



HINGHAM MUNICIPAL LIGHTING PLANT

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Laura M. Burns, Chair
Michael Reive, Vice-Chair
Tyler Herrald, Secretary

**REGULAR MEETING
HINGHAM MUNICIPAL LIGHT BOARD
May 13, 2025**

A regular meeting of the Board of Commissioners of the Hingham Municipal Light Plant (HMLP) was called to order by the Board's Chair, Ms. Burns, at 4:00 pm on Tuesday, May 13, 2025, via Zoom.

Present:

Board Members:

Laura Burns, Chairperson
Michael Reive, Vice-Chairperson
Tyler Herrald, Secretary

HMLP:

Thomas Morahan, General Manager
Mark Fahey, Assistant General Manager
Stephen Girardi, Engineering Manager
Brianna Bennett, Sustainability Coordinator

Meeting Called to Order

Ms. Burns read the following disclaimer into the record: *This meeting is being held remotely/or in person as an alternate means of public access pursuant to Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2025 and all other applicable laws temporarily amending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law. You are hereby advised that this meeting and all communications during this meeting may be recorded by the Town of Hingham in accordance with the Open Meeting Law. If any participant wishes to record this meeting, please notify the chair at the start of the meeting in accordance with M.G.L. c. 30A, § 20(f) so that the chair may inform all other participants of said recording.*

Ms. Burns asked if anyone other than HMLP wished to record the meeting. No one responded affirmatively.

Election of Board Officers

Ms. Burns began by offering congratulations to Mr. Reive on his reelection to the Hingham Light Board. She noted that it's good practice to review board officer roles after each election and wanted to bring that conversation to the group.

Ms. Burns asked Mr. Herrald if he is interested in serving as chair of the board as she believes rotating the chair position occasionally is healthy for the Board.

Mr. Herrald responded that he had considered it and would potentially be interested in serving as chair in the future. However, he felt that now might not be the best time, as he would prefer to take on that responsibility when he has more availability to fully commit to the role. Mr. Reive agreed with that sentiment and was also comfortable with the current arrangement.

Ms. Burns entertained a motion to re-elect the current board officers to continue in their respective roles.

Approve Meeting Minutes

Meeting Minutes 12/17/24

Meeting Minutes 3/18/25

Meeting Minutes 4/8/25

Ms. Burns asked if the Board would be willing to go out of order from the agenda to approve the three sets of meeting minutes, noting that they were unable to do so at the previous meeting due to time constraints.

Mr. Reive noted that he found only one minor typo error in the April 8, 2025 minutes, on page eight, where the word “being” should be “begin.”

Ms. Burns then stated she would entertain a motion to approve all three sets of minutes with that correction.

Vote:

Mr. Reive: “Aye”

Mr. Herrald: “Aye”

Ms. Burns: “Aye”

Board Meeting Recordings

Ms. Burns initiated a discussion about how the Board should handle the posting of meeting recordings online. Ms. Bennett explained that currently, all board meeting videos are posted on YouTube and linked through HMLP’s website. Recently, the videos were changed from public to “unlisted” on YouTube, meaning they can only be accessed by someone who has the direct link. These links remain available on the HMLP website under the “Meeting Archive” section, next to the corresponding meeting minutes. Ms. Bennett noted that this was meant to be an interim step until the Board decided whether to make the videos “private” or remove the links altogether.

Ms. Bennett explained that setting a video to “private” would require entering the email address of each individual who wants access, which would allow the system to track who is viewing the content. While the unlisted links are not searchable on YouTube, Ms. Burns questioned whether AI tools could still locate and access them, raising concerns about whether the current level of privacy was sufficient.

Mr. Herrald voiced his support for either the unlisted or private settings, while Ms. Burns expressed a preference for the private option, emphasizing that public access to the videos is a courtesy, not a legal requirement. She felt that requesting an email address was a reasonable and non-intrusive measure.

Mr. Reive added that a private setting would offer tighter control over who accesses the recordings, without denying access to those who simply reach out to request it. Mr. Morahan suggested including a note on the website informing visitors that they can contact the office if they'd like access to a video. Ms. Bennett confirmed she could do that, saying she could remove the links and replace them with a contact form or instructions to email HMLP with the desired video date. She added that individuals would need to be logged into the same email account used for access when viewing the video.

