

Middleton Electric Light Commission
Meeting Minutes
March 27, 2024

The following individuals were in attendance:

Frank Twiss, Chairman
Chuck Clinch
Jim Kelley
Tim Houten
Jim Carbone

Michael Cloutier, Manager

Linemen Representative Chuckie Clinch

Chairman Twiss called the meeting to order at 5:02PM.

Approval of Agenda:

Motion:

Tim Houten motioned to approve the agenda as written. Jim Kelley seconded the motion. Motioned carried 5-0.

Approval of Minutes:

Motion:

Jim Kelley motioned to approve the minutes of February 21, 2024, as written. Chuck Clinch seconded the motion. Motion carried 4-0.

Financials:

There is no Balance Sheet or Income Statement available, as they are still being completed. Our cash is good, and the interest income was good in February, so there are really no concerns.

Power Supply indicates that we purchased just under 200K more KWH than we did in 2023. We also paid less money for it. We bought about the same amount in the spot market as we did in January 2023. We are starting to receive power from NextEra Seabrook. This should represent about 8% to 9% of our power.

Non-Union Personnel Negotiations:

A few meetings have been held with the crew, and they presented a proposal to Mr. Cloutier a while back. After doing research, doing comp raises with local departments and doing comp raises within the Town, Mr. Cloutier came up with a proposal. The proposal is for 6.5% in 2024, 4.5% in 2025 and 3.5% in 2026. Also proposed is a new Longevity Chart as follows:

Service	Current	Proposed
5 years	\$500	\$1,000
10 years	\$600	\$1,500
15 years	\$700	\$2,000
20 years	\$800	\$2,500
25 years	\$900	\$3,000

Additional proposals are:

Sunday and Holiday – Double Time applied to minimum 4-hour callout.

Emergency Storm Work Premium shall be one- and one-half times the employee’s regular straight time rate portal to portal.

Office personnel annual stipend for use of personal vehicle from \$500 to \$650.

Manager’s Report:

There have been two outages since our last meeting. On February 28, 2024, we had a fuse blow on Pine Avenue, and power was back on Cherry Street within an hour. On February 29, 2024, we had a tree pull the service down at 15 Mill Street and another service across the street came off. The power was restored. On Sunday, March 25, 2024, we had a mutual aid call for Kennebunk Power and Light

Department in Maine. Bryan and Brendan went up. They were back on Tuesday around 2 PM. Mr. Cloutier received good reports on the work they had done.

The new bucket truck from Kiley was received. The men like it. It had to go back because of a hydraulic leak, it is now back in service. The fleet is now updated, the next purchase should be a digger, but that is about four years out.

The architect should have the first set of plans for the building update in the next few weeks.

We are working on the generator for the Town Complex. Mr. Cloutier went to the Building Committee meeting to reintroduce MELD's proposal to install a generator big enough to pick up the whole complex. We would also use it as a peak shaving load reducer. The Committee was okay with the proposal, if the Select Board was okay with it. The next night Mr. Cloutier and Chairman Twiss went to the Select Board meeting and gave them the same proposal. Our proposal will save them about \$400K off of their budget. In addition, we are also chasing down some grants for resiliency. During an outage, we could energize the entire Town Complex with full power by creating a "small island". If it is a long duration outage, such as a National Grid transmission issue, we would create a "big island" and energize portions of South Main Street. This would be done by opening some switches on South Main Street, Logbridge Road, and River Street. We can also have the potential to unlock the solar power in the batteries. If the outage is during the day, we can have more capacity because the solar panels will be on. These are the ideas for the grant we are working on. The Town also wants us to pledge 5% of what we save from shaving the peak to go towards the open space at the complex. Natural gas will run the generators. The generators will cost just north of \$3mil, all the work should be under \$4mil, depending on the cost of the natural gas installation. With these numbers, we are looking at a payback of 8 to 10 years. If this proposal is accepted, the Town Hall and Senior Center will also be able to be used as an emergency shelter.

Ryan is still home recovering. Looks like it may be at least another month. His fellow employees are donating their sick time to him when he depletes his time.

Dave Ogden is working 15 to 20 hours per week. When the weather gets better, he will restart installing meters.

Mr. Cloutier needs to know if anyone will be attending the MEAM meeting.

Next meeting: April 24, 2024.

Chuck Clinch left the meeting, so the Commissioners can discuss the proposed employee increases.

Proposed Employee Raises and Other Increases:

The longevity compensation is proposed to increase.

For the Emergency Storm Work Premium, the crew requested 1.66 times their wage portal to portal. Presently, they get time and a half for hours worked and straight time for their rest period. Mr. Cloutier offered them time and half for when the crew leaves the MELD facility until they return (portal to portal). The office personnel get an annual stipend for personal use of their vehicles for MELD business. Mr. Cloutier proposes this be increased to \$650 annually.

The discussion was moved to the proposed crew increases. It was asked what a First-Class Lineman top step is now and what the amount would be with proposed increase. Currently, the top step is \$58.22 and with the proposed increase it would be \$62.00. This would put MELD in second place in the State for compensation. Mr. Cloutier was asked what research he had done to justify the proposed increases. He responded that a few other departments within the municipal departments were as follows: Rowley is giving 9%, 4% and 4 1/2% Groveland is giving 9%, 4 1/2% and 4%

It was also discussed that we need to be competitive for the retention of our crew. A year ago, we lost two trained linemen to Reading Light due to their higher wage offer and less expensive health care. Also, the MELD crew is proficient in hot sticking, and they work on 23KV. Many of the other municipals do not have these capabilities and in turn have to hire private contractors. This adds to their cost of operations. It was then asked what the wage percentages were last time. Mr. Cloutier said they were 3%, 3% and 3%. Last year the employees were awarded an additional 3% adjustment. It was also brought up how inflation has increased. So, with the 6%, they are really only getting a cost-

of-living increase. The Town is also giving larger raises than in the past. Another suggestion was made that we lower the raise percentage and give a lump sum amount each year. This way the hourly wage would be less, but the total amount calculated would be about the same. It was also mentioned that the Town is increasing their contribution share of the health insurance cost. Chairman Twiss then asked what the Commissioners would like to propose. After a short discussion, it was agreed that the offer would be 6% in 2024, 4% in 2025 and 4% in 2026. All other items in the proposal were approved as presented. Chuckie Clinch was presented with the agreed offer to bring back to the crew. Chuckie voiced that he felt the offer was reasonable, and he would present it to the crew.

Tim Houten motioned to adjourn at 6:05PM. Jim Kelley seconded motion.
Motion carried 4-0

Respectfully submitted,

James Carbone
Clerk