

Middleton Electric Light Commission

Meeting Minutes

September 18, 2024

The following individuals were in attendance:

Frank Twiss, Chairman

Chuck Clinch

Jim Kelley

Tim Houten

Jim Carbone

Michael Cloutier, Manager

Chairman Twiss called the meeting to order at 5:10PM.

***Approval of Agenda:***

**Motion:**

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

***Approval of the Minutes:***

**Motion:**

**Chuck Clinch motioned to approve the minutes of May 29, 2024, as written. Jim Kelley seconded the motion. Motion carried 4-0.**

***Financials:***

Overall, the average price for power is healthy except for last month, which was up as we bought a lot from the spot market. We bought 11 million KWH because it was so hot. There were also problems with Stonybrook, as they were not able to start up their intermediate because it takes three hours to bring it up online. They were charged a penalty referred to as a pay for performance event. The cost was over \$5K per MWH. We are currently looking at perhaps divesting

ourselves from the Stonybrook intermediate project. We only own a 3-mega-watt piece of that project out of a 330-megawatt plant. This may change our portfolio a little bit. It is not a huge part of our portfolio, last year we bought only ½% of our energy from Stonybrook. We have our heat rate contract through the end of the year, and we are now looking for heat contracts for 2025.

The financial numbers are good, and operationally we are doing well. In July, there was a big charge for Employee Pensions & Benefits. This is when we get our assessment for the retirement benefits. We are still above our actuarial net positive for OPEB. We are healthy in our cash accounts.

***Audit:***

The audit has been finalized. There were no surprises or deficiencies. They did give Cheryl some additional journal entries. One thing they were watching, and we are trying to do a better job at, is the inventory count. They are comfortable with what we have done, but it could be better.

***MOU for Generator at Municipal Facilities Site:***

Justin Sultzbach sent a copy of the agreement between the Town of Middleton and the Middleton Electric Light Department. A copy is included in the Commissioners' packets. It is pending legal approval. Basically, it allows MELD to have the generator on the site, and who is responsible for certain payments. We will donate 5% of our savings to the Town. The way transmission is trending we could save between \$400K-\$500K annually, which would be a good donation to the Town to maintain the open space. Deidre said the Commissioners should sign the MOU when received.

***MELD Building Renovation/Addition Project:***

On July 17, 2024, the architect presented a proposal for the project. The price was way over what was expected at \$6 million. Mr. Cloutier stated there was no way we would pay that amount. The canopy alone was \$1 million. Steel is very expensive; the prevailing wage laws and Massachusetts procurement laws all add to the bottom line. After a discussion with the architect, we came to a design that keeps all three bathrooms, maximizes the size of the linemen's room with a shower, a space for the ice machine, and a slop sink. We will do away with the additional bay and canopy. We are still looking into putting a prefab steel, heated building out back at around \$500 sq. ft. We are trying to

maximize the size. If the building is under 7,500 sq. ft., it does not have to be sprinkled. If we needed a sprinkler system, we would need to sprinkle the entire building, and we would also need a fire pump. Basically, we are looking for a less expensive project but with value. We do have the funds, so we will not have to borrow.

***Manager's Report:***

The generator project is moving along very well. We are working with the Building Committee and found a location directly behind the public safety building. We are also working with National Grid to get the natural gas service in there, we won't be able to do it before the binder gets in, but hopefully before the finish gets in. A sound study was completed, and the generator will be in compliance with MA DEP policy. The noise policy allows for 10 decibels above the ambient. A sound study was done over the weekend and the lowest they got at the site was 39 decibels. That would allow up to 49 decibels to impact any abutting sites. The study showed that it was 47 decibels at Lewis Drive. We have not ordered the generator yet as we are waiting to receive the Memorandum of Understanding from the Town. Once this is received, we will issue a purchase order.

NEPPA Conference was a big success. It was well attended and presented many insightful presentations. The highlight, for us, at the awards ceremony was when Commissioner Chuck Clinch was awarded the Commissioner Service Award for 35 years of service to MELD. Mr. Cloutier congratulated and presented Chuck with the award as he was unable to attend the ceremony.

GML in Groveland is accepting customers for truck and equipment repairs. GML has installed truck lifts at the facility. Jonathan is doing a great job and is looking into getting more qualifying professional certifications. He is very conscientious and has confirmed that he is very happy with this job.

David Burch is doing our tree work and is currently performing tree work for Groveland. Marblehead is going to start to use him. There is also potential for work in Rowley. He has been very busy. GML presently has two trucks and may be considering getting a third truck due to the demand for service.

GML will also be doing rubber glove testing in Groveland. The testing equipment has been delayed, but we are hoping to be up and running within a few months. This will save MELD on shipping charges, return freight charges and they will have some inventory in stock if a glove fails testing.

The original co-op owners are Middleton, Littleton and Groveland. Holden has joined as a co-op member. They bought a piece of the co-op for just under \$300K. Our customers include Rowley, Marblehead, Groton, Hudson and we will be working with Princeton. GML offers good service for less money.

Mr. Cloutier will be going to Washington DC to advance NEPPA's resolution on fusion and solicit support for it. NEPPA took a vote to support fusion in their development and in making them a leader in the world. Mr. Cloutier wrote the resolution. There is a bi-partisan caucus of senators and congressmen, that is co-chaired by the Littleton Rep, Lori Trahan. Nick met with one of her aides and he was thanked for NEPPA's resolution and support.

Next meeting: October 16, 2024

Jim Kelley motioned to adjourn the meeting at 6:10PM. Chuck Clinch seconded. Motion carried 4-0.

Respectfully submitted,

James Carbone  
Clerk