

Rowley Municipal Lighting Plant



January 20, 2021 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

Mark Cousins opened the meeting at 6:01 PM

Citizen Query

Mark Cousins asked a question as a ratepayer and not a commissioner. He noticed there were tree crews removing trees around town and was wondering if this was part of the regular scheduled tree trimming routine? General Manager Matt Brown said the tree company was in to remove hazardous trees on Haverhill and Leslie Road as these were deemed to come down. He also stated our yearly tree trimming crew was in town for our annual 2021 tree trimming.

Review and Accept Previous Minutes

After reading the minutes from the previous meeting sessions, December 16, 2020 provided, the corrections were made previously to the meeting.

Bryan DiPersia made the motion to accept the regular minutes for December 16, 2020 with the corrections made. Danby Whitmore seconded the motion. Roll call vote was taken. Mark Cousins, "I", Bryan DiPersia, "I" and Danby Whitmore "I". Voted in at 6:07.

Budget 2021

General Manager Matt Brown presented to the board RMLP's annual budget for 2021. He explained he used historical data to put this together as RMLP's Accountant, Katie Tilton has not closed out for the year with solid numbers. He wanted to bump up the depreciation from three to five percent as he felt this was beneficial to the department. He explained there were a few accounts he adjusted such as 904 - Uncollectible Accounts because of the lack of doing collections due to the pandemic and 906 - Conservation/Efficiency because of the extension of the MLP/DOER SOLAR till June. Commissioner Mark Cousins asked if 926 - Employee Pensions and Benefits was accurate where we pay month to month now? Brown said yes as the first year we paid one and a half times the first year and now we are on track. Account 392 - Transportation was increased because there is a new bucket that needs replacing in 2021. We are going to order the chassis now and have it delivered but pay for the whole complete truck in 2022. Also, there are funds in there for a new managers vehicle in 2021. Commissioner Danby Whitmore asked what the breakdown was for the bucket truck and it was stated around forty thousand for the truck and chassis and two hundred thousand for the bucket and utility body. Commissioner Mark Cousins asked if account 555 & 557 was a firm number predicted from Energy New England. Brown said it was figured out with help from them and he felt it was solid. Commissioner DiPersia asked if the Depreciation cash transfer was going to be around forty thousand per month like it was in 2020. Brown said it will go up because of the annual depreciation expense percentage change from three to five but the exact amount will be

determined when we get the depreciation schedule from our accountant at year end. DiPersia also asked if we could put actual and budget amount columns as well as historical columns on the sheet so we can compare the past and present during the year. Brown said that should not be a problem.

Commissioner Danby Whitmore asked what the cost difference between overhead and underground wire would be. Brown said the town requires all new developments to be underground and it would be cost prohibitive to put underground the existing overhead. As policy, RMLP makes developers/builders responsible for the initial cost of the project. There is a thirty-year life longevity on the underground wire. Overhead conductors are easier to repair and will stand the winter elements and things resting on top of them without shorting the circuit.

There is also going to be maintenance to the substation at some point. The station is closing in on thirty years old. Also, on the agenda is the 5KV to 15KV Bradford & Summer Street reconductoring. We must finish putting in new poles, wire, and transformers and so some underground reconductoring for one customer. Even though it would be nice to see the infrastructure underground because it is pleasing to the eye, the cost is astronomically more and would require cable/phone/fiber to also go underground to get rid of the poles.

DiPersia mentioned for the vehicle replacement it should follow the guidelines of the hybrid/electric vehicle when replaced the meter reading vehicle. Brown said he has looked at the Toyota Rav Four Prime which was all wheel drive and had the proper clearance we need. Brown said he looked at the Chevy Bolt, but it would not fit our needs.

Bryan DiPersia made the motion to accept the operating and capital budget as it is written. Danby Whitmore seconded the motion. Roll call vote was taken. Mark Cousins, "I", Bryan DiPersia, "I" and Danby Whitmore "I". Voted In at 6:31.

MLP Solar Update

The DOER has extended the program until June 2021. With this funding it will help the remainder of the customers to take advantage of the program. Manager Brown had just fielded a call today which would give three ratepayers in the queue. We will talk more about this in the manager's update.

