

ELECTRIC SUBCOMMITTEE
Meeting of Wednesday, May 13, 2020
Virtual/Zoom Meeting
7:00PM

A meeting of the Electric Subcommittee was held on May 13, 2020 at 7:00pm. It was a virtual/Zoom meeting format due to the current COVID-19 pandemic.

With a quorum in virtual attendance, Mr. Mootafian called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Subcommittee Members present: Nishan Mootafian, James Engel, Whitney Hatch, Michael Schaaf, Jon Blair, Dylan Lewellyn

Subcommittee Members not present: Ed Rauscher, Bill Craft

Recording Secretary: Kathleen Reed

Abbreviations used: ELD, Electric Light Department; RCS, Residential Conservation Services; MAP, Municipal Action Plan

I. Citizens' Queries

There were no citizens' queries.

II. Approval of Minutes – April 2020

Mr. Engel requested several minor revisions be made to the April 2020 draft minutes. The revisions have been made as requested. After motion made by Mr. Engel and seconded by Mr. Hatch, it was

***Voted: To approve the minutes of April 2020 with the revisions incorporated.
The motion carried unanimously.***

III. Sustainability Program Review

a. Sustainability Charter, Sustainability Fund

Mr. Blair noted that the strategic plan was met with positive feedback from the Commissioners and the Finance Committee. The plan is operationally geared and aligns the accomplishments and the objectives with the strategic goals. It was agreed that significant strides have been made to absorb the culture of sustainability into the core of the ELD initiatives.

Mr. Blair presented the sustainability charter alongside the strategic goals for a line-by-line comparison, and redundancy in the charter and the strategic plan were noted.

Mr. Blair proposed that consideration be given to the elimination of the sustainability charter and fund and suggested the migration of the sustainability fund out of the PPFA and into the operating budget as a line item expense. Mr. Blair acknowledged the accounting complexities involved in dissolving the fund and suggested that the subcommittee continue with the current fund structure for FY 21 and proposed that the subcommittee further explore incorporating the fund as a line item expense during the strategic planning and budget development activities for FY22.

Mr. Engel agreed that the department has evolved into a sustainability-driven team. He questioned how the rebate programs and the associated quantifiable dollars might be

managed in Mr. Blair's proposal given that the FY21 goals do not address the rebate programs. Mr. Blair noted that the rebate structures and Mr. Lewellyn's analyses over the years have indicated that a significant portion of those dollars is geared toward the solar rebate. Mr. Blair stated that a compliance structure would be formalized for the residential conservation component, and the RCS would be carved out as a subsector of conservation rebates and incentives. This activity would align with the fact that the State is considering them separately as well.

Mr. Hatch proposed that consideration be given to revising the Sustainability Charter into a more focused, tailored document that would outline long-term aspirational goals. He outlined the critical components of the Sustainability Charter that require intentional focus and goal setting along with definitive target timeframes for completion as:

- Demand Management
- Non-Emitting Energy Supply
- Efficiency in Conservation

There was robust discussion, and the group agreed with the three categories outlined above. Mr. Schaaf agreed that it is prudent to transition from a reactive to a proactive management of the sustainability fund and inquired about the financial implications. Mr. Engel noted that a rate increase was approved by the Commissioners specifically to fund the Sustainability Fund and that this prior action would need to be reconciled

Mr. Mootafian suggested that perhaps eliminating the charter document could result in a confusing optics if its contents are incorporated into a larger document. It was suggested that including the sustainability expenditures into the Annual Report could serve as an easy reference as to how the funds are directed toward the strategic initiatives.

The following action items were agreed upon without objection:

Action: Mr. Hatch will work with Mr. Blair and Mr. Lewellyn to draft a separate and focused document focusing specifically on Demand Management, Non-Emitting Energy Supply, and Efficiency in Conservation for future review and discussion by subcommittee.

Action: Mr. Blair will work with Mr. Leczynski to map out the mechanics of transitioning the fund to a line item for future consideration

b. MA DOER's Residential Conservation Services (RCS) & Municipal Action Plan (MAP)

The State mandates that a Municipal Action Plan (MAP) be developed with one-quarter of one percent of the operating budget (approximately \$43,000) that is allocated to residential conservation initiatives. Given the current pandemic crisis, the May 1, 2020 MAP report deadline has been extended to June 15, 2020. The MAP will provide the ELD with a compliance structure that will support strategic goal #8: To assist and encourage customers to conserve power as a way of lowering emissions and controlling their electric costs. Mr. Blair intends to expand the RCS program with a focus on residential, low income programs that go beyond the single-family home (multi-family units, condo developments, etc.). When the MAP draft is received, it will be presented to the subcommittee for the review.

