

Electric Light Department

Town of South Hadley

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**MINUTES OF THE MUNICIPAL LIGHT BOARD
SPECIAL MEETING OF
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 2016 AT 6:00 P.M.
SHELD CONFERENCE ROOM, 85 MAIN STREET, SO. HADLEY, MA**

Present: Anne Awad, Chair
Vern Blodgett, Vice Chair
John Hine
Kurt Schenker
Gregory Dubreuil, Clerk

Also present from SHELD staff:
Paul Byrne
Mark Gilmore

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:03 P.M. by Chair Anne Awad.

Subcommittee Progress Report on General Manager Search

Chair Awad stated that the purpose of this meeting was to provide a subcommittee progress report on the General Manager Search. Chair Awad referred to the memorandum dated November 11, 2016 from Scott Fry which basically outlines the process to date. She noted that there were actually 21 candidates to start. She explained the process whereby the Subcommittee consisting of Chair Awad, Vice Chair Blodgett, Paul Byrne and Mark Gilmore, first individually ranked the candidates. She reported their individual rankings for the most part were consistent with the A and B list from Scott Fry. The Subcommittee then met and refined the list to six semifinalists all of whom were interviewed by the Subcommittee. She noted that Scott Fry provided substantial logistical support throughout the entire process. At the end of the interview process the Subcommittee unanimously agreed on three finalists. The dilemma that arose was an inability to retain two of the final three candidates. She noted that various factors including salary, pension, family requirements, and the public nature of the final process contributed to the loss of two of the three finalists. Various efforts were made to retain those two candidates however the items which were of concern to the candidates could not be overcome. Chair Awad referred to the resume of the one remaining finalist which was distributed to the Board. She added that the Subcommittee felt none of the other individuals who were interviewed were a good fit for the department. She confirmed the one remaining individual is an excellent candidate and she would be comfortable moving forward with one finalist.

Chair Awad asked Mark Gilmore, Paul Byrne and Vice Chair Blodgett if they had any additional input. Those comments made by Chair Awad were echoed and they added that the process was good and fair, and gave a good indication of candidates' passions, backgrounds and expertise. Vice Chair Blodgett added that he felt it would be unfair to bring a second candidate in as a finalist just to have a second finalist if that individual is not a viable candidate for the position.

Chair Awad then asked the other three Board members if they had any input. Mr. Hine agreed with those comments made thus far and stated that although it would be ideal to have more than one candidate, he felt the Board is justified and can support the reasons why only one candidate will be a finalist. He also stated that although the Board may be eager to bring the process to a close and bring a manager on Board, we should not move forward with an offer to the candidate if there are any "red flags" that may arise in the final interview process. Chair Awad confirmed that if Board members were not comfortable after the final interview process, we would not move forward and would restart the search.

Mr. Dubreuil and Mr. Schenker echoed those comments made. Mr. Dubreuil added that if the Board is comfortable with the finalist and agree he is a good fit for the department, we should be cautious not to prolong the process by restarting the search at the risk of losing this individual. He also added that restarting the search at this time would likely result in the same applicants that have already been vetted through the process and we would likely need to wait a period of time to attract different candidates.

Given the input of all Board members, Chair Awad said that the Board will proceed with the final interview of the one candidate. November 30, 2016 was the date established. The meeting will begin at 6:30 P.M. with the first 30 minutes dedicated to a "meet and greet" environment for the community. The formal interview would begin at 7:00 P.M. Mr. Schenker asked what the format would be relative to questions and if the community would be allowed to ask questions during the interview. Chair Awad said she would expect the community would have the opportunity to ask questions of the candidate during the 6:30 P.M. to 7:00 P.M. "meet and greet" portion of the meeting. She also said the Board should submit their questions in advance so Scott Fry can coordinate. She said the candidate would be at SHELD for the day, to meet with SHELD staff, observe operations, tour facilities, and meet with the remaining three Board members individually prior to the formal interview. Chair Awad said that Paul Byrne would make those arrangements with the three Board members.

Mr. Dubreuil asked if Jeff Cady from Chicopee Electric Light and Ron DeCurzio from MMWEC would participate in the process. Chair Awad said they would be available during the day on November 30 and would meet with the candidate as well and provide their input.

John Howard, a rate payer in attendance, asked if the earlier discussion and statement of Board members meant that a unanimous vote would be required to offer the candidate the position. Chair Awad said that although it would be ideal to have all Board members in agreement, it would not be required and that only a majority vote of the Board would be required.

Mr. Dubreuil asked if the Board would vote immediately after the interview or if the Board would reconvene to vote. Mr. Hine said it would be best not to vote the night of the interview. The Board should take time to think about it and to provide the public time to comment to Board members. A discussion ensued over the process of voting and contract negotiations should the

vote be in favor of moving forward with the candidate. It was decided the Board would reconvene the following week on December 7, 2016 at 6:30 P.M. to vote. Since the regularly scheduled December meeting would be December 22, 2016, very close to the Holiday, it was also decided that any business that may need to be conducted by the Board would also be done on December 7. If the vote is in favor of moving forward with the candidate, the Board would then move to executive session to conduct a strategy session in preparation for contract negotiations with the candidate following the open portion of the meeting. Chair Awad said that Scott Fry would provide a letter of agreement as a starting point for contract negotiations. Chair Awad also informed the Board that the Department has retained the law firm of Bacon & Wilson for general counsel purposes and that Bacon & Wilson will assist in the review of the final contract form.

Mr. Dubreuil noted that the Board and the community should be grateful for the efforts and time commitment of the Subcommittee.

Dan Whitford, a prior Board member in attendance, asked if anything related to the prior situations within the department and the difficulties surrounding those situations came up or were of concern to any of the candidates during the interview process and if the subcommittee assessed how the candidates might deal with those situations. Chair Awad said that any particulars related to events of the past were not raised however candidates did their homework on SHELD and given the information that is available on the internet, we can assume they were well aware. She also said that the interview process included several situational questions to ascertain how a candidate might deal with difficult situations and the Subcommittee was comfortable with the responses.

Adjournment

On a motion made by John Hine and seconded by Vice Chair Vern Blodgett it was unanimously

VOTED: To adjourn the meeting at 6:50 P.M.

Respectfully,



Gregory R. Dubreuil, Clerk
Municipal Light Board

Approved: December 7, 2016