David Beavers, and Members Jessica Harrison, Steve Klionsky, and Michael Macrae.
- **Present for Belmont Municipal Light Department (BMLD)** were General Manager Craig Spinale, Assistant GM Sam Osmanovic, Finance Manager Maria Makar-Limanov, Energy Resource Manager Kevin Bleau, and Executive Assistant Erin Lenzing.
- **Documents/exhibits used:** Draft minutes as outlined below; 2026 Budget Package; Rate Stabilization Fund Transfer Memo; ACOSS Results with 2026 Projections; DOER Ratemaking Straw Proposal; Confidential FERC document.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- Executive Session for October 6, 2025
- Regular & Executive Sessions for November 6, 2025

Mr. Klionsky mentioned a typo and Ms. Lenzing confirmed the correction had been made.

*Mr. Klionsky moved to approve the minutes of the October 6th, 2025 Executive Session and November 6th, 2025 Regular and Executive Sessions of the Municipal Light Board. Mr. Beavers seconded, and the motion passed 5-0 by roll call vote. Mr. Klionsky, Mr. Beavers, Ms. Harrison, Mr. Macrae, and Mr. Machado all voted aye.*

**PUBLIC COMMENT** – There was none.

**PROJECTED 2026 BUDGET & YEAR-END TRANSFERS**

Ms. Makar-Limanov presented a draft of the 2026 budget, emphasizing that it will be refined as more current cost data becomes available. She reviewed her methodology, which incorporates existing tariffs, load analysis based on 2024-2025 data, and Time-of-Use (TOU) customer data, and projected capital and operating expenses. Based on these assumptions, total revenues are projected at \$30.3M and total expenses at \$30.6M, resulting in an operating loss of ~\$250K. With interest income from reserve accounts, total income before contributions and transfers is ~\$500K. Financial KPIs and operating revenue assumptions were also reviewed.

After answering some clarifying questions from the Board regarding power supply expenses and projections, Ms. Makar-Limanov noted a projected \$1.24M for renewable energy certificates (RECs) and electrification programs based on the one cent allocation in the Power Supply Policy. There was a brief discussion about renewable energy targets and REC purchases. Total projected power supply costs are \$17.6M.

She also reviewed operations and maintenance expenses, noting rising material costs—particularly a 12% increase in wire costs—though most materials are capitalized, limiting operating impacts. Total 2026 O&M expenses are projected at \$30.6M, consistent with the previous year. There was a short discussion on the impact of the Arrears Management Program for uncollectible accounts and an overview of the demand side management (DSM) budget, estimated at \$525K, which will be presented in more detail at a future meeting.

The estimated 2026 capital spend is \$8.5M, including \$3M for the incinerator site project and \$2.5M for voltage conversion. There was some discussion of how the figures were estimated, projects billable to customers, and the impact of large past projects like McLean and Acorn Park. Capital and construction cash, including voltage conversion projects, is expected to be fully spent, with remaining costs funded through bond premium reserves and depreciation cash, leaving approximately \$1.1M in reserves at year-end.

Ms. Makar-Limanov noted that cash reserves continue to earn interest and that the stabilization fund is projected at \$5.7M (~3.9 months), even with the proposed \$750K transfer. There was some discussion about the 5% depreciation (previously approved by the Board) which is pending approval from the DPU, with communications ongoing. She then reviewed the proposed transfer of \$750K from the rate stabilization fund to address a \$570K under collection in 2025 that was primarily driven by transmission costs. There was a short deliberation on the proposed transfer, during which Mr. Macrae left the meeting at 8:43am.

*Mr. Machado moved to transfer \$750K from the Municipal Light Department Rate Stabilization Reserve to the Municipal Light Department Operating Cash Account. Mr. Beavers seconded, and the motion passed 4-0 by roll call vote. Mr. Klionsky, Mr. Beavers, Ms. Harrison, and Mr. Machado all voted aye.*

### **COST-OF-SERVICE STUDY (COSS) FOLLOW-UP**

Ms. Makar-Limanov presented an updated Allocated Cost of Service (ACOSS) analysis reflecting 2026 revenue needs. This was a follow-up to her presentation at the 10/6/25 meeting but now incorporating the estimated 2026 budget. The analysis indicated that an 8.3% rate increase would be appropriate, compared with the 5.3% initially projected. Board members asked clarifying questions about the adjustments and underlying accounting, and there was a brief discussion about the impact of investments on reducing costs, which will be explored in more detail at future meetings.