Residential Conservation Services & Energy Efficiency Programs – Discuss current/future incentives, revenue stream, promotions [continued discussion]

Manager Brown made a recap from last month's meeting. Commissioner Whitmore asked if Brown had heard back from the person from the state who had the RCS spending amount on conservation services which we spent just under \$20,000.00 last year but at this time he said no. Our ratepayers are well informed on our rebate programs. There is a \$.28 conservation charge per residential bill on each bill which supports rebates for residential customers only. We have also talked about the battery powered lawn equipment rebate program.

Commissioner DiPersia said there was a requirement of .0025 of the revenue should go to the conservation? The RCS program budget for a municipal utility shall be at an annual level equal to and not less than .0025 of its gross retail revenues, per Mass.gov. Maybe we could see what other MLPs are doing and see what works and see how we can get people with electric cars more of an incentive to do it. We could go through ENE and see what others have done, but DiPersia wanted Brown to see what would work. Brown stated he had been working with a customer to put an electric charging station in someplace in town. Right now, it is in the works and there may be some grant money involved in getting this done quicker. Brown asked Commissioner Cousins how it works down in Wakefield as they have three public EV charging sites. Cousins explained the EV chargers are owned and operated by the town and grant money is helpful. Whitmore asked if Rowley EV chargers would be on private property and if we would have to pay rent on the location. His answer was no, and Whitmore asked maybe the police and fire station on Haverhill Street. Brown said it they were thinking of a centrally located spot where a group could grab something to eat or shop locally while charging up. Whitmore said it would be nice to see the police cruisers be electric vehicles.

DiPersia said the plan looks to be in place and see what the future planning will bring.

Managers Update

MLP Solar Update: 28 total solar customers have been awarded \$24,066.00 with \$25,934.00 remaining for future arrays. On December 9, 2020 a new solar customer on Wethersfield Street was connected. On Kittery Ave., there is one application waiting but there has not been any paperwork secured yet. Kristin Dupre of ENE confirmed the MLP solar program through the DOER extended through June 2021. The original pledge from RMLP was \$50,000.00 and we have had lots of interest, so our six-month extension pledge is \$30,000.00 or six new systems.

Falcon Ridge: Just about all the overhead work related to the new subdivision is complete. All that remains is the underground riser to the Girl Scout Camp. It needs to be excavated/intercepted and attached to the new fifty-foot pole where the intersection was reconstructed. Comcast and Verizon also have work to do on the same pole. Commissioner Whitmore asked if there was a bond to us from the contractor. The answer is no and RMLP's exposure is mitigated because if they didn't pay, we simply just wouldn't energize the project without payment.

End of Year Inventory: Foreman Sean LaBelle is working on buttoning up the final numbers for the accountant.

MEAM Meeting: There were a few things mentioned at the meeting. For starters, the MLP bill was filed again so we shall see where that goes. They also talked about the Plymouth meeting hoping it was going to be in person and talking about pole ownership and liabilities, Navaho Nation issue with questions brought up in the past about insurance and changed some language to make it so the ratepayers would not be on the hook for anything. There will be discussions with the DPU in connection with customer shutoffs and collections the increase in the late payers attributable to the Covid 19 issue. There would be some talk regarding easements which we are working on now at the RMLP. In conclusion there would be some talk about the Covid 19 vaccine.

NDS Bill Processing: Northern Data Systems will be now printing and mailing out our monthly invoices. The company we had been using was out of New Mexico and Manager Brown did not like the stability of the company. NDS works with a mailing company out of Bangor Maine and hit the mailbox quicker. A lot of time was spent with Matt and Eric getting this new bill formatted and done for the start of the year and it was a great effort on both parties.

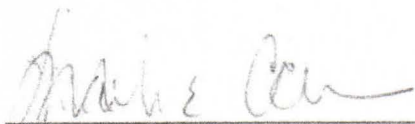
All Other Items Not Anticipated by The Chair

There was nothing added in by the chair.

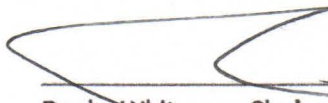
Adjournment

Bryan DiPersia made the motion to adjourn. Danby Whitmore seconded. All voted in favor at 7:05 PM with a roll call vote with everyone saying yes.

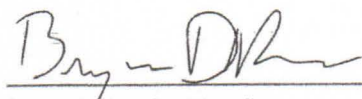
Minutes submitted by Eric R. Grover



Mark Cousins, Chair



Danby Whitmore, Clerk



Bryan DiPersia, Member