

**SOUTH HADLEY ELECTRIC LIGHT DEPARTMENT
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' VIRTUAL MEETING
MARCH 24, 2022, AT 5:00 P.M.**

Present for the Board: Chairman Gregory Dubreuil, Vice-Chair John Hine, Kurt Schenker, Denise Presley, Ron Coutu

Present for SHELD: General Manager Sean Fitzgerald, Administrative Assistant Kim Mendoza, Financial Manager Michael Conchieri, Sr Engineer Mark Gilmore, Marketing and Customer Service Manager Kelly Frazier

The virtual meeting was called to order at 5:00 P.M. by Chairman Dubreuil.

On a motion by Mr. Hine, seconded by Mr. Coutu, it was VOTED: To move to executive session pursuant to M.G.L. c. 164, § 47D, for purpose of discussing trade secrets, confidential, competitively sensitive, or other propriety information and return to Open Session at approximately 6:00PM, by a roll call vote: Mr. Hine – aye, Mr. Coutu – aye, Mr. Schenker – aye, Ms. Presley – aye, Mr. Dubreuil – aye.

The executive session adjourned at 5:26. The open session reconvened at 6:00 PM.

Minutes Approval:

2/24/2022 Open Session:

On a motion by Mr. Hine, seconded Mr. Schenker, it was unanimously VOTED: To approve the minutes of the South Hadley Electric Light Department Board of Commissioners virtual meeting of February 24, 2022, by a roll call vote: Mr. Hine – aye, Mr. Schenker – aye, Mr. Coutu - aye, Ms. Presley – aye, Mr. Dubreuil – aye.

2/24/2022 Executive Session:

On a motion by Mr. Hine, seconded Mr. Schenker, it was unanimously VOTED: To approve, but not release, the minutes of the South Hadley Electric Light Department Board of Commissioners' executive session virtual meeting of February 24, 2022, by a roll call vote: Mr. Hine – aye, Mr. Schenker - aye, Ms. Presley – aye, Mr. Coutu - aye, Mr. Dubreuil – aye.

Public Comment:

Mark Beauregard spoke for Carlene and Michael Marcotte on a transformer in the basement of her house at 131 Woodbridge Street. They feel that this is a dangerous situation and, since it was installed and maintained by SHELD, they want SHELD to remove the transformer and replace it with a new service at SHELD's expense. They believe there were many other basement transformers that, in the past, SHELD removed and replaced at no cost to the homeowner. SHELD has told Mrs. Marcotte that the financial responsibility to connect service, from a new transformer at the street to the house, falls on Mrs. Marcotte.

Mr. Beauregard said that previous SHELD manager, Wayne Doerpholz, told them that it's SHELD's responsibility to take care of connecting the home service, stating that it's a monumental problem that needs to be done right away. Mr. Doerpholz spoke and gave his opinion on the topic.

Mark Gilmore, SHELD Sr Engineer, shared information he found when researching the transformer on this property. Mr. Hine asked what SHELD's policy was in the past. Mr. Fitzgerald stated that past practice was that customer pays for service from the street to the house, it is stated that way in SHELD's Terms and Conditions. Mr. Gilmore said that present policy is that if a customer wants to change their service, we remove our service cables, and the customer would pay for new service to be brought to the house from the street.

Mr. Dubreuil stated that management has already taken a position, but the homeowner has come to the Board asking them to reconsider it. Mr. Dubreuil stated the Board needed more information from management, and legal counsel, on the situation before they could make a decision. Mr. Dubreuil also stated that he would like this to be a priority, be researched, get legal input, and have it settled as soon as possible. He did not want to wait until next meeting, if possible.

Larry Dubois spoke in support of SHELD's funding the lighting for the pickleball court at Buttery Brook Park. Mr. Dubreuil stated the Board received many emails in support of funding the project.

Manager's Report:

Outages: There were none.

Fibersonic Update: Three fiberhoods were released in the last month; Lorraine Ave, High St and the aerial section of Spring Meadows, which totals 20 of the 32 fiberhoods constructed. We are approaching 1400 connected customers.

Friends of Buttery Brook:

Mr. Dubreuil stated that Mr. Gilmore had forwarded the Board additional detail on the costs associated with lighting for the pickleball courts at Buttery Brook Park.

