

Rowley Municipal Lighting Plant



April 12, 2023, Commissioner's Meeting

6:00 PM – Remote Go to 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. Resident Philip Towne logged on.

Bryan DiPersia opened the meeting at 6:05 PM.

Citizen Query

Philip Towne of 22 Bennett Hill Road opened with questions regarding solar and the net metering policy with the stipulation of 10KW panels. He asked why the policy seemed outdated and it was time to change the parameters. Manager Matt Brown said the policy is 10-12 years old and it should be reviewed. Currently, there are 33 solar customers with mostly rooftop units. Towne said they have bought an electric car and will be looking for a new heating system soon and would like to make it worthwhile. There should be more of an incentive to put more solar on the system for emergency situations, for example if there was a weather event with a town wide outage, they could power up Pine Grove School or another emergency center for shelter. Danby interjected that we are working on a storage solution. Brown explained he lives in an investor-owned electric town and what they do is just divide up the solar expenses to all their rate payers and everyone pays. In Rowley, the solar customers do return the power to the system, but they also must pay for the use of the infrastructure on the town grid. The DOER set up the 10KW limit back when solar first came out and that was the standard for the municipalities in Massachusetts. Cousins stated the installer for Towne should talk to Brown and reiterate that 10K is the standard for municipal arrays.

MEAM Meeting May 18 & 19, 2023 In Plymouth MA

This is the annual MEAM meeting and Manager Brown wanted to make sure the board knew about it. Commissioner Mark Cousins said he would be attending the Thursday portion of the meeting. When the agenda is put together, Brown will send it out to the board.

Light Commissioners Statewide Meeting [Zoom May 11, 2023]

Commissioner Bryan DiPersia said this meeting agenda was sent out to light department commissioners and general managers across the state to make the attendance worthwhile. The topic was going to be from the regulatory assistance project titled "rate setting in the 21st century." DiPersia said the invitation was sent out for commissioners to respond back if they were interested in going and the interest of additional meetings. Both Commissioner Danby Whitmore and Commissioner Mark Cousins had planned to attend the meeting. Cousins asked what the format was from prior meetings if they were Zoom or in person and how many of the meetings have taken

place. DiPersia said about fifteen meetings and Cousins was wondering how the connection of the regulatory assistance project was getting the topics they present.

Cousins just wanted to throw out the open meeting law and we should keep that in the back of their heads. Whitmore mentioned there is only one person per municipal to speak at the forum and this group could contact the ethics commission with any questions regarding the open meeting law.

Pilot Payment FY 2024

Manger Matt Brown presented a PILOT payment of \$22,650.33 to the Town of Rowley.

Mark Cousins made the motion to accept the FY 2024 Pilot Payment to the town in the amount of \$22,650.33 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

Solar Rebates Project Continued Discussion

This topic was a continuation from a prior meeting. Commissioner Mark Cousins had asked when the solar subsidy was going to stop as the DOER program finished on June 30, 2021. Due to Covid, the program slowed down, but the RMLP kept the program rolling by offering sixty cents a kilowatt for 0-10 KW systems with a rebate of six thousand dollars to install the unit. Ten out of the forty-one municipalities in Massachusetts decided to stay with the solar program themselves, being about twenty-five percent overall. Right now, we have a fifty-thousand-dollar budget, and a big portion is for the solar program. So, we need to think about what we want to do, either continue it, leave it alone, or lower the rebate. Commissioner Mark Cousins stated that once the DOER solar program ended the inflation reduction act steps in and gives the installer five percent and then the federal government gives another thirty-three percent. There will still be incentives out there the RMLP doesn't need to give further incentive.

Cousins had thought of keeping this program in place till the end of the year and then doing away with it. Anyone who was in the queue right now could take advantage of the six thousand dollars but cut it in half on June 30th. Then do away with it at year end and homeowners would still receive roughly a 40% subsidy. Commissioner Danby Whitmore said giving an additional \$6,000 is a great program and would like to keep it we can afford it, or do it at half, as the program shows that Rowley is working toward sustainability and self-sufficiency.

Commissioner Bryan DiPersia asked Brown how we are currently funding the program and if he could explain it. The rebates, from solar to appliance program, have always been through the residential customer charge on their electric bill. Some years the program has been very well received and we have gone over the budget. We have never turned anyone away from the program because the money had been depleted. Below are the numbers from the AQ31 Greenhouse Emissions Report for what we have done with the solar:

- 2020 – We issued \$28,386.00 back in rebates, new solar was 47.31 KW which turned into 37 class one Massachusetts recs being granted to RMLP.
- 2021 – We issued \$34,326.00 back in rebates, new solar was 57.21 KW which turned into 62 class one Massachusetts recs being granted to RMLP.

in response to commissioner DiPersia's comment on residential rooftop solar lasting 20 years, Cousins said that after seven or eight years, people have been known to swap out their panels whether it be a new roof or a better

technology coming down the road. A larger project such as Wethersfield Street would have better value for recs because of the way the system operates and economies of scale.

