



**SOUTH HADLEY ELECTRIC LIGHT DEPARTMENT
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' NEW BUILDING SPECIAL MEETING
AT THE SENIOR CENTER SOUTH HADLEY, MA
SEPTEMBER 10, 2025, AT 6:00 P.M.**

Present for the Board: Chair John Hine, Vice Chair Paul Dobosh, Ron Coutu, Darren Hamilton
(attended remotely until 7PM) Absent: Tom Terry

Present for SHELD: General Manager Sean Fitzgerald, Director of Operations Adam St. Martin,
Financial Manager Michael Conchieri, Administrative Specialist Kim Mendoza, IT Manager David
Sullivan

Guest: Tom Doolittle, Skanska USA (OPM)

The special meeting was called to order at 6:00 P.M. by Chair Hine. He introduced the Board members on the panel, Mr. Fitzgerald, Mr. St. Martin and Tom Doolittle. Mr. Hine stated there would be a short presentation followed by questions from ratepayers.

A presentation was displayed that started with reasons why SHELD needs a new building: SHELD is an essential business, current facilities are in the 100-year flood zone, the current SHELD building, and the leased telecom building, are too small, the current SHELD building needs 6.5-8.5 million dollars of improvements. Photos of the 1936 flood showed the SHELD building and all of South Hadley Falls flooded. To date, SHELD has updated its spatial needs assessment, located property near Big Y (a map was displayed) having a purchase & sale agreement on the property, hired an Owners Project Manager firm and an Architect firm, and completed the phase I environmental site assessment. SHELD spent six years trying to locate property large enough to house the SHELD/Fiberspring business, all the employees, trucks and equipment, in one place. The approximate cost of the new building will be \$25 million plus an additional \$12 million in soft costs. The impact to ratepayers will be 2.3 cents per kWh, or \$16.27 on an average 700 kWh bill for the first 10 years, then decreasing as the debt service is paid down. Continued expansion of Fiberspring could contribute to lowering the rate increase. A rate chart listed electric utilities in the State, including investor-owned utilities. Even with the rate increase, SHELD would still have rates below the State average. There are many costs, in addition to upgrading 85 Main street, that will be associated with not building and moving to a new location. The SHELD Board is committed to providing reliable electrical service to the residents of South Hadley at the lowest possible cost, now and into the future. Delaying investment will further increase cost of building. Investing in the future will ensure SHELD's long-term stability.

The floor was opened to ratepayer questions. While customers appreciated SHELD and its service, ratepayers had concerns about SHELD's plan for a new building. The primary concerns were:

- Traffic on Old Lyman Road from SHELD vehicles
- The cost of the new building
- An increase in electric bills
- The future increase in the cost of electricity

- The timing is bad for South Hadley
- The current and future state of South Hadley town finances
- Taxpayers should be able to vote to approve, not just the Board
- Use of an existing building in town
- The loss of tax base on the property
- The future use of the 85 Main Street property
- Public access to the building plans
- SHELD should help the Town financially
- Keep rates low
- Discounts for seniors, veterans, or people heating with electric

John Hine, Paul Dobosh, SHELD Management, and OPM addressed all the concerns of the ratepayers, explaining the project needs, the plan details, and reviewing timelines. Mr. Coutu agreed with residents who don't think this is the time to spend that amount of money on a new building. He would like the town to be able to vote on it too but that's not the way the rules are set up for SHELD to operate, and fiber growth may or may not be there in 20 years to help pay for the building.

Mr. Hine addressed his past and present board positions on the new building, and his support of the current new building needs. Mr. Hine reiterated that the Board is committed to providing low-cost reliable power and that we have increasing risks of floods and the building is not adequate for many reasons. Mr. Dobosh said that the current plan is similar to the plan from 10 years ago, but the cost of all building projects has increased significantly in the last 10 years. The architect firm was chosen from those who replied to the RFQ, and we are waiting to see if they can reduce the cost.

Mr. Fitzgerald said the new architect firm, Tecton, has considerable experience building in Massachusetts and for municipalities. They are reviewing the conceptual plans with value engineering, looking for ways to cut costs and adding efficiency. Skanska, the OPM, is managing the whole project and has municipal and utility building experience also. The timeline for the project is to have 90% plans completed to submit to the planning Board for approval and to have a Board vote in February to move forward with financing. Groundbreaking would hopefully happen by the end of 2026.

Adjourn:

On a motion by Mr. Dobosh, seconded by Mr. Coutu it was unanimously VOTED: To adjourn.

The open session ended at 8:00 P.M.

Signed by:

Darren Hamilton

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Darren Hamilton, Light Board Clerk

Approved: September 25, 2025

EXHIBIT A

List of Documents reviewed September 10, 2025, Municipal Light Board Meeting

1. New Administrative & Operations Building Presentation