

**SOUTH HADLEY ELECTRIC LIGHT DEPARTMENT  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING  
SELECTBOARD MEETING ROOM, TOWN HALL  
APRIL 25, 2019 AT 5:30 P.M.**

Present for the Board: Gregory Dubreuil, Chair, Anne Awad, John Hine, Kurt Schenker  
Peter McAvoy Arrived 5:31

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

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 P.M. by Chair Gregory Dubreuil. Mr. Dubreuil explained that the Board was requested to move our meeting up to accommodate another meeting that had since been cancelled.

Mr. Dubreuil congratulated Mr. Schenker and welcomed Ms. Awad back to the Board.

**Reorganization of the Board:**

Mr. Dubreuil reviewed the process for nominations for the Board offices. The floor was then opened for nominations for Chair. Mr. Schenker nominated Mr. Dubreuil, who accepted the nomination. Ms. Awad seconded the nomination. There were no other nominations. The Board voted unanimously to appoint Mr. Dubreuil as Chair.

Next, Mr. Schenker nominated Mr. Hine for Vice Chair. Ms. Awad seconded the nomination. Mr. Hine accepted the nomination. There were no other nominations. The Board voted unanimously to appoint Mr. Hine as Vice Chair.

Mr. Dubreuil then nominated Mrs. Awad for the Clerk position. Mr. McAvoy seconded the nomination. Ms. Awad accepted the nomination. The Board voted unanimously to appoint Ms. Awad to the Clerk position.

Mr. Dubreuil then mentioned that last year the Audit Committee had been comprised of himself and Mr. Blodgett. Mr. Dubreuil said he would continue to serve on the committee and asked if anyone else was interested in joining him. Mr. Hine asked about the purpose of the committee. Mr. Dubreuil explained that the auditors technically work for the Board. Any communications from the auditors would be with the audit committee first. The committee would review the audit and management letters prior to them being finalized and released to the other Board members. The committee members also meet with the auditor before he presents the audit at a Board meeting. Mr. Hine said he would serve on the audit committee with Mr. Dubreuil.

**Minutes Approval:**

3/28/2019 Open Session

Chair Dubreuil asked if everyone had a chance to review the minutes. Ms. Awad said she would abstain from voting since she was not on the Board in March.

On a motion made by Mr. Hine and seconded by Mr. McAvoy, it was unanimously

VOTED: To approve the meeting minutes of the South Hadley Electric Light Department, Board of Commissioners, meeting of March 28, 2019.

**Review of Executive Session Minutes:**

The Board had a list of executive session minutes that had previously been approved, but had not been released. The Board had reviewed the minutes. Mr. Dubreuil had also sought legal recommendation to determine which of these minutes should be released. Some of the minutes have information that is protected under attorney client privilege and were recommended to still be held.

Mr. Schenker suggested that instead of voting on each date individually, that the Board follow the recommendations of the attorney as stated on the list. Mr. Hine said they could reference the document, as presented, and follow the recommendations listed for each set of minutes.

Mr. Dubreuil then stated that the minutes of December 7, 2017, February 22, 2018 and June 28, 2018 did not have clear recommendations listed but he felt that those minutes could also be released.

On a motion made by Mr. Hine and seconded by Mr. McAvoy, it was unanimously

VOTED: To release or continue to hold minutes based on the document list, but to also release the minutes of December 7, 2017, February 22, 2018 and June 28, 2018.

**Public Comment:**

There were no public comments.

**Manager's Report:**

Mr. Fitzgerald started by welcoming Ms. Awad back to the Board before continuing with the outage report.

**Outages:**

Mr. Fitzgerald stated that there were two outages last month. One outage, on Boynton Avenue, affected 39 customers for one hour due to an equipment failure. The second outage, on Brockway Lane, occurred after a tree fell on the wires. The outage affected 10 customers, for 3 hours, while the tree was removed and power was restored.

**Fibersonic Streaming & Device Center:**

Mr. Fitzgerald presented a PowerPoint presentation showing pictures of the new Fibersonic Streaming & Device Center which recently opened at SHELD. There are labeled wall decals, of a house, that show how the fiber will get into customers' homes in a standard residential install. There are also two televisions, which are hooked up to two different types of antennas, and use two different streaming options to view television with high speed internet. There are also routers, and other components, that customers can check out.

On Tuesday April 23, from 4:30-7:00, SHELD opened the room to customers who had expressed interest on the Fibersonic website. Over seventy customers came by to visit the room. Some of them were already cord cutters and others were interested in learning about cord cutting. SHELD had several employees available to answer questions. Customers are welcome to stop in. The room is open daily from 8:30-4:30 and our customer service representatives will answer questions. SHELD is planning on holding other events in the near future.

SHELD is continuing its construction phase of the fiber rollout and plans to start connecting residential customers in July. Business customers can call SHELD, if they are interested in high speed internet, and SHELD's fiber staff will respond right away. The plan is to conduct residential service the same way.

