

ELECTRIC LIGHT SUBCOMMITTEE
Meeting of Wednesday, June 10, 2020
Virtual/Zoom Meeting
7:00PM

A meeting of the Electric Subcommittee was held on June 10, 2020 at 4:02 pm.

With a quorum in virtual attendance, Mr. Engel called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

Subcommittee Members present: James Engel, Whitney Hatch, Michael Schaaf, Jon Blair, Dylan Lewellyn, Jeff Civitarese

Subcommittee Members not present: Nishan Mootafian, Edward Rauscher, William Craft

Guests: Ann Reynolds, Sarah Simons

Recording Secretary: Kathleen Reed

Abbreviations used: ELD, Electric Light Department; MMWEC, Massachusetts Municipal Wholesale Electric Company; RCS, Residential Conservation Services; DG, Distributed Generation Policy; PPA, Power Purchase Agreement; DEP, Department of Environmental Protection

I. Citizens' Queries

Ann Reynolds of 16 Ryan Avenue, Ipswich expressed her desire to have the ELD, along with public and private energy entities, develop and participate in a public workshop dealing with climate change and energy resources to be scheduled in the Fall 2020. She suggested the following topics: solar, wind, nuclear, and passive solar. She noted that she would be happy to tape the forum as well as present it on YouTube for those unable to attend to be able to benefit from the information. Mr. Engel suggested that Mr. Craft be the electric light subcommittee representative to the group as the concept is further developed. Mr. Blair expressed willingness to discuss the matter at a future date with Ms. Reynolds.

II. Approval of Minutes – May 2020

It was noted that there was an error in Mr. Schaaf's name in the May 2020 minutes and that has been corrected. On the last page, second paragraph, "iron" has been changed to "ion" as requested by Mr. Engel. Mr. Schaaf made a motion to approve the minutes,

Voted: To approve the minutes of May 2020 with the above-referenced revisions incorporated. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Blair asked the electric light subcommittee if the current minutes format is satisfactory to the Committee. It was agreed that it is important to record those who are not in attendance. Otherwise, the format is satisfactory.

III. Greenhouse Gas Inventory Report

Mr. Blair asked whether the electric light subcommittee members prefer to review the Greenhouse Gas Inventory Report and provide feedback within the next ten days or if the preference of the group is to take another month and add this report review as agenda item on the July 2020 meeting agenda. Several initial comments were presented. Mr. Engel suggested that the content of Section 5 be included in the beginning of the report followed by the specific details, perhaps an Executive Summary format that included the charts. Mr. Engel also noted that Wind I

and Wind II were not accurately represented, and Mr. Lewellyn noted that this has been corrected by the vendor. In addition, he suggested that Figure 4, Portion of Electricity Supply, needs rework as it doesn't describe the "unknowns", and there is no indicator as to whether they are fossil or not. He also questioned why the Project Team was on the second page.

Mr. Schaaf questioned how Figure 3 and Figure 4 would be reconciled given the degree of "unknowns" in the report. Mr. Lewellyn agreed and he has already requested that the vendor provide clarification on the report. He indicated that "unknown" is actually grid power that doesn't have a specified source. Mr. Lewellyn noted that there was a data error in the report; namely, double counting in the earlier years.

The consultant has been asked to provide a historical breakdown of the resource mix and then apply the same ratios by carbon intensity of resources. On Figure 3, Annual Emitting vs. Non-Emitting Portions of Electric Energy, it was noted that there is perhaps a discrepancy in the report vs. information reported to the public. The importance of consistency and transparency was discussed and agreed upon. An assumption that the "unknown" is emitting in the report may be an area that needs to be addressed. Mr. Hatch stated that the role of 1990 data might not carry significant weight as a baseline. He agreed that incorporating the discussed changes was important, and that Figures 1, 2, and 4 are the key figures and that perhaps Figure 3 was not critical to the next steps in the development of a strategy to further reduce the greenhouse burden.

Action: Mr. Lewellyn will forward revised graphs to the electric light subcommittee, including Figure 4 with the grid mix applied, and requested that feedback and any requests for revision(s) be forwarded to him and Mr. Blair on or before June 30, 2020.

Action: Mr. Blair and Mr. Lewellyn will plan on receiving additional input from the electric light subcommittee and will prepare a final draft for presentation and discussion regarding the use of this new benchmarking tool.

IV. Rebates and Incentives

The IELD Municipal Action Plan 2020 was included in the packet, and Mr. Lewellyn provided a comprehensive website tour of the sites that customers encounter when they are applying for home energy rebates/incentives. The Cool Homes Rebate (air source heat pumps, ductless mini split heat pump) has seen the most growth in the past several years. The Connected Homes Program pilot was reviewed. This is a new program in which a customer agrees to allow their light department to make brief, limited adjustments during peak hours. The ELD currently subscribes to the entire portfolio offered by MMWEC; however, the impact on driving change has been minimal.

Mr. Blair introduced Sarah Simon, 9 Farley Avenue, Ipswich, who was in attendance and was brought on last Fall as a consultant to assist with providing an objective, outside look at the rebate program offered to Ipswich customers. The Rebates & Incentives summary was reviewed along with the proposed rebate process. In summary, it was reported the Ipswich ELD's rebate and incentive offerings lack the flexibility and vision to adequately target modern goals. In addition and based on several years of feedback from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, community groups, and consultants, the report stated that a change in the current offerings is warranted. It is her opinion that the first step toward energy efficiency in homes and businesses is a free energy assessment/audit that actually teaches customers how to conserve by uncovering potential opportunities to save energy. The challenge for the RCS efficiency programs going forward is to provide the right incentives for customers and to reach all the other customers who need support. There was discussion that audits may point the way to energy savings but are not well correlated

to the actual implementation of conservation and efficiency initiatives. Investments in efficiency improvements should be effective in reducing energy needs and emissions, saving customers money over the long run, and maintaining a high level of customer satisfaction. Flexibility in the program would be an important component to allow for maximum inclusion, impact, and growth.

