



HINGHAM MUNICIPAL LIGHTING PLANT

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

REGULAR MEETING
HINGHAM MUNICIPAL LIGHT BOARD
February 10, 2026

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, February 10, 2026, via Zoom.

Present:

Board Members:

Laura Burns, Chair
Michael Reive, Vice-Chair
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 as an alternative means of public access pursuant to Chapter 2 of the Act of 2025 and all other applicable laws temporarily amending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law. You're 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.

Update on Meeting with the Select Board Regarding the Warrant Article

The Board moved directly to the first agenda item regarding Mr. Morahan's attendance at a Select Board meeting related to the warrant article. Mr. Morahan provided a report on the meeting.

Mr. Morahan stated that a public meeting was held with the Select Board the previous week, during which the warrant article was reviewed. The Select Board voted favorably on the warrant article as written. The next step will be a presentation to the Advisory Committee on February 24, 2026 at which time staff will seek a positive recommendation as well.

Ms. Burns asked whether the Select Board had any questions. Mr. Morahan responded that there were very few questions. He provided a brief overview of the project, and the primary question raised concerned whether rates would be affected. Mr. Morahan explained that the most recent rate study included increases over a three-year period, and those increases are expected to cover the cost of the project moving forward. Overall, he described the meeting as fairly short.

Mr. Morahan also noted that the planned outreach efforts leading up to Town Meeting were presented during the Select Board meeting. Mr. Reive asked whether the Select Board was satisfied with the proposed outreach plan and whether they felt it was sufficient. Mr. Morahan responded that he believed the Select Board was comfortable with the plan. He offered to forward the outreach materials, noting that he had sent them to Ms. Burns but was unsure whether Mr. Reive, Mr. Herald had received them. Mr. Morahan confirmed that he would forward the information to the remaining members.

Ms. Burns then asked if there were any additional comments or questions from staff, the Board, or the public regarding the Select Board meeting and the warrant article. There were no further questions.

Update on Rate Study with UFS

Mr. Morahan reported that HMLP has engaged Utility Financial Services (UFS) to conduct the rate study. He stated that he and Ms. Griffin, HMLP Business Manager, will be holding a kickoff meeting with UFS next week. UFS has advised that once all required data is received, the rate study will take approximately three months to complete.

Mr. Morahan noted that the current rate study will not include a time-of-use rate, a solar rate, or a heat pump rate due to potential conflict-of-interest concerns related to those rate structures at this time.

Ms. Burns added that HMLP is still several years away from being able to implement time-of-use rates. Mr. Morahan agreed, explaining that HMLP is likely about two years out, largely due to the timeline for installing the necessary metering infrastructure. As a result, time-of-use rates would likely align with the next rate study cycle.

Ms. Burns shared informational background with the Board, noting that the Concord Light Board has recently implemented time-of-use rates and has helpful educational materials available on its website. She encouraged Board members to review these resources in preparation for future implementation. She further noted that Concord followed the example of the Sacramento Municipal Utility, which conducted focus groups to support marketing and public education. One key takeaway was that customers more readily understood the term “time-of-day rates” rather than “time-of-use rates,” leading Concord to adopt that terminology. Ms. Burns suggested HMLP may wish to consider using similar language in the future.

Mr. Reive shared several thoughts regarding time-of-use rates and the UFS proposal. First, he suggested that if HMLP pursues time-of-use rates in the future, it may be beneficial to allow customers to pay the lower of either the standard rate or the time-of-use rate. This approach could encourage voluntary participation by allowing customers to see potential savings without risk, thereby increasing adoption and shifting usage away from peak demand periods if the program is designed correctly.

Mr. Reive also raised the topic of winter rates to support heat pump adoption and electrification. He noted that the Town of Wakefield has implemented a reduced winter rate similar to those offered by investor-owned utilities, such as Eversource and National Grid, under state mandates. He encouraged HMLP to request heat pump rate data from UFS now so the Board would be prepared to consider a similar incentive for Hingham residents between November and April, noting that this issue may be relevant sooner than the next rate study cycle.

Ms. Burns stated that she was not convinced HMLP would be eligible to act on such a rate in November, which was why obtaining the data at that time did not initially seem necessary. She suggested that Board members discuss the matter further with Mr. Morahan to gather his perspective.

Mr. Reive asked whether obtaining the data would be cost-prohibitive. Mr. Morahan indicated that he could request pricing from UFS for including a heat pump or winter rate analysis as part of the study. Based on prior estimates for a solar rate and time-of-use rate, he anticipated the cost could be approximately \$3,500, but noted that UFS would need to confirm pricing.

Ms. Burns asked if there were any additional questions or comments regarding the rate study. Mr. Morahan added that if UFS receives the necessary data by March, the rate study could be completed by June.

There were no further questions or comments.

Budget Billing – Should credit cards be allowed

Mr. Morahan explained that the question was raised by the Customer Service Department. Under the current structure, customers enrolled in budget billing are automatically placed on autopay. The question was whether customers on budget billing should be permitted to use credit cards, particularly since some participants enroll due to financial challenges.

Mr. Morahan explained that HMLP currently has a small number of customers on budget billing and that the program has not been actively advertised. Typically, customers enroll only after

inquiring about the program, and enrollment usually begins in January, as it simplifies calculating an annual average bill. Under the program, a customer's estimated annual usage is calculated and then divided evenly across monthly payments.

