

Rowley Municipal Lighting Plant



September 9, 2020 Commissioner's Meeting

6:00 PM – Remote GoTo Meeting

Commissioners Present: Bryan DiPersia, Mark Cousins, Danby Whitmore. Also, in attendance was General Manager Matthew Brown, Office Manager Eric Grover

See attendance sheet for the public sign-in.

Mark Cousins opened the meeting at 6:02 PM

Citizen Query

Nobody from the general public participated in this citizen's query.

August Billing Issue: Overview, Cause, Corrective Measures

Mark Cousins opened the discussion saying there was approximately thirty ratepayers that had been over charged. The reason for the overcharge was caused by a few different factors. The ratepayers during this cycle had a roll over where their meters went back to zeros. During this time there was an update to our billing software, and this was not caught in the test phase of their work. Manager Matt Brown read the email from Dan Dickinson from Northern Data explaining the incident. The major focus was the computer program had to be changed from six digits to five and this would not happen again. RMLP has worked with NDS to assure this. The office manager did a full audit of each book selecting three or four customers and recreated their invoice. He also took the file and resent it to NDS and checked on how it would come out after the adjustment. All worked out fine. Mark Cousins asked how this could have been overlooked and it all ended up being the perfect scenario for failure. Bryan DiPersia asked if any other towns had this same issue, but fortunately, Rowley was the first one to find the error. There have been checkpoints put in place for the future billing, so this won't happen again. [See attached email from Northern Data Account Executive Dan Dickinson for an explanation]

MLP Solar Update

The program has had two new ratepayers adding to the solar program. One is under construction and the other one is not taking advantage of the rebate because they did not want to. Matt spoke to them and explained they were entitled but still declined. Matt thinks there will be an extension due to the Covid 19 situation, but he will get a better answer to the board. So, there is some time for either residential or commercial customers to get in on the rebates before it ends.

Managers Update:

2019 Audit: This was our annual audit put together by Bill Fraher. There was one correction found since it was completed and has been fixed. Danby Whitmore asked about the post employee benefits which is known as the OPEB fund the RMLP funds. Matt is planning on making a contribution in the fiscal year 2020. This will help with the funding for the retirees that are on the health care insurance.

2018 was a difficult year as the capacity was high and the purchase power was the same way. 2019 had turned around with the new way of how the finances are being dealt with.

On page seven there was a question on the decrease in demand and the increase in fuel charges. The question was what the decrease in demand was and why did it happen. Matt stated it was due to the cooler weather we had in 2019 as the air conditioners were not running as much and we had a milder winter, so ratepayers did not use their heat as much.

Bryan had some questions on the Management Letter. The board read and discussed the topics and felt comfortable with the answers. Bryan would like to see this worked on and hopefully we can get a better result next year.

New Digger Truck: The new digger truck has arrived. It is replacing the twenty-year-old truck we have, and the Line Crew seem very happy with it.

Truck Logos: The new magnetic logos have come in as a sample to see how they look on the trucks. Everyone seems to like the new logo as the old one was outdated. At some point the vendor will be contacted and he will put them on all the trucks. It will be a nice addition to the trucks.

Septic Award: The bid was awarded to Woodall Construction. Everything seems to be in place to get the project started on September 21st. The building will be without a bathroom, but we will make provisions for the employees.

Falcon Ridge [Intersection – Line Upgrade]: The contractor and the town has approved to move the intersection for the new development. There are plans to relocate a few poles and the contractor will be working with Verizon and Comcast to get it moved. The contractor is paying for all work for this phase of the project. Also, there will be a tree cutting company coming into trim from Hillside to the development so we can reset poles and run a three-phase circuit down to the development. All this work is being paid by the contractor and is a great upgrade to our system.

Capacitor Banks: We have received three capacitor banks, but unfortunately one of them came in damaged. The two good ones have been tested by PLM and have been installed on new poles. Distribution Superintendent Mark Anderson is working on a replacement capacitor bank with the vendor.

Daniels Road: We have set six new poles on Daniels Road in the area of the wagon wheel factory. One pole broke in a storm six to seven months back causing the circuit to be very tight when the pole was reset. With the addition of the new poles, the line crew was able to get enough slack back into the wire to get it corrected. We are just waiting now for Verizon and Comcast to transfer the poles.

Mutual Aid: The RMLP responded to two mutual aid requests. The first one called for two Lineworker and a bucket truck, employees Dennis Morrison and Jeff Valley to head down to Connecticut for three days. The second request was for also two Lineworker and a bucket truck, employees Dennis Morrison and Brian Herdman, to help respond to the Town of Wakefield for a one-day event storm. Both towns will reimburse RMLP for trucks, stock, and labor for the events in accordance with the NEPPA Mutual Aid Agreement.

Banner Discussion: Back in 2004, General Manager Carl Benson made a policy on hanging banners over roadways as a liability. In one Massachusetts town there was a banner that came down and caused an accident and it went into legal litigations on who was responsible for accident. Was it the person who owned the banner, the light department for putting it up, who had insurance? It turned into a nightmare where most towns just did away with the whole hanging of banners and a policy was started.

Danby started off the conversation by saying she didn't see a problem with the banners being hung. She stated there are only three elections at the state, federal and town elections each year. Danby would like to see the policy overturned and banners hung back up on Haverhill Street.

After some discussion on this, many alternatives were brought up to get the word out about elections. There is currently a flyer in the electric bills this month put together by Town Clerk Susan Hazen. Maybe contacting the highway and water department to use the message boards in front of the new public safety building would be an idea. Mark did say we could never drop the insurance requirement for a banner and that insurance would have to be provided by the event person. Bryan asked if there was any place on the east side of Haverhill Street from the intersection to hang a banner. Matt will have to go out and look at the infrastructure and see what is available.

One suggestion Matt did have is maybe there is a grant out there for a portable sign board like the highway and water has and this would be less distracting to the drivers rather than looking up in the air over the road.

MEAM Meeting 9/16 [Municipal Electric Association of Massachusetts]

On September 16 there is a meeting but due to the Covid 19 illness it will most likely be a Zoom meeting.

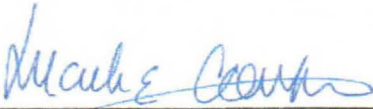
All Other Items Not Anticipated by The Chair

There was nothing added in by the chair.

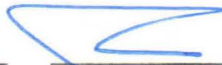
Adjournment

Mark Cousins made the motion to adjourn. Danby Whitmore seconded. All voted in favor in favor at 7:20 PM with a roll call vote with everyone saying yes.

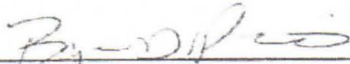
Minutes submitted by Eric R. Grover



Mark Cousins, Chair



Danby Whitmore, Clerk



Bryan DiPersia, Member