Mr. Gilmore said there were three pieces to the request. He contacted a lighting vendor for their expertise on what was needed to light the court area. The main court cost was \$16,045 total. To light the adjacent parking lot would cost \$4520. To light the north entrance, like the other entrance, was not the type of work that SHELD normally does and therefore he could not quote it. He also received more info on the court plans, which in turn, could change the costs.

Mr. Dubreuil stated the total cost, excluding the entrance lighting, was \$20,565. The Board previously discussed donating the labor only, which totals \$8610.

There was a discussion about whether SHELD could accommodate taking the crews off current work and having them work on this project. Mr. Fitzgerald said it may slow some other things

down, but it could be done. The order in which things needed to be done, for SHELD to have access to the location, was discussed. Kim Prough explained the order in which she thought the work would happen. SHELD would need to install several poles before other work is done.

Mr. Coutu stated he was impressed by the many thoughtful and passionate emails from ratepayers supporting the project.

On a motion by Mr. Hine and seconded by Ms. Presley, it was unanimously VOTED: that SHELD provide the labor and equipment (trucks) for the pickleball court and parking lot lighting as outlined in Mr. Gilmore's email plus give a sponsorship of \$5000 which entitles SHELD to a Fibersonic sign at the pickleball courts by a roll call vote: Mr. Hine – aye, Ms. Presley – aye, Mr. Coutu – aye, Mr. Schenker - aye, Mr. Dubreuil – aye.

Consumer Deposit Policy:

Mr. Conchieri presented a suggestion by Ms. Frazier to reduce the amounts of required residential electric service deposits. Based on a review of comparable MLP policies and the fact that collection procedures have improved which has lowered delinquent balances, he recommended that the Board change SHELD's current consumer deposit policy, effective immediately for new customers, from the current \$300 to \$200 and for residential heat customers from \$600 to \$400. The difference between the current and proposed deposit amounts could be refunded to all current customers in the May 2022 billing cycle. That represents about \$100,000.00 and would be accomplished by directly crediting the customer's electric account.

On a motion by Mr. Hine and seconded by Ms. Presley, it was unanimously VOTED: to approve proposed change the consumer deposit policy as outlined, by a roll call vote: Mr. Hine – aye, Ms. Presley – aye, Mr. Schenker - aye, Mr. Coutu – aye, Mr. Dubreuil – aye.

Green Choice Program Update:

Ms. Frazier presented background information on the development of the voluntary renewal energy option program, the Green Choice Program. A bill stuffer was sent to all ratepayers explaining the program in August of 2021. Eighteen customers have enrolled for either \$10, \$20, or \$30 per month. MMWEC, on SHELD's behalf, purchased 26 Massachusetts Class I RECS at \$37each, for a total of \$962, with the 2021 funds. All enrolled customers were notified of the purchase. Customers can still enroll if they are interested.

Performance Evaluation Process Renewal:

Mr. Dubreuil gave background information, from last month's meeting, where Mr. Coutu and Ms. Presley volunteered to reevaluate the General Manager's performance evaluation process and look for improvements. Mr. Coutu stated they were not aware of where the current process originated. They asked Mr. Fitzgerald for background information. They decided it was late to change goals for 2022. The longer-term changes should be made in conjunction with possible changes to an updated strategic plan for 2023-2028. They would suggest some short-term changes at the next meeting.

Mr. Fitzgerald suggested that they have Steve VanderMeer, who initially helped the Board with SHELD's goals for the Strategic Plan, return for meetings with the Board and ratepayers and repeat the process to set new goals and initiatives for the next 5 years. He said he would reach out to Mr. VanderMeer.

Old Business:

There was none.


New Business:

Mr. Schenker asked if the Board could do some live meetings.

Adjourn:

On a motion by Mr. Hine and seconded by Mr. Coutu, the meeting was unanimously VOTED: to adjourn by a roll call vote: Mr. Hine – aye, Mr. Coutu – aye, Ms. Presley – aye, Mr. Schenker - aye, Mr. Dubreuil – aye.

The open session ended at 7:02P.M.



Light Board Secretary

Approved:

EXHIBIT A

List of Documents reviewed at the March 24, 2022, Municipal Light Board Meeting

1. Draft Open Session Minutes February 24, 2022
2. Draft Executive Session Minutes February 24, 2022
3. Proposed Changes to Consumer Deposit Policy – March 24, 2022