

**SOUTH HADLEY ELECTRIC LIGHT DEPARTMENT
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' VIRTUAL MEETING
OCTOBER 28, 2021, AT 6:00 P.M.**

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

Present for SHELD: General Manager Sean Fitzgerald, Administrative Assistant Kim Mendoza, Sr Engineer Mark Gilmore

Guest: Jason Viadero, Engineering Supervisor, MMWEC

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

Minutes Approval:

9/23/2021 Open Session:

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

VOTED: To approve the minutes of the Municipal Light Board of September 23, 2021 open session, by a roll call vote: Mr. Hine – aye, Mr. Schenker - aye, Ms. Awad – aye, Mr. Dubreuil – aye.

Battery Storage:

Jason Viadero, from MMWEC, presented information on battery storage in Massachusetts and what is involved in bringing battery storage to South Hadley. He spoke about the benefits of battery storage for managing capacity and transmission, peak load, and the possible cost to SHELD and the ratepayers.

After the presentation, Mr. Viadero answered questions from the Commissioners regarding the life of a battery and disposal of the hazardous waste when batteries are decommissioned, the cost of the operation of the battery since it uses energy to recharge, and the value it would have for peak shaving for capacity and transmission costs. Mr. Hine asked about the loss that will occur during operation of the battery. Mr. Viadero explained the several variables that affect the losses. Mr. Dubreuil asked about the benefits during the year, besides load shedding for capacity during the summer, since we would have to purchase and consume energy to recharge the battery to be able to use the battery. Mr. Viadero stated there was the benefit of shaving the transmission loads monthly and reducing the yearly peak. Mr. Hine thought that it would have value if the recharging could be done overnight when SHELD has surplus energy. Another factor in the cost is the location of the battery storage unit. SHELD has to choose a location that has the space and infrastructure to install it. Ms. Awad suggested speaking to the town about possibly locating battery storage at the closed landfill. Mr. Gilmore emphasized using the layered approach for installation because over time purchase prices may go down and there will be new technology coming in the future.

Mr. Fitzgerald reminded everyone that SHELD is now 99% carbon free and outperforming other utilities in the State, but he still likes the opportunity for reducing capacity and transmission. Mr. Fitzgerald explained that battery storage has been under consideration for some time but due to the large capital projects of Fibersonic and AMI, plus being 99% carbon free, SHELD tabled discussions in order to effectively manage other large initiatives. Mr. Viadero stated that this is not a decision that needs to be made today.

After Public Comment, Mr. Dubreuil asked if there needed to be any action or a motion from the Board concerning battery storage. Mr. Hine stated he would like Mr. Fitzgerald and Mr. Gilmore to work with Mr. Viadero to develop a financial model, especially one that would utilize the excess energy at night. All three agreed they would work on it.

Public Comment:

Mr. John Howard commented that several communities were using electric school buses for battery storage, and he thought it would be something to investigate for South Hadley. Chairman Dubreuil explained that SHELD would certainly work with the Town on this regarding the chargers, however it would be a school board decision.

Manager's Report:

Outages: In the last month there were three minor outages: two caused by squirrels and one from a tree branch.

Fibersonic Update: There are 1,232 connected customers, with an additional 40 pending, and 209 voice customers. There are 17 connected fiberhoods and 5 under construction, which leaves 10 fiberhoods remaining to finish the town's 32 fiberhoods. Construction is moving along at a good pace.

Manager's Review:

Chairman Dubreuil gave a quick summary of the process the Board used for the Manager's annual review. Mr. Dubreuil stated that Mr. Fitzgerald was evaluated in eight categories on a scale of one to five, where a rating of one indicates he rarely meets his goals, and a rating of five indicates he always exceeds his goals. Mr. Dubreuil indicated that Mr. Fitzgerald's overall average rating for the eight categories was 4.844, which was higher than last year. Mr. Fitzgerald's rating has increased each year he has worked at SHELD.

Mr. Dubreuil then gave an abbreviated list of the accomplishments for the past year: South Hadley is in the lowest quartile for rates in the State, we have a 99% carbon free footprint, a vendor has been chosen for the AMI project, SHELD's reliability rating is outstanding, the fiber project has a 41% take rate, the fiber financing has been completed, another employee survey with positive results, during several severe weather events SHELD maintained its high reliability, and there were new renewable rebates added this year.

Mr. Dubreuil congratulated Mr. Fitzgerald on another outstanding evaluation. The Board still needs to establish his goals for the upcoming year, but the next step is for the subcommittee of Mr. Hine and Mr. Dubreuil to meet with Mr. Fitzgerald to negotiate salary. The subcommittee will present the results to the rest of the board at the next meeting.

Mr. Fitzgerald thanked the Board and his staff for working through another challenging year. He is proud of all the accomplishments SHELd has made and he appreciates the Board and the staff's commitment and support.

Old Business:

There was none.

New Business:

Ms. Awad announced that this would be her last meeting as a commissioner as she will be relocating to another state. She regrets leaving SHELd and the Board and thanked the community for their trust in her as a board member. Everyone thanked Ms. Awad for her dedication to the board, she did more than would be asked of any volunteer over the years she served.

Mr. Dubreuil then stated that Mr. McAvoy resigned his board seat on September 25, 2021. There are now 2 open seats and there will be a joint meeting with the Selectboard November 2, at 7:00PM to review the letters of interest and interview those interested in serving on the SHELd board until the next election in April.

Mr. Fitzgerald stated he had a new business item. The City of Easthampton has engaged SHELd to help them with a cost analysis for fiber for its town. They will compensate SHELd, and it will not affect SHELd's schedule of work in town.

The last new business item was to schedule the next Light Board meeting which will be Thursday December 2, 2021 at 6:00PM.

Adjourn:

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

The open session ended at 7:08 P.M.


Secretary

Approved: December 9, 2021

EXHIBIT A

List of Documents reviewed at the October 28, 2021, Municipal Light Board Meeting

1. Draft Open Session Minutes September 23, 2021
2. SHELD Energy Storage 10/2/2021 PowerPoint