Mr. Morahan noted that while participation in the budget billing program is currently limited, it could increase in the future, particularly if rates rise or more customers adopt heat pumps. He confirmed that some budget billing customers are currently able to use credit cards, prompting the Board's discussion on whether that practice should continue.

Ms. Burns asked whether budget billing customers should be treated the same as all other customers, allowing credit card payments only through manual monthly entry, not autopay. It was confirmed that HMLP does not allow credit cards for autopay; autopay requires direct debit from a checking or savings account.

Mr. Reive expressed surprise that the issue had resurfaced, noting the Board had previously voted against credit cards for autopay. Mr. Morahan relayed Customer Service's perspective that some budget billing customers face financial challenges and that credit cards may offer flexibility; however, credit card fees are ultimately borne by all ratepayers.

Ms. Burns clarified that HMLP's existing policy already allows all customers to use credit cards for manual payments, but not for autopay. She emphasized that budget billing is intended to smooth seasonal billing fluctuations for all customers and expressed concern that allowing credit cards for autopay could increase financial risk for customers. She supported maintaining the current policy.

Mr. Morahan agreed that any instances of credit cards being used for autopay under budget billing should be corrected to align with Board policy. He noted no known operational drawbacks to budget billing but agreed to confirm administrative impacts with Ms. Griffin.

The Board reached consensus to leave the policy unchanged: autopay must be through a bank account, Debit, and credit cards may be used only for manual monthly payments. Ms. Burns thanked Customer Service for raising the issue and noted the topic may be revisited in the future if circumstances change.

Approve Meeting Minutes - December 9, 2025

Ms. Burns asked whether Mr. Herrald and Mr. Reive had an opportunity to review the minutes. Mr. Herrald stated that he had reviewed them and had no requested changes. Mr. Reive commented that while he had no objections, he felt the minutes contained very detailed reporting of the survey results and suggested that the survey itself might be better posted on the website rather than summarized extensively in the minutes. He expressed concern that the level of detail may be unnecessary and increase the risk of inaccuracies if not carefully fact-checked.

Ms. Burns responded that she appreciates having detailed minutes, particularly for complex topics, as she often refers back to them. She noted that while only basic information is legally required in meeting minutes, such as date, time, attendees, topics discussed, votes taken, and adjournment time, additional detail can be helpful. She stated that content can always be removed if the Board prefers, but she generally favors retaining detail.

Ms. Burns suggested that, if helpful, staff could prepare alternative versions of future minutes for Board review. Mr. Reive clarified that his concern was not a request for changes to the December 9, 2025 minutes, but rather a general caution about redundancy and potential discrepancies between reports, recordings, and minutes, particularly when reports are already publicly available.

Ms. Burns suggested that, when detailed reports are publicly available, the minutes could reference the report and provide a link rather than restating the full content. The Board agreed this could be considered as a guideline for future minutes.

Ms. Burns then called for a motion to approve the December 9, 2025 meeting minutes. The motion was made and seconded. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Mr. Herrald - "Aye"

Mr. Reive - "Aye"

Ms. Burns - "Aye"

Updates: Transmission Line Project, Capital Projects

Mr. Morahan reported that regarding the transmission line project, staff is scheduled to meet with the Advisory Committee on January 24, 2026. He noted that a timeline for public outreach over the coming months has been developed and will be forwarded to the Board for review and comment.

Mr. Morahan stated that progress on capital projects has been limited due to recent snow conditions, which have made field work difficult. He noted that HMLP is still waiting for utility poles from Verizon for the Elm Street project, and that snow conditions have further delayed pole installation. He added that these delays are typical for this time of year and that capital project work is expected to resume over the next couple of months.

Mr. Morahan also reported that HMLP is working with a battery storage developer in the industrial park on a project that is beginning to move forward. He stated that the developer has requested an interconnection study, which HMLP has completed. He added that Mr. Girardi, Engineering Manager, could provide additional details regarding the battery storage process if needed.

Mr. Girardi provided an update on the 5 MW battery storage project on Commerce Road in the industrial park. HMLP is conducting a high-level interconnection study to determine how the system can be safely discharged without back feeding into the transmission system. Because load growth in Hingham has been minimal, a full 5 MW system could potentially limit future solar development, particularly in residential areas like Circuit 9 and commercial sites in the industrial park. To address this, the study includes planned discharge schedules and output limits to balance battery use with continued solar expansion. Adjustments, such as reducing the system to 4 MW, are being considered to avoid constraining future solar projects.

The Board discussed the importance of coordinating battery and solar deployment, noting that behind-the-meter solar has significantly contributed to local energy production over the past

several years. Mr. Girardi emphasized that battery discharge typically targets peak periods when solar output is declining, providing peak-shaving benefits without negatively affecting customers. The Board requested continued updates as the study progresses.

Mr. Morahan provided an update on electric school buses. Three buses are expected in March 2026 but will not have vehicle-to-grid (V2G) capability due to timing, equipment, and program limitations. A previous state incentive program for V2G chargers is no longer available, and the vendor was not pursuing a new agreement for Hingham. Additional buses with potential V2G capability may be considered in the future.

Finally, Ms. Burns noted that a public hearing for the transmission line project is planned for early April 2026 as part of a regular Board meeting. She observed that previous in-person hearings had low attendance but wanted the Board to be aware of the upcoming outreach.

Other New Unforeseen Business

No further updates were reported.

Motion to Adjourn:

Mr. Reive - Aye

Mr. Herrald -Aye

Ms. Burns - Aye

Meeting adjourned at approximately 5:20 pm