

Electric Light Department

Town of South Hadley

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**SOUTH HADLEY ELECTRIC LIGHT DEPARTMENT
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING
SELECTBOARD MEETING ROOM, TOWN HALL
JANUARY 18, 2017 AT 6:30 P.M.**

Present for Board: Anne Awad, John Hine, Gregory Dubreuil, Vernon Blodgett, Kurt Schenker (arrived 6:35)

Present for Staff: Paul Byrne – Interim Co-Manager, Ed Morrin - Interim Co-Manager

Ms. Awad convened the Open Session at 6:32 PM.

Ms. Awad stated that tonight's meeting is not the regularly scheduled meeting. The monthly meeting is next week on January 26. A special meeting was called because the Board has completed the General Manager search. Last week the Board held an Executive Session to discuss contract negotiations with non-union personnel, for the General Manager position. The Board is ready to report, discuss and hopefully approve the contract.

Ms. Awad then gave a brief Chair report.

SHELD is stable and the staff should take credit for this; the department is thriving. The staff and the Board have worked well together over the past year and are looking forward to having a new Manager in place. The Manager will be able to address things such as office procedures, staffing levels, and job descriptions which have not kept up with the changing world of business functions. The staff has worked hard to meet expectations but under a new Manager SHELD will be able to move forward in 2017. In a municipal utility, the ratepayers control the flow of energy into their homes. The new Manager will have to put some energy into working on internal functions to bring the business practices up to speed.

Everyone is excited about starting work on the fiber optics and renewable energy projects but we need to give the new Manager a couple of months to work on the internal functions. He will need time to talk to the staff, assess things and set priorities for getting them done.

The search for the new Manager took about six months and here are the steps the Board took:

1. Updated the job description.
2. Released a RFP for a professional search firm.
3. Chose Mycoff, Fry & Prouse LLC because they specialize in utility industry searches.
4. 21 candidates responded.
5. Two Board members, Mr. Blodgett and Ms. Awad, and Scott Fry, the professional search consultant, reviewed the applicants and reduced the group to six.
6. The six candidates were interviewed and the group was reduced to three.
7. Two of the three candidates pulled out for various reasons (the public process, pension issues and relocation concerns).
8. The full Board then decided to move forward and offer the remaining final candidate, Sean Fitzgerald, the position in December. Mr. Fitzgerald is here tonight.
9. Mr. Blodgett and Ms. Awad negotiated a contract with Mr. Fitzgerald.
10. Last week the Board met and discussed the final contract and is ready to take a vote. If the vote is favorable, the contract will then be signed by the Board and Mr. Fitzgerald.

Ms. Awad asked the other Board members if anyone had comments on the process or the contract.

Mr. Hine thanked Mr. Blodgett and Ms. Awad for all the time and effort they put into producing a good process and candidate.

Ms. Awad stated that following the vote, if approved, the contract will be released as a public document.

Mr. Hine moved and Mr. Schenker seconded a motion:

That the Board approves the contract between the South Hadley Municipal Light Board and Sean P. Fitzgerald of Southampton dated January 18, 2017.

Before the vote was taken, Ms. Awad asked Board members if there was any discussion.

Mr. Hine said there would probably be some sticker shock with Ratepayers. He participated in the Superintendent and Town Administrator searches. When searching for new candidates one finds that the Market has raised the bar, in terms of compensation, and it's commonplace that you need to pay more than the incumbent was receiving for salary. We must respond to the Market and do what we need to do to get a qualified candidate. This is the most important decision the Board will make and it's an investment in the future.

Mr. Blodgett commented that one thing discussed, in the last year or two, was developing a fiber optic system to serve South Hadley. One of the unique qualifications Mr. Fitzgerald has is his role in establishing a fiber optic network at Westfield Gas & Electric. No other candidate had that experience or level of involvement in that area.

Ms. Awad spoke about the salary also. They had surveyed other MA municipals for General Managers' salaries. The salary is squarely where it should be for South Hadley and is in line with other municipal utilities who deal only in electricity (versus those which also deal with gas).

Mr. Dubreuil liked the diversity in Mr. Fitzgerald's background and his solid understanding of the industry. He will be a great asset to the department.

Ms. Awad took the vote by roll call.

Mr. Hine - aye

Mr. Blodgett - aye

Ms. Awad - aye

Mr. Schenker - aye

Mr. Dubreuil - aye

It was a unanimous vote to sign this contract and engage with Mr. Fitzgerald as the new General Manager for SHELD.

While the Board, then Mr. Fitzgerald, signed the contract; Ms. Awad mentioned some of the other accomplishments of the last year.

SHELD had its first ever audit and will soon be having its second audit following Mr. Conchieri's work on a second RFP.

A new Administrative Assistant and Senior Engineer were hired and will contribute to moving the department move forward in 2017.

Ms. Awad also thanked Paul Byrne and Ed Morrin for their work as Co-interim Managers. People said having Co-Managers wouldn't work but it has worked from day one because they respect each other and always put SHELD's needs first.

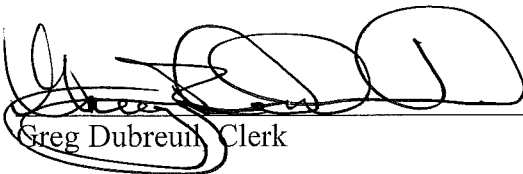
Mr. Schenker thanked Mr. Byrne, Mr. Morrin, Mr. Conchieri and all the staff at SHELD for all their hard work. He is looking forward to moving in a positive direction. He then congratulated Mr. Fitzgerald.

Mr. Fitzgerald thanked the Board and said he was excited for the opportunity.

Adjourn:

Ms. Awad asked for a motion to adjourn.

Mr. Hine moved and Mr. Schenker seconded a motion to adjourn. The vote was unanimous. The meeting adjourned at 6:53 P.M.



Greg Dubreuil Clerk

Approved: February 23, 2017