

**SOUTH HADLEY ELECTRIC LIGHT DEPARTMENT
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' VIRTUAL MEETING
SEPTEMBER 23, 2021, AT 6:00 P.M.**

Present for the Board: Chairman Gregory Dubreuil, Vice-Chair John Hine, Anne Awad, Peter McAvoy

Absent: Kurt Schenker

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

The open session convened at 6:00 P.M.

Minutes Approval:

8/26/2021 Open Session:

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

VOTED: To approve the minutes of the Board of Commissioners' virtual meeting of August 26, 2021, three votes to one, by a roll call vote: Mr. Hine – aye, Ms. Awad – aye, Mr. McAvoy - no, Mr. Dubreuil – aye.

8/26/2021 Executive Session:

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

VOTED: To approve the minutes of the Board of Commissioners' Executive Session of August 26, 2021, and not to release, by a roll call vote: Mr. Hine – aye, Ms. Awad – aye, Mr. McAvoy - aye, Mr. Dubreuil – aye.

Public Comment:

There were none.

Manager's Report:

Outages: There were three outages last month. Two were due to squirrel contact, power was restored within an hour. The third, on Amherst Road, was due to a tree causing blown fuses affecting 161 customers for less than an hour.

Fibersonic Update: There are 1,232 connected customers and 159 voice customers. There are 17 connected fiberhoods and 5 under construction, which will leave 10 fiberhoods remaining to finish the town's 32 fiberhoods.

Training: SHELD conducted two nights of first responder electrical hazards training for town Police, Fire and DPW personnel. This training was a collaborative effort between the town and SHELD and coincides with our strategic values of safety and collaboration. The trainings had over 40 total participants.

NEPPA Awards:

SHELD Commissioners Greg Dubreuil and Anne Awad have each been awarded the NEPPA (Northeast Public Power Association) Commissioner Service Award for their years of dedicated service to SHELD. Executive Director Bonnie Biocchi personally delivered the awards to Chairman Dubreuil and Commissioner Awad. Congratulations to both of you and thank you. The awards are well deserved.

Home Energy Conversion Loan:

SHELD has launched a new Home Energy Loan Conversion Program. This program provides a 0% interest free loan through the UMASS Five College Credit Union and allows customers to borrow up to \$10,000 to convert their home heating and cooling systems to more efficient and clean energy sources. This is in line with SHELD's vision of creating innovative solutions that anticipate the evolving needs of its customers. The program is available today. Anyone interested should call SHELD.

Mr. McAvoy asked if solar, wind, and water renewables were included in the program. Mr. Fitzgerald stated this program was designed to help people change from fossil fuel burning heating systems to a more efficient heating/cooling system and is not for financing distributed generation. Mr. Fitzgerald continued by stating SHELD has made a substantial commitment to renewable projects by setting aside \$100,000 (matched by the State) in solar rebates and incentivizing one megawatt of solar in town. This new program will help reduce the town's carbon footprint by converting home heating systems from fossil fuel burning systems. Mr. McAvoy wants to see the program expanded to include renewable projects and will bring this up again, in new business, when he wants to address solar power on his home.

Mr. Hine stated the State has a goal to convert residential heating systems from oil and gas. This program will help residents to convert to more environmentally favorable heating systems.

Old Business:

Mr. McAvoy started a conversation on the government infrastructure bill and the state of the nuclear power plants, stating that voters needed to know the Board member's positions on the issues.

Mr. Dubreuil told Mr. McAvoy that if he wants to argue the state of the nuclear power plants, he needs to contact the nuclear regulatory commission, the Board does not have influence over any decisions regarding the nuclear plants.

Mr. McAvoy also asked about the nuclear plant safety audit reports he requested last month. Mr. Fitzgerald stated that he requested the reports from MMWEC and was waiting to hear back from them.

New Business:

Mr. Dubreuil stated that the Manager's evaluation needs to be conducted at the October meeting, so a subcommittee can present their recommendations to the full board at the November/December meeting for a vote. He will send out the Manager's self-evaluation and

blank forms, requesting they be returned to him by October 22 so he can compile the information.

Mr. McAvoy stated someone lodged a conflict of interest complaint against him with the State Ethics Committee. Mr. Dubreuil stated this was not an appropriate topic for discussion at a board meeting.

Mr. McAvoy continued by saying that he requested to have a 14-kilowatt solar system on his house which is in excess of the town bylaw, and SHELD policy, of 10-kilowatts because the grid will not support it. Mr. Fitzgerald stated that was inaccurate. Mr. Fitzgerald said the 10-kilowatt limit was a utility practice. If there were 10 kilowatt systems on every house, it would create excess power which may require building a second substation and most homes cannot consume more than 10 kilowatts. The system is not dysfunctional but would need to be studied to see if it would need upgrading if the limit were removed. SHELD's system is one of the best in the region and can handle more load. Mr. Fitzgerald said that he has been directed to hire an outside engineering company to independently evaluate the system.

Mr. Dubreuil stated this was not an agenda item and cannot be discussed in length or the board would be in violation of open meeting laws. Mr. Hine suggested that Mr. McAvoy email the Chair and request it be put on a future meeting agenda.

Mr. McAvoy stated he is not happy with how Mr. Dubreuil handles board meetings. Ms. Awad suggested that if a board member wants a topic on the agenda, it should be personally neutral to his own experiences. He should not be seeking a waiver of policy for his own self-advantage. Ms. Awad stated that she supports Mr. Dubreuil and stated that she felt he always conducted the meetings and discussions appropriately. Mr. Dubreuil told Mr. McAvoy to email him with a request to put the topic on the agenda, then asked for a motion to adjourn.

Adjourn:

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

The open session ended at 6:33 P.M.



Anne Awad, Clerk

Approved: October 28, 2021

EXHIBIT A

List of Documents reviewed at the September 23, 2021, Municipal Light Board Meeting

1. Draft Open Session Minutes August 26, 2021
2. Draft Executive Session Minutes August 26, 2021
3. NEPPA Facebook post of Commissioner Awards
4. Home Energy Conversion Loan Flyer