Employee Survey:

Mr. Fitzgerald began by stating that the Board had indicated they would like to see some of the strategic plan goal progress presented at the monthly meetings. A goal of the strategic plan is to tie strategic initiatives to what is happening at SHELD. One of the initiatives of the plan is Workforce, with a goal of developing and educating the employees to be better prepared to do their jobs. In March, SHELD conducted its first all employee survey. There had never been an employee survey done before at SHELD. Mr. Fitzgerald needed to gauge how everyone felt about their jobs and the company so he would have a starting point for development of the initiative.

The survey explored five benchmark categories: employee job duties/work conditions, supervisor performance, management performance, company satisfaction/dissatisfaction and company benefits. The questions were based on industry wide practices and compiled by Kim Mendoza.

Mr. Fitzgerald reviewed the five slides and the results in each category. The survey returned overwhelming positive views, in all categories, indicating high satisfaction and confidence from SHELD employees. The areas needing improvement were communication and team building. SHELD has initiated workforce training and will continue to focus training on improving the communication metric.

Mr. Hine asked how the survey was presented to the employees. Mr. Fitzgerald outlined the process used, which was to hand out paper forms to everyone at an all employee meeting in March. An electronic format was not an option, this time, as some of the operations department has just recently been set up with SHELD email addresses, as SHELD moves to an electronic work order system. Names were optional on the forms, but some people chose to put their names. Mr. Fitzgerald plans on conducting the survey on a yearly basis and expects to see improvements.

Mr. McAvoy commented that he liked the questions that were asked on the survey because it gets to the point of whether people are satisfied with their jobs. Mr. Dubreuil said the survey was very comprehensive and it was great to see the results of the survey. During the time when there wasn't a manager at SHELD, and Ms. Awad had to step in as interim manager, it was difficult to determine how things were being done at the department. Mr. Fitzgerald said, that when he was first hired, that it was Ms. Awad who directed him to establish procedures. He has since revised the personnel policy, put structure in place and started performance reviews; things that help develop accountability and boost morale.

Mr. Fitzgerald said they are also currently working on a customer satisfaction survey; which is another strategic initiative.

**Approval of 12/31/2018 Financials, presented March 28, 2019:**

Mr. Dubreuil stated that the Board had been approving the financials, when presented, and it was an oversight that they did not approve and accept the December 31, 2018 financials presented at the March 2019 meeting. Ms. Awad said she would abstain from voting again.

On a motion by Mr. Hine and seconded by Mr. Schenker, it was unanimously

VOTED: to approve the December 31, 2018 financial report as presented on March 28, 2019.

**Reimbursement to the Town:**

Mr. Fitzgerald stated that for the last three years, SHELD had annually reimbursed the Town \$175,000 for services provided by the Town. Mr. Dubreuil commented that SHELD had level funded the town for three years and nothing stays the same price over a three year period, costs increase. Mr. Fitzgerald had spoken to Mr. Sullivan, the Town Administrator, who would like to see an increase in SHELD's payment to \$200,000. Mr. Fitzgerald recommended paying \$180,000 this year.

After a brief discussion, it was decided to increase the payment to the Town from the \$175,000. Several Board members made suggestions as to how much to pay the Town. Mr. Hine asked if they could come up with a formula so they would not have to revisit the subject every year. Mr. McAvoy suggested a 3% increase. Mr. Schenker stated that he felt it should not be over the 2.5% that the town is limited to each year.

Mr. Hine said he has worn both hats as a Light Board Commissioner and a Town Selectman. SHELD is part of the community and needs to think of this as an investment in the town. Ms. Awad did not want to see an automatic yearly increase, which is what a fixed percentage per year would create. She would rather the Board review the reimbursement annually to determine reimbursement. After the discussion, the Board agreed on \$180,000 for this year and to review the amount annually.

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

VOTED: to set the annual reimbursement to the Town for fiscal 2020 at \$180,000.

**Other items that come to the attention of the Chair after the meeting is posted:**

Mr. Dubreuil asked that if any ratepayers had comments regarding the meetings being moved up to an earlier time, 6:00 PM (5:30 for this meeting); please let a Board member know.

Mr. Fitzgerald mentioned that there is a benefit concert at the high school from 2-4 PM on May 19<sup>th</sup>. The benefit is for the senior center and SHELD is a sponsor in exchange for promotional recognition of Fibersonic. Dan Kane will be performing and Mr. Fitzgerald has tickets if any Board member would like to attend.

Also, Mr. Fitzgerald said he is attending the MMWEC annual conference next week. Mr. McAvoy had expressed interest in joining him. If any other Board members would be interested in attending, they should let him know.

**Adjourn:**

On a motion by Mr. Hine and seconded by Mr. McAvoy, it was unanimously

VOTED: to adjourn

The open session ended at 6:11 P.M.



Anne Awad, Clerk

Approved: May 23, 2019

**EXHIBIT A**

List of Documents reviewed at the April 25, 2019 Municipal Light Board Meeting

1. Draft Open Session Minutes of the MLB March 28, 2019 meeting
2. List of Executive Session Meeting Minutes Not Released
3. Outages 4/22/2019 – YTD
4. Fibersonic Streaming & Device Center Presentation
5. Strategic Plan Goals Update “Workforce” Presentation