

# *Electric Light Department*

## *Town of South Hadley*

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### **SOUTH HADLEY ELECTRIC LIGHT BOARD MEETING Minutes of the Meeting of APRIL 21, 2016**

Present: Anne S. Awad, Chair, Vernon L. Blodgett, Jr., Vice Chair, John R. Hine, Clerk, Kurt C. Schenker, Gregory R. Dubreuil  
Staff: Michael Conchieri, Financial Manager, SHELD

The Meeting convened at 6:03 PM. The Chair noted that it was a memorable evening because the Board has expanded to five and this is the first meeting of the newly constituted Board. The Chair introduced the Members of the Board to the public. She noted that the Board would reorganize as is the requirement following the Election.

#### **Reorganization:**

Mr. Blodgett nominated Ms. Awad to be Chair. Mr. Dubreuil seconded that nomination. No other nominations were made. The call for the vote yielded a unanimous vote (with Mr. Schenker not yet in attendance), 4-0.

The Vice Chair position backs up the Chair; for example, if the Chair is ill or out of Town, they would Chair the Meeting. Mr. Hine nominated Kurt Schenker. Mr. Schenker was not present at the time. Ms. Awad nominated Vernon Blodgett. Mr. Dubreuil seconded the nomination. The Board decided to defer a vote until Mr. Schenker was in attendance.

Mr. Dubreuil nominated John Hine for Clerk. Ms. Awad noted the many roles Mr. Hine plays in Town and asked if he was willing to serve. Mr. Hine nominated Mr. Dubreuil, who accepted the nomination. A vote of 4 aye, 1 missing put Mr. Dubreuil into this role.

Mr. Schenker joined the Board meeting at 6:30 PM. He was apprised of the situation regarding the contest for the Vice Chair role. He indicated that he would accept the nomination. The vote was two in favor of Mr. Schenker as Vice Chair, 3 unstated. The vote for Mr. Blodgett for Vice Chair was 3 in favor, two unstated. Mr. Blodgett will be the new Vice Chair of the Board.

**Massachusetts Municipal Wholesale Electric Company (MMWEC) Representation:**

Ms. Awad noted that the positions for the MMWEC Board are out of date. Normally, the Manager is the main voting attendee, and the Board, all three members, were listed as alternates. Ms. Awad suggested that all five Board members be alternates, but that the Chair, for this interim period, go to the meetings and vote. Once we have a Manager in place, we revoke this, designating the Manager as the point person ongoing.

Mr. Hine moved and Mr. Blodgett seconded a motion that the Chair of the Municipal Light Board be designated as the voting representative of the South Hadley Electric Light Department, and that the other four members be noted as alternates. Vote was called and it was unanimous. Ms. Awad agreed to notify MMWEC.

**Public Comment:**

Mr. John Howard noted that on the website that there is a page for the pricing and it was last updated in October of 2001. He asked that the website be reviewed and updated.  
Ms. Sandy Zieminski noted that it was nice to see 5 members. She felt that work did not get done with 3 members. She hopes that transparency will continue. She felt that the Board needs to rebuild public trust because issues were buried and public awareness was discouraged. She asked that the public have an opportunity to view the process of Manager recruitment and hiring. Ms. Awad noted that interviewing will be open at the finalist stage and that the Board will hold special public sessions for people to come in and meet the candidates and to listen to discussions. Ms. Awad hopes that each final candidate will spend a full day here and have an opportunity to meet the staff, meet the public, and get a sense of the challenges and benefits of SHELD and South Hadley. Ms. Zieminski worries that Eversource or National Grid would buy us out.

**Audit:**

We retained Melanson & Heath to come in and do a financial audit. Due to various delays, they came in actually a couple weeks ago and spent the week there going through financial reports and assessing our position. They interviewed me, they interviewed key staff at SHELD, and we do expect that we'll have their report in a month or so. The auditors will come and present their report to the Board in an open meeting. When the audit is expected it will be posted as part of the agenda, so you'll know that that's the hot night to come in and hear about the audit.

I do want to express appreciation for Mr. Conchieri. Besides being a point person within SHELD during the absence of the Manager, he's also managed to deal with an audit firm coming in, and

normally the Chief Financial Officer can just focus on that. So he had a lot of different things to deal with and did it gracefully.

### **Manager search.**

When we were a Board of three, we had approved a job description which I will make available to the new members of the Board. One of the changes, and it is controversial, is that we changed the educational requirements for the position. It had always required an engineering degree and we changed it to read "...relevant bachelor's degree or engineering"...This would open the position to someone with a business degree or some other relevant degree. Ms. Awad has discussed the qualifications with Massachusetts Municipal Wholesale Electric Company and with the North East Public Power Association. MMWEC advises that well over 50 percent of the newer managers, managers brought in since the mid 1990's do not have an engineering background. They have more of a business background. The managers hired with long tenure, prior to 1995 tend to be engineers. One of the dilemmas for SHELd is that we're very small. So if we don't have engineering in the Manager, we need to have engineering on the staff. As you know, when we've had people on leave, we've actually been without staff engineers for a number of months. It's a legal requirement (regulation of the Department of Public Utilities) that you have engineering. So we did obtain it quickly from Holyoke Gas & Electric when our engineers were placed on administrative leave. They backed us up during the time that our engineer was on leave. That is not ideal, As you want someone familiar with your own systems and personally with other staff so that they are a team. By looking for a Manager who might not be an engineer, it puts pressure on SHELd, possibly financially, because we don't have any redundancy. We only have one engineering position. If resumes come in and if we see that someone has engineering and strong leadership, a good track record of building teams and setting goals, then that would give extra points perhaps. We'll have to come up with some kind of scoring for how we all review the resumes that come in.

Basically the steps in a Manager search are 1. complete the job description, 2. post it internally and to the world by advertising, 3. receive resumes. 4. review the resumes. 5. Identify those to be invited for initial interview, 6. Reduce candidates to 2-3 finalists, 7. Conduct final interviews, 8./ invite public to meet the candidates, 9. Select a final candidate for offer. Hopefully as a community we will be welcoming a new Manager of SHELd by mid to late fall. Meanwhile, the Board might consider appointing an interim Manager because it is healthy to restore the normal boundaries of Board and Management. The Board will also consider using a search firm to assist in securing our next Manager. Board members discussed pros and cons of doing the search on our own and retaining a search firm. A major consideration was cost.

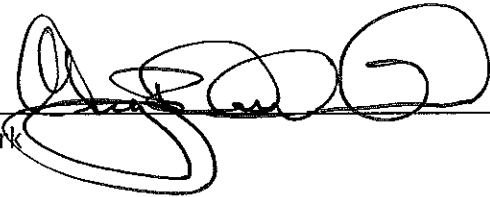
Mr. Hine noted that this will be the most important decision that this Board will make because it sets the direction for the Department for a very long time. One of the values he has observed over the years of engaging a search consultant is their ability to contact people who might be candidates and to talk to people in a very informal, background manner. That's extremely valuable. You want to get good candidates, and a good search firm does that. Mr. Dubreuil noted that we have a \$156 million a year business and there is value added by using a search firm. By consensus the Board agreed to release an RFP to solicit search firms.

**Meeting times and dates**

The Board agreed to meet on the fourth Thursday of every month at 6:30 PM.  
May 26, 2016 will be the next posted Open Meeting.

The meeting adjourned by a motion from Mr. Schenker, seconded by Mr. Blodgett, and unanimously approved, at 6:40 PM.

Approved at the Board Meeting of July 28, 2016: motion by Kurt Schenker, second by John Hine, unanimous vote to approve.

  
Clerk