Action: At the request of Mr. Hatch, Mr. Blair will mail the MAP templates to the subcommittee for detailed review.

Mr. Blair reported that approval has been given to fund the hiring of a Sustainability Technician. Updates will be forthcoming.

Mr. Schaaf described a gap between identification of residential improvements and the undertaking of such improvements. He suggested that this is an area where more aggressive action is warranted in the future as resource conservation is the most effective way to limit gas emissions.

c. Review of Draft Greenhouse Gas Inventory Report (1990-2018)

Mr. Blair described this first draft report as a significant milestone and that the final report will be important to disseminate to the ELD and its customers. Mr. Lewellyn noted that the comprehensive report is a narrative of the electricity purchases over the past 30 years. He asked the subcommittee to review the document and make recommendations and suggestions for amendment to the draft. When the report is finalized, it will be paired with the portfolio goals discussion and will be used as a tool to quantify future goals. It was also discussed that it is important to know the carbon content of the energy that is purchased. Mr. Lewellyn was complimented for his efforts in development of this comprehensive report.

Action: Mr. Blair will send out printed copies to each member of the Committee for careful review prior to the June 2020 meeting, if possible.

Action: Mr. Hatch will review the Roadmap Bill legislation and will update the subcommittee on any reference to the number of years that must be included in the Greenhouse Gas Inventory Report and present his findings to the subcommittee.

Action: Mr. Lewellyn will, as requested, include the annual portion of the electric supply by fuel type in the supply mix grid on page 11 of the draft.

IV. Manager's Update

a. COVID-19 Response

Mr. Blair reported that he has been working closely with the Town and the Health Agent during this period of pandemic operational changes and adjustments. The management team has defined the guidelines for re-opening which is scheduled to begin on May 18, 2020. The transition will be managed with policy modifications, hygiene practices, mask use, and social distancing to mitigate the risk of illness to personnel and customers. The clerks will return to a regular work schedule as well on May 18, 2020. However, the doors will remain closed to the public until June 1, 2020 so that hardware can be installed to protect the staff and the customers, many of whom fall into a high-risk category. Efforts are underway to encourage customers to convert to contactless payments via online transactions or mail-in payments. Upgrades to the building will be made such as installing switchless lighting fixtures with motion sensors and installing low flow automatic toilet valves and faucets that build on the margin towards safety as well as towards conservation. The emergency management component has been reviewed and updated in order to keep business functions operational in the event future, unplanned setbacks.

b. Power Plant Compliance Update

Mr. Blair reported that the catalysts that were installed 5 years ago have been tested as called for in the 5-year compliance plan. Three of the catalysts failed during this first cycle.

Two of the three filters will be rebuilt, and the third will need to be manufactured. The cost of the replacement catalyst is approximately \$10,000. The two catalysts under warranty will be returned to Oklahoma, and the cost to the ELD will be for freight and shipping expenses. The factors that may have contributed to the early failure are likely the orientation of installation and the temperature at which they are maintained. The catalysts will be re-tested during the Memorial Day week, and the results will be reported to the Mass DEP and EPA for their consideration within the required 60-day testing window.

An update was provided on the groundwater issue. Mr. Blair is working with a consultant to develop a plan for installation of a multi-stage ion exchange filtration system. The system will use cartridge filters to remove the matter in groundwater to ensure that the discharge does not result in harm to the surrounding waterways.

Mr. Blair reported that a hazardous building material specialist tested the gaskets and other components of the two retired engines (3 and 4) as well as in the old gas house located in front of the power plant. Six of the 20 samples retrieved came back positive for asbestos. Also identified have been probable PCBs in some of the antiquated switch gear. The air quality and groundwater compliance issues will take first priority followed by issues associated with hazardous building materials.

V. Next Meeting

The next meeting of the subcommittee will be held on June 10, 2020. Items on that meeting agenda will include rebates and incentives.

VI. Other Business

Mr. Schaaf reported that the ELD report presented last evening to the Finance Committee was well received. Mr. Blair and Mr. Lewellyn were complimented for their efforts in that regard.

Mr. Schaaf requested that the anticipated consultant report regarding the performance of the sustainability fund be added as a future agenda item.

Action: Mr. Lewellyn will secure the completed report and deliver it to the subcommittee in June 2020.

There being no further business, there was a motion made by Mr. Engel, and seconded by Mr. Hatch, to adjourn the meeting. It was

Voted: To adjourn the meeting of the subcommittee at 9:04 pm. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen Reed, Recording Secretary