The ELD is currently committed to HELPS and GO program through end of calendar year 2020. Mr. Blair suggested that a new rebates/incentive program be developed for consideration and voted on in the Fall 2020. At that point MMWEC would be notified which of their conservation offerings will be utilized effective January 2021.

Concern was expressed that the request for an audit in order to receive a rebate may be a deterrent for some. There was discussion on how to incentivize a customer to submit to the audit and drive change that results in actual improvements. Marketing would also be an important factor. It was suggested that a preferred vendor list be developed that could be included with the audits as a way to incentivize vendors. The need to address any potential privacy issues was raised. Mr. Hatch suggested that the approach be one of a partnership with the customer in which the customer would be asked to sign a release for any sharing of information.

At the end of the discussion, the electric light subcommittee members expressed full support for proceeding with the audit project as it directly supports Strategic Goal #8 and is likely to intersect with other goals as well.

Ms. Simon thanked those present for the constructive feedback. She thanked Mr. Blair and Mr. Lewellyn for their cooperation and support. The proposed rebate process was reviewed. It was agreed that significant strategic focus would be required in order to achieve goals with regard to carbon intensity, efficiency, conservation, and alternative energy. Mr. Hatch suggested that we develop a clear, description of programs offered, so that it is easy to choose the right program based on the different customer segments. Other considerations that would require thorough review were discussed: rebate value, audit flexibility, development of preferred vendor relationships, and potential financing options. Comprehensive energy audits would clearly demonstrate the outcomes of dollars spent and corresponding benefits that could be tied directly to carbon savings. The audit tool proposed is robust and allows for flexibility and an objective way to measure incentives for different customer segments.

Action: It was agreed that Ms. Simon would provide a final draft of the Rebates and Incentives Report to the ELECTRIC LIGHT SUBCOMMITTEE in October 2020.

Mr. Blair asked for any comments or feedback regarding the recent communication regarding the Symes Associates project, Farm Village on Linebrook Road. In that communication, there were concerns expressed about the marketability of eliminating the use of propane in new construction. It was estimated by the project manager that an update over the typical HVAC propane fired system would be approximately \$14,000 per unit. Mr. Engel suggested that perhaps the ELECTRIC LIGHT SUBCOMMITTEE should require a carbon footprint goals from the Planning Board for development projects as a method to “earn” a subsidy. Mr. Schaaf indicated that there will be analysis presented at the Planning Board meeting on June 12, 2020 with regarding the tradeoff both in capital upfront and operating costs for such upgrades.

V. Review Distributed Generation (DG) Policy

Mr. Blair provided an overview of the current Distributed Generation Policy and asked whether or not there was interest in putting effort toward refining the current policy with regard to 1) PPA rates and prescriptive calculation, 2) exploration of roof leases for ELD-owned solar arrays to

open new market segment, and 3) billable costs for infrastructure related to “oversized” DG resources (e.g. production meters, larger transformers, etc.). Mr. Blair asked if the subcommittee would endorse the idea of crafting the definition of categories with objective metrics using environmental, engineering, and economic factors to define categories. Mr. Hatch would like to review the thresholds in the current policy to see if there is an opportunity to assess the caps/credits to determine if they are still relevant. Mr. Blair will review challenges and legal implications of community solar efforts. It was noted that currently there is nowhere to put an array. It was agreed that overbuilds should be included in the policy in some form as there are systems that will require updated transformers and conductors and some engineering.

Action: As agreed upon by the electric light subcommittee, Mr. Blair, in collaboration with Mr. Schaaf and Mr. Hatch, will draft proposed changes to the Distributed Generation Policy for future consideration by the electric light subcommittee.

VI Manager’s Updates

COVID-19 Response

The ELD is open to the public and no cash policy remains in place currently. Efficiency in business operations has been noted. The no cash policy is not yet permanent and will be reviewed every 30 days. Customers seem to be adapting well to the changes.

Power Plant Compliance Update

Stack testing was redone on the two refurbished units and the one new unit. The testing was successful and will be submitted to the DEP.

Groundwater Treatment System Update

The ELD has moved past system design and has begun the procurement for a two-phase ion exchange treatment system and new well water separator. The associated project expense is approximately \$75,000. The expense of materials is approximately one-third of the total cost. The annual operating cost is \$5,000.

VI. New Business

Mr. Schaaf requested an update on Barefoot Maine project. Mr. Blair attended a MMWEC Board meeting held several weeks ago. At that meeting, MMWEC was granted approval to build a 3MW solar farm on their facility in Ludlow. In addition, the ELD was able to secure 1 MW at this point of time.

Mr. Schaaf requested an update on the school roof project. Mr. Blair offered, in an exchange of emails with Mary Hopping, to fund the structural engineering study. However, the Town Manager and Facilities Director have confirmed that they are funding the project and will manage the project in its entirety.

The Town Farm Road update was provided by Mr. Blair. The wind turbine owners have concluded the arbitration proceedings and are awaiting that determination. The exchange of information has been challenging. Mr. Blair continues to request routine status updates with the owner/operators. A friendly lawsuit has not been ruled out.

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

Voted: To adjourn the meeting of the electric light subcommittee at 10:26 pm. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen Reed, Recording Secretary