

**SOUTH HADLEY ELECTRIC LIGHT DEPARTMENT  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS VIRTUAL MEETING  
JUNE 24, 2021 AT 5:15 P.M.**

Present for the Board: Chairman Gregory Dubreuil, Vice-Chair John Hine, Anne Awad, Kurt Schenker (arrived 5:24),

Absent: Peter McAvoy

Present for SHELD: General Manager Sean Fitzgerald, Administrative Assistant Kim Mendoza, Financial Manager Michael Conchieri

The virtual meeting was called to order at 5:15 P.M. by Chairman Dubreuil.

On a motion by Mr. Hine, seconded by Ms. Awad, it was

VOTED: To move into Executive Session to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining with I.B.E.W. 455 and return to open session at approximately 6:00 PM, by roll call vote: Mr. Hine – aye, Ms. Awad – aye, Mr. Dubreuil – aye.

The open session of the virtual meeting reconvened at 6:00 P.M.

Also present for SHELD: Sr. Engineer Mark Gilmore, Marketing & Customer Service Manager Kelly Frazier

Guests: Eric Pineseault and Howard Cheney (arrived 6:08) from Meyers Brothers Kalicka, P.C. and Attorney Ben Coyle

**Minutes Approval:**

5/27/2021 Open Session:

On a motion by Mr. Hine, seconded Ms. Awad, it was

VOTED: To approve the Board of Commissioners' virtual meeting minutes of the May 27, 2021 as written, by a roll call vote: Mr. Hine – aye, Ms. Awad – aye, Mr. Schenker - aye, Mr. Dubreuil – aye.

**2020 Audited Financial Statements Report & Presentation**

Mr. Dubreuil introduced Mr. Eric Pineseault, audit manager from Myers Brothers Kalicka, PC, who conducted SHELD's 2020 audit. Mr. Pineseault gave an outline of his presentation, then stated that SHELD had received an unmodified opinion, which means there were not any material misstatements found during the audit. The firm did not find any material weaknesses in the internal controls. SHELD is financially sound and stable. He continued by stating that we would be able to see how the pandemic, with increased residential but decreased commercial, industrial and municipal revenues, and the fiber buildout, with increased assets, had affected the financial statements. Mr. Pineseault reviewed the revenue, expense, change in net position, and the liability pages of the report.

After reviewing the financial statements, Mr. Pinsoneault moved on to the Report to Management. There were no significant deficiencies in the internal controls, but they did make a few suggestions for process changes, some of which may be hard for a small company like SHELD to implement. Mr. Pinsoneault answered a few questions from the Board.

On a motion by Mr. Hine, seconded by Ms. Awad, it was VOTED: To accept the audit report as presented, by roll call vote: Mr. Hine – aye, Ms. Awad – aye, Mr. Schenker - aye, Mr. Dubreuil – aye.

**Public Comment:**

There were none.

**Manager’s Report:**

Outages:

On June 8<sup>th</sup> there was outage at the Pineshed substation which caused a major circuit operation to trip open at 6:31AM affecting a total of 785 customers. The outage was momentary, for most customers, with power coming back on within minutes. All customers were completely restored in 32 minutes. The cause of the outage was determined to be a bad LED monitoring light and possibly a bad diode. There were a couple smaller outages due to lightening storms.

Fibersonic Update by Ms. Frazier:

Currently, there are 1020 connected customers. The overall take rate is 38% with 12 impending installs in the 15 connected fiberhoods. Ms. Frazier gave a construction update and stated that the Woodbridge fiberhood was now open and accepting applications for installations which will begin the end of July. There are also several areas where underground construction is near completion and customer service will be taking installation applications for those areas in July. The 2021 planned construction schedule is on track.

Ms. Frazier also presented information on a new program to help residents with their fiber bills. The Emergency Broadband Benefit Program has been implemented by the FCC using COVID stimulus funds. Once approved, all eligible Fibersonic customers can receive \$50 towards their fiber bill. There is an alert on the Fibersonic website page with more information and links for people to apply.

COVID-19 Update:

SHELD has reopened to the public and business is returning to normal. Also, the State has extended the remote meeting option until March of 2022.

**IBEW 455 CBA Vote:**

Mr. Fitzgerald requested the Board ratify the 2021 three-year IBEW Collective Bargaining Agreement as proposed.

On a motion by Mr. Hine, seconded by Ms. Awad, it was VOTED: To ratify the IBEW 455 contract as presented, by roll call vote: Mr. Hine – aye, Ms. Awad – aye, Mr. Schenker - aye, Mr. Dubreuil – aye.

**Renewable Energy Option Recap:**

Mr. Fitzgerald recapped the decision, voted on last month by the Board, to initiate the renewable energy option program for residents, which allows SHELD to purchase Massachusetts RECs (renewable energy credits) to progressively increase development of renewable energy. The program is voluntary, and residents can elect to pay \$10, \$20 or \$30 monthly. The credits will be used to develop renewable projects like solar generators and wind farms. Applications will be included with August bills and the program will start in September.

**Old Business:**

Mr. Dubreuil asked if the rebate program for electric lawn equipment was up and running. Mr. Gilmore said the program was active but not yet posted. It was coming.

Mr. Dubreuil also stated he asked an experienced engineer at his workplace about the possibility of developing town hydro power, using the small dams in town. The subject had come up at a previous board meeting. Mr. Dubreuil was told the project would be very complex, expensive, and not worth pursuing financially. Mr. Fitzgerald said SHELD owns some Hydro-Quebec power and could buy more but we are already oversupplied with power a lot of the year and don't need to purchase more power.

**New Business:**

Mr. Fitzgerald stated that Commissioner Awad and SHELD management would like to plan an employee luncheon for the department. With the Board approval, Mr. Fitzgerald said he would like to plan the event, likely on a Friday afternoon, on behalf of the commission and the department.

Mr. Hine mentioned the community meeting on Project 2015A in Peabody that took place earlier in the week and asked if there should be a public meeting on the subject in town. Ms. Awad and Mr. Fitzgerald agreed that the Board should wait to see what the MMWEC board decides to do next about the project and Mr. Fitzgerald stated that MMWEC is not likely conducting public meetings in each participating town as the MLPs involved have had the project on multiple open meeting agendas. Mr. Fitzgerald said that SHELD also was on a recent South Hadley Board of Health open meeting agenda on the project. MMWEC has made some changes to the project plans after listening to concerned people. They removed one of the large storage oil tanks, switched from using ammonia to urea, and are investigating hydrogen fuel. It was decided that battery storage would not work for capacity. The Board decided to put a meeting on hold until they hear from MMWEC.

**Adjourn:**

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

The open session ended at 7:01 P.M.



\_\_\_\_\_  
Anne Awad, Clerk

Approved: July 22, 2021

## **EXHIBIT A**

List of Documents reviewed at the June 24, 2021 Municipal Light Board Meeting

1. Draft Open Session Minutes May 27, 2021
2. Financial Statements for December 31, 2020 and 2019
3. Report to Management for December 31, 2020
4. SHELD Emergency Broadband Benefit Program
5. SHELD Renewable Energy Option