

**MINUTES
TOWN OF BELMONT
MUNICIPAL LIGHT BOARD
OPEN MEETING
Hybrid Meeting via Zoom &
BMLD Conference Room
February 5, 2026**

**RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK
BELMONT, MA**

DATE: March 12, 2026
TIME: 2:32 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 and Steve Klionsky.
- **Present for Belmont Municipal Light Department (BMLD)** were General Manager Craig Spinale, Assistant GM Sam Osmancevic, Finance Manager Maria Makar-Limanov, Energy Resource Manager Kevin Bleau, Customer Care & Billing Manager Gina Smith, and Executive Assistant Erin Lenzing.
- **Documents/exhibits used:** Draft minutes as outlined below; public comments and heat pump rate analysis; vacancy appointment information; Incinerator Site presentation slides; GM 2026 goals.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- Regular Session for January 13, 2026

Mr. Beavers moved to approve the minutes of the January 13th, 2026 Regular Session 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. Machado all voted aye.

PUBLIC COMMENT

The Board reviewed emails from two residents suggesting a discounted winter rate for heat pump users, similar to a program recently introduced by Eversource. Analysis by Mr. Beavers showed BMLD's existing residential and time-of-use (TOU) rates are already competitive or lower overall. The Board discussed how heat pumps add to winter peak demand, meaning a discounted rate could shift costs to other customers. Alternatives such as adjusting the customer charge, rebates, and expanded TOU rates were suggested. Also noted was the need for customer communication as winter heat pump bills rise with very cold weather.

BOARD VACANCY

Mr. Machado announced the resignation of former board member Michael Macrae. Mr. Spinale outlined the two options for filling the vacancy, which are through the election process or via an appointment by the Light Board and Select Board members. Given that the election timeframe would unduly burden any potential candidates, the preferred method in this case was by appointment.

In accordance with Massachusetts General Law Chapter 41, Section 11, the Board must formally notify the Select Board within 30 days of the resignation, after which a joint meeting will be held to review candidates and appoint a replacement within one week of that meeting. The Town will advertise the opening, and residents were invited to submit resumes to either the Select Board or Light Board. The appointed member will serve the remainder of the term through April 2027. Afterward the seat will be filled through the regular election process.

Next steps are to have BMLD staff prepare the formal notification, to be signed by the Chair, and to work with the Select Board on scheduling the joint meeting. From Mr. Spinale's findings, there is no specific timeline by which that meeting needs to be held.

INCINERATOR SITE DISCUSSION & POSSIBLE VOTE

This was a discussion to solidify the next steps for the development of the former incinerator site at 1034-1100 Concord Ave, specifically capping the ash pile. Mr Spinale explained that the cost of the cap, which is roughly \$5.5M, is about \$2M higher than the Town's current funds, creating a funding gap that must be addressed before the wider project—solar, battery storage, and potentially a new building—can proceed. He asked if there was an avenue for BMLD to assist and outlined multiple funding strategies, including borrowing via the Town, forming a municipal co-op, or leveraging existing third-party entities such as MMWEC (Massachusetts Municipal Wholesale Electric Company).

There was a wide-ranging discussion of trade-offs and concerns, during which the Board focused on clarifying the scope, responsibilities, and financial implications of BMLD's possible involvement in the cap. Key points included understanding legal and environmental liabilities, the importance of site control, possible benefits for BMLD and the Town, the impact on rates, project management and sequencing, and the additional cost to the cap in order to support a building (~\$200K-\$250K). Additionally, the Board discussed the possibility of prioritizing the solar and battery installation before decisions on a new building.

Participants also addressed barriers facing the Town in moving forward with the capping, such as financial constraints, loss of long-term staff and related institutional knowledge, and limited external impetus. Suggestions were made to raise public awareness, engage the Select Board, and highlight ratepayer savings as ways to create motivation for timely action. Past approvals, such as the 2019 Select Board resolution granting joint site control to BMLD and DPW, were noted as a foundation for moving forward.

By the end of the discussion, the Board had reached a consensus on next steps: Seek legal counsel and begin negotiations on a formal agreement, such as Memo of Understanding (MOU), with town administration that clearly defines 1. BMLD's responsibilities and limits, 2. the Town's engagement in the project, and 3. the care, custody, and control of the site with protections to prevent unilateral changes by the Town. Overall, the Board expressed support for a cap design that would allow for a future building, with the understanding that the building itself would be addressed separately at a later time.

GENERAL MANAGER'S GOALS

Mr. Spinale outlined six primary goals covering management, operations, and business priorities. The key management goal was addressing expiring union agreements with relevant staff. Operational goals emphasized maintaining system reliability and advancing the ongoing voltage conversion project, with a target of converting 1MW of load, acknowledging the challenges of system build-out and new customer demands. Business goals focused on evaluating the efficacy of demand-side management (DSM) programs, creating an easy-to-read report for the public on BMLD's efforts to control costs, and pursuing strategic electrification, including agreements related to the incinerator site.

Barriers to adoption for behind-the-meter battery storage were discussed, along with potential focus areas for the DSM goal (air source heat pumps, weatherization), and IT/cybersecurity, with an action to propose a specific IT goal. The Board also noted the complexity of measuring progress for initiatives like demand response and load conversion, given baseline challenges and shifting system demands. Later in the meeting there was a brief discussion on the expected timing of Mr. Spinale's annual performance review.

GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

Mr. Spinale updated the Board on the following:

- **Coverage:** He outlined points of contact for an upcoming leave.
- **Wellington School solar:** Discussions had started with Town regarding a potential solar installation at Wellington School. The main concern is the 14-year-old roof; a roof replacement would make the project financially unviable, so staff will inspect the roof and report back on feasibility and value. Board members acknowledged prior solar efforts and increased community acceptance, while emphasizing the need to balance this project with larger priorities such as the incinerator site.

- **Meter opt-out policy:** This was raised as a potential need due to one remaining customer who refuses to transition to a smart meter. Replacing unsupported legacy AMR equipment would cost \$50K, so a manual-read fee or policy may be brought forward if discussions with the customer are unsuccessful.
- **Misc.:** The April 9 meeting falls shortly after Town elections on April 7, and the Board discussed whether to adjust timing to accommodate a potential new member. School break begins April 20, giving some flexibility; a Doodle poll may be used if needed. Also discussed was recognizing Mr. Macrae for his service with a proclamation or certificate. Staff agreed to coordinate appropriate recognition.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Klionsky moved to adjourn the meeting of the Municipal Light Board. 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. The meeting was adjourned at 9:22am.

Respectfully submitted by,

Erin Lenzing, Executive Assistant