



# HINGHAM MUNICIPAL LIGHTING PLANT

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## Board Members

Laura Burns, Chair  
Michael Reive, Vice-Chair  
Tyler Herral, Secretary

## MEETING HINGHAM MUNICIPAL LIGHT BOARD

December 9, 2025  
Zoom Meeting  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86216703640>

### Meeting Called to Order

A meeting of the Board of Commissioners of the Hingham Municipal Light Plant (HMLP) was called to order by the Board's Chair, Laura Burns, at approximately 4:00 pm on Tuesday, December 9, 2025.

Present:

Board Members: Laura Burns -Chair  
Michael Reive -Vice-Chair  
Tyler Herral -Secretary

HMLP: Thomas Morahan -General Manager  
Mark Fahey -Asst. General Manager  
Brianna Bennett - Sustainability Coordinator

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.*

### Great Blue Survey Review

Catherine Vollmer from GreatBlue Research presented the findings of the latest customer satisfaction survey for Hingham Light. HMLP scored significantly higher than investor-owned utilities in most metrics.

*Satisfaction & Trust:*

- On average, HMLP had a customer satisfaction rating of 87.8%. The highest positive ratings were “restoring power after an outage in a reasonable amount of time,” “providing consistent and reliable electric service,” and “providing good service and value for the cost of electricity.” Customers also identified these as their most prioritized organizational characteristics for HMLP. In contrast, customers placed less emphasis on “helping customers conserve electricity,” “offering innovative programs and services,” and “community service.”
- Over two-thirds of HMLP customers stated that the top expectations of their utility were “prompt response to outages,” followed by “reliable/consistent service” and “affordable prices.” 93.3% of customers said HMLP meets their expectations all or most of the time.
- Nearly three-quarters of HMLP customers viewed the rates they pay for electricity as reasonable, which is significantly higher than the Massachusetts IOU customers.
- HMLP earned a net positive score of 94%, which is the sum of those who are satisfied, loyal, or advocates of the utility. This rating is slightly higher than what we saw across the rest of the state and other municipalities and significantly higher than what we saw for IOU utilities. In November, HMLP was recognized by the American Public Power Association (APPA) for its satisfaction rating and won the Public Power Satisfaction Award.

### *Customer Service*

- The top reasons for contacting customer service were to report an outage, inquire about energy/rebate programs, and to pay their bill. HMLP customers received consistently higher ratings for (1) understanding the problem/need, (2) explaining the problem & resolution, (3) being courteous, and (4) speed of results, in comparison to Massachusetts IOUs.
- 72.4% of customers contact HMLP by telephone, followed by 11.8% by email and 6.6% via the HMLP website.
- 84.2% of customers said that the utility takes care of things the first time they contact them. This is an extremely high rating. The national average on this rating is 60%, and Massachusetts public power is around 62.9%.
- Overall satisfaction with Customer Service was 94.1%.
- 61.5% of HMLP customers support the utility handling customer service for the water company. 29% of customers were unsure if they would support or oppose this change.

### *Awareness & Communication*

- 91.2% of HMLP customers correctly identified their utility as a “community-owned municipal utility,” and the majority reported that it is “very” or “somewhat important” to maintain local control.
- The majority of customers, 70.5%, perceive responsive service as the most important benefit of community ownership.
- When customers were looking for information about HMLP, 69.5% responded that they use the website, and 45.8% stated they rely on bill inserts. The specific information customers are looking for includes outage and restoration updates and rate information.
- Almost 80% of customers find the level of communication right. The most valued communication methods were email (89.2%) and the HMLP website (81.3%). Fewer customers valued social media (26.5%) because they may not use it or follow HMLP’s pages.
- The preferred bill payment methods are Autopay (50.1%) and online via HMLP’s website (26%).
- Customers were asked if there was interest in managing billing through a customer portal, and 50.8% said yes, 26.9% responded unsure, and 22.4% stated no.
- 7 out of 10 HMLP customers reported that self-service digital options, such as a website, email, and text, are important to them. This figure is lower than that seen in the statewide survey. These responses appear to be influenced by the responder’s age.
- Overall, 95.1% of customers who have visited HMLP’s website are satisfied. About 11% of customers visit the website a few times a month, and 36.6% visit a few times a year. 34.6% of customers indicated they visit “rarely,” and 17% of customers have never visited the website.

- It was found that customers desired additional “rate information,” “energy conservation programs/services,” and/or “education on energy topics.”
- 78.5% of HMLP customers reported that their expectations of communication during outages were met “all” or “most of the time.” 92.9% of respondents rated outage restoration time as “very acceptable,” compared with 85.8% for Massachusetts IOUs.