There was talk about how National Grid works, about rates, what they are giving their customers for incentives, and how the municipals have more say than the private investor-owned companies. Another informational meeting to see what the public is interested in doing was suggested. It was very well received in the past and could show itself to be productive.

Resident Phil Towne asked what the meaning of a rec was. Brown said it is a renewal energy certificate. Towne doesn't understand why we are cutting back on incentives and not building up our portfolio now. Brown thinks we should keep this topic on the agenda, and we should do a customer satisfaction survey and see where our ratepayers are coming from.

Battery Storage Project Continued Discussion

Manager Matt Brown reported that Bill Bullock had left MMWEC and Matt Ides replaced him in his role. Currently the MMWEC and RMLP legal counsel must get together for a conference call and iron out a few things before this can go on. When that happens, Brown will report back to the board on where we stand.

Continued Discussion on Show of Support Letter to Selectman For "Specialized Code"

Commissioner Bryan DiPersia recapped from other meeting discussions the newly released specialized building codes Massachusetts put forward in December 2022. It is an addendum the town can choose to adopt that are above and beyond the stretch code that Rowley has already adopted because of being a green community. Commissioner Danby Whitmore felt it was important to adopt this because it would show our ratepayers, we are looking to save money. Commissioner Mark Cousins said, we are a light plant, and the inspections department should be taking care of codes. Also, he felt at what point does one board tell another board they can't do something because of a code. Cousins wouldn't be in support of the RMLP board sending a letter on this. DiPersia felt we should recognize the new codes and better plan as this could be a better service to the town.

Manager Matt Brown suggested the board put together a letter to the selectman like the PILOT document. The ATM is closed so it wouldn't happen until next year. Brown asked DiPersia if this specialized code had been adopted within other towns and DiPersia didn't know.

Managers Update

MLP Solar Continuation Update: There are four potential solar customers who have applied for service with one new customer on Wethersfield Street. There are 33 total systems now.

RECS: Provided to the board was the REC history up through quarter three of 2022. There is always a lag in getting this information due to timing.

Supply Chain Issues: There really isn't a change in the supply chain issue. It doesn't appear to be getting better, but not getting worse.

Fleet Vehicles: We are in the same place as were last month. The truck is still in the paint booth and is taking a little longer than normal. Matt has reached out to Kiley to see when the delivery date may be.

Construction:

- We are currently wrapping up Falcon Ridge with a few more things to do. Mark and Eric did a great job tracking everything and keeping up with the ever-changing environment. My role was to get them to pay in a timely fashion.
- Dodge and Daniels Roads are about done and feeder four is looking good. Mansion Drive is the next voltage conversion, and we will be breaking this up into three parts like the Summer Street job.
- Preventative maintenance to the substation is underway with UPG and by the end of April work on transformer two and the associated breakers should be done.
- We have had a couple of pole hits recently on Glen Street and Leslie Road.
- We also participated in the March Nor'easter with mutual aid to NH Electric Co-op in Alton NH. Sean LaBelle, Jeff Valley, and I went with Groveland, Ipswich, Merrimac, and Danvers. Great job by all, no heavy lifting, but we did energize a lot of customers in just a few days. It was a great team building exercise and allowed me as the manager to really get to know the employees as well as other area linemen.

All Other Items Not Anticipated by The Chair

There was nothing added by the chair.

Executive Session under GLC 30A, Section 21 a Strategy for Negotiations with Non-Union Personal

Mark Cousins made the motion to adjourn to Executive Session for the non-Union Personal and return to regular session for the sole purpose of adjournment. Danby Whitmore seconded. All voted in favor in favor at 7:31 PM with a roll call vote with everyone saying yes.

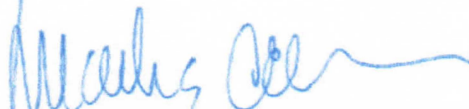
Adjournment

Bryan DiPersia made the motion to adjourn the meeting. Mark Cousins seconded. All voted in favor at 7:48 PM with a roll call vote with everyone saying yes.

Minutes submitted by Eric R. Grover



Bryan DiPersia, Chair



Mark Cousins, Clerk



Danby Whitmore, Member