Mr. Spinale reviewed possible rate adjustment options, such as the 5.3% initially projected by Daymark and the 8.3% currently projected (in either one step or two), using estimated bill impacts. There was some discussion about equity concerns, particularly for commercial and low-income customers; the cost allocation methodology; and the customer service charge. The consensus was to defer wider discussions on equity, subsidies, and customer charges and focus on a uniform rate change for now since the driving factor was rising transmission costs. This led to a short discussion on transmission cost increases (which BMLD staff estimated at 30% or greater) and next steps, including an evening forum for the public.

The Board took turns giving feedback on what options to present to the public, with most leaning toward a 5.3% single-step increase, based on prior Daymark data, as a conservative approach while allowing flexibility through the Power Cost Adjustment (PCA) if costs shift. Low-income and TOU rates, including the municipal pilot, were discussed. Consensus was to maintain the low-income rate's ratio to rate A and to continue the pilot rates for one year to allow further evaluation. Procedural steps and timing were confirmed, and an evening rate hearing will be scheduled prior to the next Board meeting to allow community input. Also briefly discussed was adjusting the conservation charge to meet the DSM budget.

### **TIME OF USE (TOU) DISCUSSION**

This followed earlier discussions on ending the TOU rate pilot and making it an open rate option. Mr. Spinale briefed the Board on previously identified billing mechanics issues.

He explained that currently, BMLD uses multiple meter reading schedules, with some customers having their meter read on the 1st of the month and others on the 7th, 14th, or other dates depending on their billing cycle. To support future TOU participation, BMLD staff recommend migrating all customers to a uniform meter read period from the 1st of the month to the 1st of the month, while still maintaining multiple billing cycles to manage workload, detect errors, and protect cash flow. Once all customers are migrated, the pilot designation could be dropped, and the rate offered as either opt-in or opt-out. In the meantime, any customers on the pilot waitlist can be accommodated on a case-by-case basis. The Board was supportive of this approach.

Mr. Spinale noted that the migration would be a multi-month effort and would require careful customer communication, as some customers would receive a one-time bill reflecting an unusually short or long billing period during the transition. Targeted outreach to higher-usage customers was discussed. Ms. Makar-Limanov confirmed that the read date does not impact liability or reporting from an accounting perspective.

## GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

Mr. Spinale updated the Board on the following:

- **Networked Geothermal study:** BMLD will participate in a third-party study focused on the feasibility, logistics, and potential challenges of a network geothermal heating system within municipal light plant (MLP) territories. The study will examine whether utilities or third parties should own such systems.
- **Municipal solar (Wellington School):** The Energy Committee approached Belmont Light about exploring solar installations on town-owned buildings, such as Wellington School. Early discussions are underway to assess roof suitability, leasing, and project timing, with a potential installation by 2027.
- **Department of Energy Resources (DOER) straw proposal:** A recent DOER article highlighted BMLD's existing TOU program, noting its communication strategy and summer program. The article serves as a recognition of the Board's leadership and provides context for ongoing rate discussions.
- **Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) motion to intervene:** Belmont Light and other area MLPs are part of a group intervening in FERC proceedings to ensure that new large loads (over 20 MW) are paired with generation. The goal is to avoid adverse impacts on the general grid when large generators retire and new loads come online.
- **RECs agreement with the Town:** An agreement with the Town to set REC pricing has been finalized; as previously discussed it will be based on the average of three broker sheets from Energy New England (ENE) with a small discount to reflect avoided broker fees. Future solar projects like Wellington will be covered. Monies given to the ice rink will be recovered using this pricing structure.
- **Misc:** Belmont Light has hired a new customer service manager, Gina Smith, who will start soon and oversee billing and related projects. This ensures continuity for initiatives such as the previously discussed billing migration and TOU program expansion.

## ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Harrison left the meeting at 10:04am. There was a short conversation about future meeting schedules.

*Mr. Beavers moved to adjourn the meeting of the Municipal Light Board. Mr. Klionsky seconded, and the motion passed 3-0 by show of hands vote. Mr. Machado, Mr. Beavers, and Mr. Klionsky all voted aye. The meeting was adjourned at 10:15am.*

Respectfully submitted by,

Erin Lenzing, Executive Assistant