Ms. Burns acknowledged this could be a lot of manual work for Ms. Bennett, especially given that some meetings have received upwards of 30 views. Ms. Bennett said she was willing to try the new approach but suggested also adding information about Harbor Media airings of the meetings to help reduce video requests. Mr. Herrald then asked whether access could be granted to all videos at once instead of individually. Ms. Bennett said she would look into whether adding viewers to a YouTube playlist might allow for broader access without having to approve each video one by one.

Ms. Burns concluded that, for now, the Board seemed comfortable with the interim "unlisted" setup. Ms. Bennett said she would explore the playlist option further, noting that managing it through YouTube might not be much more time-consuming than the current process. Ms. Burns suggested they revisit the topic in a month and thanked Ms. Bennett for her work on the issue.

Heat Pump Forum/ Hingham Lumber Lawn Equipment Event Debrief

Ms. Bennett summarized two recent outreach events: the Heat Pump Forum and the Hingham Lumber electric lawn equipment tabling. The Heat Pump Forum, held on March 22, 2025, was a well-attended and well-received event with over 120 participants and strong community engagement. Key takeaways included the need for more basic "Heat Pump 101" content and better coverage of Mass Save rebate information. Technical and logistical issues, such as audio and long registration lines, were addressed, and post-event follow-up showed continued public interest.

In contrast, the April 26, 2025 lawn equipment tabling event faced challenges, including poor weather and low visibility indoors, resulting in lower-than-expected attendance. Ms. Bennett noted the absence of a display made engagement more difficult, though information was distributed. She suggested future tabling efforts would benefit from volunteers and improved coordination with Hingham Lumber staff.

MEAM Customer Satisfaction Survey

Ms. Bennett provided an update on the Municipal Electric Association of Massachusetts (MEAM) customer satisfaction survey. Currently, eight municipal light plants (MLPs), including Hingham, have signed on to participate. Although more participation would have been ideal, those that opted in are sharing the cost of the statewide effort. Great Blue Research is conducting the survey, collecting 400 responses from investor-owned utility (IOU) customers, 400 from MLP customers across the state, and an additional 400 responses specifically from Hingham residents. This oversample will allow for a meaningful comparison between state-level satisfaction, MLP-level satisfaction, and Hingham-specific data.

The statewide survey is already in the field, and Hingham-specific fielding will begin in late May or early June. To promote participation, the survey link or QR code will be shared via the June billing flyer, social media, and email communications. The survey will be entirely digital—no phone calls. Unlike the last survey, which had technical issues that prevented people from re-entering once their IP address had been logged, this time all responses will be collected, but only the most complete response per IP address will be used for analysis.

Participants must be the head of household or the person responsible for paying the electric bill. Those who don't meet that criterion will be politely screened out. The survey includes questions about customer satisfaction, service characteristics, communication preferences, and experiences with energy programs and power restoration. Hingham has also included custom questions about the water department's customer service, interest in an online billing portal, satisfaction with the website, and awareness of the HEIRP transmission project.

Existing questions in the survey already cover topics like renewable energy and energy program options, so those will be captured as well. A draft of the survey can be shared with Mr. Morahan upon request. Much of this effort is aimed at promoting the work of MLPs and comparing them with IOUs to better understand how each is performing.

If Hingham receives more than 400 responses, Great Blue will still only analyze a randomly selected 400 for consistency and cost management, but all submissions will be collected. We'll follow up to confirm whether we can access the full dataset beyond the analyzed 400. In the last survey—also conducted by Great Blue—just under 800 responses were collected, with 300–400 received on the first day, so expectations for participation remain high.

Additionally, this survey will make Hingham eligible for the Public Power Satisfaction Awards offered by the American Public Power Association. These awards aren't competitive in the traditional sense; rather, utilities that meet a satisfaction benchmark are recognized. Many MLPs in Massachusetts participate and often receive these awards. Given Hingham's strong customer satisfaction, there is optimism about achieving recognition as well.

Sphigler Group Presentation Discussion

Ms. Burns opened by revisiting the Sphigler Group's presentation from the last meeting, noting it felt more like a marketing opportunity, with the group positioning themselves as potential consultants for grid modernization efforts. She invited feedback from Mr. Morahan and Mr. Fahey.

Mr. Morahan said many of the topics presented were already in line with internal planning. While Sphigler Group may not be useful for everything, such as enterprise system selection, they could be helpful with AMI (Advanced Metering Infrastructure), especially in drafting RFQs or evaluating vendors. He emphasized that any engagement should be selective and project-specific, and that other firms should be considered for comparison.