### *Energy Efficiency*

- About half of customers currently own or have previously owned a smart device in their home.
- Among respondents, about one-third reported already having a programmable thermostat, 15.9% indicated they plan to purchase one in the future, and just under half do not plan to purchase one.
- About half of customers reported they are likely to purchase a smart home device in the future, whereas the other half indicated they are not likely to purchase a smart home device in the future.
- 51.2% of customers reported that their utility is doing enough to curb carbon emissions in its power supply, while 42.2% were unsure. 61.7% of customers feel their actions at home help the utility meet the statewide goal, but only 37.8% say HMLP empowers them to conserve energy at home. This is 18.2% lower than MA Public Power.
- 46% of customers were aware of the state’s net-zero greenhouse gas emissions goal, and 37.6% of respondents had a great deal of trust in HMLP’s energy portfolio decisions.
- 42.8% of customers prioritize low-income assistance programs over energy efficiency incentives and rebates. 37.2% of customers prioritize energy-efficiency incentives and rebates over low-income assistance programs. In contrast, the majority of MA Public Power customers placed greater importance on energy-efficiency incentives than on low-income assistance.
- More than half of respondents (66.7%) stated they have no plans to purchase solar panels in the future. This figure is significantly higher than MA Public Power (+28.2%). For those considering solar or already have it, the main reasons are environmental sustainability and reducing their electric bill.
- 29.2% of customers stated that they may purchase an EV within the next five years. The primary barrier for customers who are not planning to purchase an EV was “limited range/distance per charge.” Additionally, customers cited “low availability of charging stations,” “higher initial cost to purchase,” and “long charge time.”
- 54% of customers preferred a level 2 EV charger because of its faster charging time. 30.9% of customers said they would be more likely to buy an EV if there were more charging stations in their community.

### *Time of Use Rates (TOU)*

- Over half (55.2%) of HMLP customers were aware of TOU rates, which is strong awareness.
- There is a strong interest (68.8%) in a TOU rate.

### *Hingham Electrical Infrastructure Reliability Project (HEIRP)*

- 44.9% of customers were aware of the HEIRP transmission and substation project. This is an increase from only 19.4% awareness in 2023.
- When customers were given more information about HEIRP, 48.4% of them reported feeling informed about the goal and potential impact.
- In regard to what factors would help customers better understand or support HEIRP, 57.4% reported “cost impacts,” followed by 47.5% stating “timeline and construction impacts.”

### *Considerations*

- Enhancing awareness and support for energy initiatives and infrastructure projects.
- Leveraging Customer Service strengths to broaden service capabilities. Maintain high standards and publicize strong customer service ratings to reinforce trust and demonstrate HMLP’s commitment to customer care.
- Potentially implement short post-contact surveys for electric and water services.

Ms. Burns asked Ms. Vollmer for clarification on what a customer portal would look like. Ms. Vollmer stated that it would provide account, payment, and outage restoration information. Mr. Morahan added that it would also provide bill detail, usage/consumption information, and weather details. In addition, survey results would be available on the portal.

Mr. Herral and Mr. Reive were both very pleased with the survey results. Ms. Bennett stated that this survey was prebuilt as a statewide survey, but still allowed customization in areas such as HEIRP. She shared that the main piece of feedback was that the survey was very long. Ms. Vollmer suggested future options, such as segmenting surveys to improve completion rates and adding a “save & continue” button.

Mr. Reive questioned the breadth of the survey and how Great Blue Research collected data from the 40 municipal utility territories. Ms. Vollmer explained that they used online survey panels to conduct a statewide survey in Massachusetts, allowing them to reach a wide range of zip codes rather than relying on utility-provided contact lists. The team targeted zip codes based on whether they were served by municipal utilities or investor-owned utilities and set quotas to ensure equal representation—about 400 respondents from public power customers and 400 from investor-owned utilities (e.g., National Grid, Eversource, Unitil). Responses from municipal utilities were distributed based on customer size, resulting in more responses from larger munis, though every municipal utility was represented, sometimes with only a few responses for very small ones. Regarding oversampling, Ms. Vollmer noted that some municipal light plants (MLPs) opted to oversample their own customers. She explained that Great Blue typically shares blinded, utility-level organizational characteristics first, and may later unblind the data if all utilities grant permission. Additional permissions may be required for more detailed comparisons, and she expected to have more information available at an upcoming meeting.

**Income Adjustment Rate Research**

The Board is considering the size of the Income-Adjusted Rate relative to the regular rate, and Ms. Bennett was asked to research what other municipalities offer their customers. Ms. Bennett stated that HMLP currently offers a 15% discount on certain bill items for qualified customers. She presented research (see below) on income-based rates across the MLPs, finding that Belmont offers an approximate 30% discount on electric bills, while Concord provides a 63% discount for the first 657 kilowatt hours. She noted that Taunton, Shrewsbury, and Ipswich offer income-based rebates rather than discounted rates, and Belmont, Concord, and Middleborough offer both.

