

**MINUTES
TOWN OF BELMONT
MUNICIPAL LIGHT BOARD
OPEN MEETING
Hybrid Meeting via Zoom &
BMLD Conference Room
March 12, 2026**

**RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK
BELMONT, MA**

DATE: April 16, 2026
TIME: 3:08 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, and Executive Assistant Erin Lenzing.
- **Documents/exhibits used:** Draft minutes as outlined below; memos on 2025 voluntary payment and preliminary 2025 financials; updated GM 2026 goals and 2025 review summary sheet.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- Regular Session for January 15, 2026
- Regular Session for February 5, 2026

Mr. Machado moved to approve the minutes of the January 15th, 2026 and February 5th, 2026 Regular Sessions of the Municipal Light Board. Mr. Klionsky seconded, and the motion passed 4-0 by show of hands vote. Mr. Klionsky, Mr. Beavers, Ms. Harrison, and Mr. Machado all voted aye.

PUBLIC COMMENT – There was none at this time.

DISCUSSION ON BOARD APPOINTEE PROCESS

Mr. Spinale outlined the next steps in filling the vacant seat: advertise the vacancy, have residents submit applications via the Town’s website for committee appointments, then hold a joint meeting with the Select Board to review candidates and make the appointment. Other than the legal requirement to appoint someone within seven days of the joint meeting, the timeline is at the Board’s discretion, so Mr. Spinale sought input on preferences. After some discussion, the consensus was to accept applications through the end of April, and aim for a joint meeting sometime in May, depending on public response and the Select Board’s schedule. There was also some discussion about whether candidates should be asked to submit a resume; ultimately the feeling was it should be optional based on the Town application form. Mr. Beavers volunteered to draft a one-page description of the board member role to be shared with BMLD staff for posting on the Belmont Light website as a reference for interested candidates.

VOTE ON VOLUNTARY PAYMENT TO THE TOWN

Ms. Makar-Limanov provided an overview of the proposed voluntary payment to the Town and the year-end financials for 2025, noting that the figures presented were preliminary and unaudited. She indicated that year-to-date results are largely aligned with the budget, with income before contributions and transfers estimated at \$1.3M. Mr. Spinale explained that the \$650K payment has historically been treated as a flat rate, in the mid-to-high range compared to other municipal utilities, and that the payment is voluntary rather than a mandated tax. Mr. Beavers mentioned a past discussion with the Select Board and drew parallels with getting a return on an initial investment.

The Board discussed the timing of the payment to align with financial reporting, and Mr. Machado asked questions about the debt service coverage ratio, which Ms. Makar-Limanov and Mr. Spinale clarified is an important utility metric but differs from the fixed charge coverage KPI used by rating agencies like S&P.

The discussion also addressed ongoing issues with the Department of Public Utilities (DPU's) approval of the elevated 2025 depreciation rate. Mr. Spinale and Ms. Makar-Limanov outlined prior communications with DPU staff and noted delays due to personnel changes; the Board discussed possible follow-up steps, including contacting state legislators. Mr. Spinale also touched on how the depreciation assumptions relate to project funding, including the voltage conversion project and other infrastructure needs.

Mr. Machado moved to transfer a voluntary payment of \$650,000 from the Municipal Light Department Operating Cash Account to the Town's General Revenue Fund. Ms. Harrison seconded, and the motion passed 4-0 by show of hands vote. Mr. Klionsky, Mr. Beavers, Ms. Harrison, and Mr. Machado all voted aye.

Before moving on to the next topic, a member of the public, later identified as Mr. Ilya Yunus, asked whether the current solar buyback rate is fair given recent transmission rate increases and the growing gap between customer charges and buyback payments. BMLD staff and Board members explained that the rate is based on a set formula tied to generation costs by prior policy decisions and is designed to provide stability rather than fluctuating with all cost components. Mr. Yunus expressed concern that the fixed adder no longer reflects current transmission costs and suggested the methodology be reconsidered. The Board acknowledged the concern, and Mr. Beavers offered to follow up directly to review the underlying analysis.

UPDATE TO GENERAL MANAGER REVIEW & GOALS

Mr. Spinale provided an update on his annual performance review and 2026 goals, noting that his written self-evaluation was not yet complete but would be provided ahead of the next meeting. As a result, the previously scheduled Executive Session for this meeting was not needed. The Board briefly discussed timing for completing the review process, and whether to have a dedicated meeting or using time during a regularly scheduled meeting—there was no strong preference either way.

Mr. Spinale also noted that he had added an IT/cybersecurity goal as discussed at the last MLB meeting on February 5th. The goal is based on the Center for Internet Security framework and would aim to increase the Belmont Light's compliance score within the intermediate tier (IG2) from approximately 28% to 60%. He noted that achieving this would require both operational effort and some investment and thus is a stretch goal. The Board discussed balancing cybersecurity improvements with associated costs, and Mr. Spinale emphasized the importance of continued focus on this area.

The Board voted to approve the 2026 goals as amended. The vote of 4-0 in favor by show of hands vote. Mr. Klionsky, Mr. Beavers, Ms. Harrison, and Mr. Machado all voted aye.

GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

Mr. Spinale updated the Board on the following:

- **2025 audit:** The final audit is scheduled for April 29th, pending inputs from the Town and outstanding reports. The audit committee asked for a board member to attend; members will check their availability.
- **Storm response:** The blizzard on February 24-25 caused two main outage events (overhead wire contact and underground cable failure); both were restored within ~45–50 minutes, though underground repairs required extended follow-up work. Crews responded effectively under difficult conditions and overall public sentiment was positive.
- **RP3 award (APPA):** Belmont Light achieved Diamond designation (top tier) under the American Public Power Association's RP3 program, which only accepts about 13% of public utilities. The designation lasts three years and reflects strong performance across operations, safety, reliability, and planning.
- **Clafin St level 3 charger:** The charger continues to be unreliable despite repeated repair attempts. Belmont Light will make one more attempt, and if that does not work, will look into a replacement.

- **School bus electrification:** There had not been any recent discussions with the School Department, but previous discussions had identified a possible site for chargers.
- **2026 power supply costs:** The cold winter (especially January/February) drove significantly higher costs, meaning a Power Cost Adjustment (PCA) is likely. Expected start date would be around May 1, to recover costs over ~8 months; this is a pass-through and not discretionary spending. For context the January spot market was ~76% above budget. There was short discussion about hedging and how it mitigated the impact and also about summer vs winter peaks.
- **Possible power supply option:** Energy New England (ENE) raised potential participation in a new nuclear procurement. The Board expressed general openness to exploring further details, pending pricing and terms, based on the feedback on nuclear from the last Customer Satisfaction Survey.
- **Massachusetts energy bill:** The MA House passed a bill (Senate pending) that allows mutual aid equipment transfers and ensures worker benefits for non-emergency deployments.
- **Incinerator site development:** The site's use for snow storage may affect development and use plans; Mr. Spinale is working with the Department of Public Works (DPW) and Town Administrator's office to quantify incremental value of a third-party battery vs occasional snow storage.

EXECUTIVE SESSION to conduct strategy session in preparation for negotiations with non-union personnel (General Manager)

The Board did not enter Executive Session.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Klionsky moved to adjourn the meeting of the Municipal Light Board. Ms. Harrison seconded, and the motion passed 4-0 by show of hands vote. Mr. Klionsky, Mr. Beavers, Ms. Harrison, and Mr. Machado all voted aye. The meeting was adjourned at 9:24am.

Respectfully submitted by,

Erin Lenzing, Executive Assistant