



**SOUTH HADLEY ELECTRIC LIGHT DEPARTMENT
KNOW YOUR TOWN - SHELD NEW BUILDING FORUM
AT THE LIBRARY, SOUTH HADLEY, MA
MARCH 12, 2026, AT 6:00 P.M.**

Present for the Board: Chair John Hine, Vice Chair Paul Dobosh, Tom Terry

Present for SHELD: General Manager Sean Fitzgerald, Director of Operations Adam St. Martin, Financial Manager Michael Conchieri,

Know Your Town Host: Martha Terry
Moderator: Marc Desrosiers

Mrs. Terry gave background information on the new SHELD Building Forum. Mr. Desrosiers introduced members on the panel: General Manager Sean Fitzgerald, Light Board Chairman John Hine, and Light Board Vice Chair Paul Dobosh. Chair Hine called the MLB meeting to order at 6:07 P.M, as there was a quorum of the Light Board Commissioners present. Mr. Hine thanked Know Your Town and stated the panel would answer four questions during their presentation. Why does SHELD need a new headquarters? What were their options? What is the impact on ratepayers? Why now?

Electric reliability is SHELD's #1 priority, now and into the future. SHELD is an essential business. Current facilities, at 85 Main Street and leased space (at \$90k/year) on New Ludlow Rd for fiber, are too small. The Main street location needs \$6.5-8.5 million dollars of improvements and is in the 100-year flood zone.

Options considered were to renovate Main Street while continuing to lease space for fiber, purchase or lease an existing building in town, or build new. SHELD investigated several parcels of land and several existing buildings, but there were reasons none were suitable. A third party did a feasibility study on the building on Gaylord Street and to bring it up to essential business building code would cost more than building new on Willimansett Street.

The impact of the new building on ratepayers will be .02228 cents per kWh based on a monthly average 700 kWh bill, or \$15.60/month for the first 10 years, then as the balance decreases on the debt service, the interest on the monthly payment would decrease, thus decreasing the cost to ratepayers. Continued expansion of Fiberspring could also contribute to lowering the cost to ratepayers. In comparing rates of all electric utilities in the State, including investor-owned utilities, SHELD would still have rates below the State average.

SHELD has been looking for property and planning for a new building for several years. In 2012, the Light Board attempted to build a similar building for \$12 million. That building now costs \$37 million and will continue to increase in cost over time. Mr. Hine listed the steps that have been completed and those on the schedule to move forward with the plan. Delaying investment will further increase cost of building. Investing in the future will ensure SHELD's long-term stability over the next 75-100 years.

The floor was opened to ratepayer questions/comments. Many customers said they appreciated SHELd, its service, and low rates. Ratepayers had concerns about SHELd's plan for a new building and the relationship between SHELd and the Town. The primary concerns were:

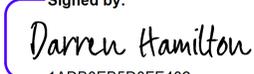
- The timing is bad for South Hadley because of the current and future state of South Hadley town finances
- An increase in electric bills will be especially hard for seniors on top of other living expense increases
- Understanding the relationship between SHELd and the Town
 - SHELd pays all employees' salaries, health benefits, and retirement costs
 - SHELd reimburses the Town for services the town employees supply to SHELd
 - The Light Board oversees the operation of SHELd, and the General Manager is responsible for the daily operations
- Traffic concerns from SHELd vehicles
 - Traffic study to be filed and discussed at the Planning Board meeting
 - Minimal large truck traffic AM & PM
- Fiberspring expansion questions/comments
 - Condos still don't have Fiberspring
- Non-binding ballot vote implications
- The future use of the 85 Main Street property
- Impact of a flood before moving to a new facility
- Several ratepayers spoke in favor of the new building

Mr. Hine said the Board is sympathetic to the increase in rates along with the other increases facing everyone in Town. Board members are also experiencing the same increases. Fiberspring price has not increased in South Hadley since it started 5 years ago. In the future Fiberspring revenues, as they continue to grow, will be able to offset some expenses, which could have a positive impact on electric rates.

Adjourn:

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

The open session ended at 7:48 P.M.

Signed by:

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Darren Hamilton, Light Board Clerk

Approved: March 26, 2026

EXHIBIT A

List of Documents reviewed March 12, 2026, Know Your Town - Municipal Light Board Meeting

1. Know Your Town – New Headquarters Project PowerPoint