Income-Based Rates						Other MLPs Offering Income-Based Rebates	
Utility	Low-Income	Discount	Notes	LI Rebates	LI Rebate Description		
Belmont	Yes	customer charge waived (\$12.60), lower components (\$0.06916 ~ 30%)	must qualify for means-tested benefits	Yes	\$1,000 Heat Pump Adder	Taunton	TMLP Saves LMI Track (Weatherization & Heat Pumps)
Concord	Yes	per kWh credit (\$0.13809 on first 657kWh ~63%)	must qualify for means-tested benefits & income verification	Yes	Weatherization 75-100% & Higher Caps; Heat Pumps Rebate Increase	Shrewsbury	EV Rebates (Purchase/Lease Adder) Appliance Rebates
Holden	Yes	customer charge waived (\$5)	verification via LIHEAP; administered by local CAP	No	NA	Ipswich	Weatherization & Heat Pumps
Middleborough	Yes	5% discount	verification via LIHEAP; administered by local CAP	Yes	Weatherization up to 100% Lawn & Appliances (2x Rebate)		
North Attleborough	Yes	lower components of the bill	must qualify for means-tested benefits	No	NA		
Reading	Yes	customer charge waived (~.10/kWh)	must qualify for means-tested benefits	No	NA		

Insight: Percentages in bill reduction range from 5%-63% depending on the consumption. Several MLPs offer Income-Based Rebates as a different form of low-income assistance.

Mr. Reive found it interesting in the GreatBlue survey that there was almost a one-for-one commitment to equalize the money HMLP puts up for low-income programs with what it puts up for energy efficiency and renewable energy incentives. He stated that we paid \$16,000 in low-income benefits last year and asked how much we paid for energy efficiency and renewable energy incentives. Ms. Bennett responded that our state-mandated rebate minimum is \$80,000 (¼ of 1% of revenues), and HMLP typically exceeds that amount. Both Ms. Burns and Mr. Reive believe the Board needs to consider this discrepancy, as the

survey showed what customers want. Ms. Burns asked which parts of the bill are affected by the discount. The discount applies to the Customer Charge and the Capacity, Transmission, and Distribution Charge.

The Board currently evaluates the IA rate every 6 months. Mr. Reive initially proposed eliminating the customer charge and offering a discount up to a certain number of kilowatt hours, as Concord does. After discussion, he proposed eliminating the Customer Charge and raising the discount on the Capacity, Transmission, and Distribution Charge from 15% to 30%. Ms. Burns would like to see the dollar impact before accepting any proposal. Mr. Morahan stated that the proposed increase would still only have a minimal impact. Mr. Herrald stated his preference for a simple plan rather than different discount factors for different pieces of the bill. Mr. Reive questioned the customers' consumption on the IA rate, and Ms. Bennett and Mr. Morahan indicated that some may have high energy usage. Ms. Bennett will reach back out to Concord to see how they determined their per-kilowatt credit of 657.

### **Approve Meeting Minutes for 10/14/2025**

Mr. Reive believes that there is too much detail in the discussions and would like the notes simplified. He has also documented the logic behind the Board's decision to remove debit/credit cards from Autopay. Ms. Burns suggested that Mr. Reive's document be added to the notes and that any other suggestions be implemented before the notes are approved.

### **Financials - September 2025**

month/year	kwh sold	revenue	expenses	net income
Sep-25	16,800,080	3,276,223	2,552,517	723,706
Sep-24	17,271,700	3,058,871	2,429,306	629,565
Sep-23	20,150,320	3,660,876	2,342,916	1,317,960
<b>Year to date</b>				
Sep-25	150,818,471	30,501,944	26,010,821	4,491,123
Sep-24	147,766,902	27,290,509	23,095,327	4,195,182
Sep-23	144,530,078	27,616,122	22,789,274	4,826,849

Tom reported that September net income was \$723,000, with year-to-date earnings at \$4.4 million, leading to a reduced energy charge, though PCA remains at zero.

### **Updates: Transmission Line Project, Capital Projects**

- Transmission Line Project: The transmission line project is awaiting Weymouth's brief to the Energy Facility Siting Board, expected by Friday, with project approval not expected until August 2026. The project team met with the Bond Council, and we have to provide some information for their warrant article.
- Capital Projects: There is an issue with one insulator with interference that we are currently addressing.

Next meeting will be January 13, 2026

Motion to adjourn the meeting.

Mr. Herrald: "Aye"

Mr. Reive: "Aye"

Ms. Burns: "Aye"

Meeting adjourned at 5:25 pm