Ms. Burns agreed, particularly on the value of involving a consultant for the AMI meter RFP. She noted the importance of using collected data to drive decisions. Of the eight focus areas Sphigler Group presented, most seemed relevant. She asked Mr. Morahan where he saw the most benefit.

He pointed to AMI and time-of-use (TOU) rate planning as key areas for potential support, though he preferred a more specialized firm, like Utility Financial Services, for broader rate studies. Sphigler Group's ability to interpret AMI data was seen as a strength. When asked about Sphigler Group's ability to support water system integration, he said they had experience with multi-utility clients.

Mr. Herrald highlighted Sphigler Group's familiarity with state and federal grants as a key advantage. Mr. Morahan confirmed this, saying grant support would likely be part of their role. Mr. Reive emphasized the need to benchmark AMI technologies and gather insights from peer utilities, noting the importance of systems that integrate power and water data.

Mr. Morahan added that Sphigler Group could also help define key performance indicators to ensure the utility gets full value from its investments. Ms. Burns agreed that making full use of data was a central theme. Mr. Fahey noted that many of the presentation's points aligned with existing discussions and validated their direction. He also referenced a recent meeting with Analog Devices that had a presentation that reinforced the value of data analytics.

Ms. Burns concluded by saying they would thank Sphigler Group for the presentation and follow up if specific project needs arise.

Financials

month/year	kwh sold	revenue	expenses	net income
Feb-25	18,214,673	3,485,102	3,666,021	(180,919)
Feb-24	17,247,671	3,374,919	2,983,721	391,198
Feb-23	16,477,516	3,086,587	3,056,012	30,575
YTD/year				
Feb-25	36,353,101	6,855,767	6,475,742	380,025
Feb-24	32,301,925	6,088,262	5,452,558	635,704
Feb-23	32,560,268	6,315,311	5,666,028	649,284

Mr. Morahan reported that while they don't yet have the March financial, Ms. Griffin is still waiting on some final figures, they expect to have them by the end of the week. Regarding February, he noted that it was a colder month, contributing to higher kilowatt-hour sales. Despite that, the net income for the month was negative \$180,000. This was largely due to a scheduled annual payment for the Watson plant, which is made every February, as well as the PCA reduction implemented in January 2025. Year-to-date net income stands at \$380,000. After speaking with Ms. Griffin, Mr. Morahan said they feel confident they are on track to meet the 8% target based on the fiscal year 2025 budget. Financially, no concerns have emerged at this point.

In response to a question from Mr. Reive about whether the increased usage might reflect a shift toward more power per household or greater adoption of heat pumps, Mr. Morahan said he believes it was mostly due to the colder winter. He noted that usage growth over the last 10 years has remained relatively flat. While some customers have likely transitioned to heat pumps, the utility hasn't yet seen the expected spike in demand. He added that they haven't encountered winter issues like overloaded transformers or voltage problems—concerns that typically arise during the summer months.

Mr. Morahan stated that the audit should be completed by next month, and his plan is to have the auditors present at the June 2025 board meeting.

Updates: Transmission Line Project, Capital Projects

Mr. Morahan reported that the replacement of the insulators on the transmission line is moving forward, with a pre-bid meeting scheduled for tomorrow with contractors. He noted that they had finally received the necessary license from the MBTA and now have all bid documents prepared. The work is tentatively scheduled for October 2025, pending bid results.

Regarding other capital projects, he mentioned that reconductoring work on Pleasant Street is progressing well and the overall capital program remains on track for completion by year end. He also addressed the status of the larger transmission project, noting that they recently received some feedback from the Energy Facilities Siting Board. Discovery is expected to take place this summer, with input from

stakeholders like the Department of Public Utilities and others. He acknowledged the process is lengthy, estimating it could take about another year, with possible approval coming summer 2026.

Other New Unforeseen Business

There was no other unforeseen business to discuss.

Motion to enter Executive Session

Ms. Burns entertained a motion to enter executive session, not to return to public session, pursuant to M.G.L. c. 30A, s. 21(a)(2) for the purposes of:

- Conducting a strategy session in preparation for negotiations with non-union personnel or contract negotiations with nonunion personnel

Vote:

Mr. Herrald: “Aye”

Mr. Reive: “Aye”

Ms. Burns: “Aye”