



# HINGHAM MUNICIPAL LIGHTING PLANT

31 Bare Cove Park Drive  
Hingham, MA 02043-1585  
(781) 749-0134 FAX (781) 749-1396

[www.hmlp.com](http://www.hmlp.com)

General Manager  
Paul G. Heanue  
pheanue@hmlp.com

John P. Ryan, Chairman  
John A. Stoddard Jr., Vice-Chairman  
Roger M. Freeman, Secretary

## REGULAR MEETING HINGHAM MUNICIPAL LIGHT BOARD

April 15, 2020  
7:30 A.M. – Meeting via Zoom

### MEETING NOTES

[https://www.hmlp.com/downloads/Board%20Meeting%20April%2015,%202020\\_Trim2.mp4](https://www.hmlp.com/downloads/Board%20Meeting%20April%2015,%202020_Trim2.mp4)

#### **Meeting Called to Order:**

A regular meeting of the Board of Commissioners of the Hingham Municipal Light Plant (HMLP) was called to order at 0730 on Wednesday, April 15, 2020 via Zoom.

#### **Present:**

John P. Ryan, Chairman; John A. Stoddard Jr., Vice-Chairman; Roger M. Freeman, Secretary; Paul Heanue, General Manager (GM); Tom Morahan, Assistant General Manager (Assistant GM); guests Laura Burns, Hingham resident, former Selectman and current Senior Intern to Representative Joan Meschino, Brenda \_\_\_\_\_, Janice Brown McPhillips, Larry Rosenberg, Pam Harty, Susan Harbert, Joyceline Chow, Kathleen Sutton, Patty Coyle, Joann Heileman and Dr. Ben Kerman, Hingham residents.

#### **Renewable Energy Credits (RECs)**

At the April 1, 2020 Board Meeting, the Secretary and Vice-Chairman voted to continue the policy the Board adopted in 2017 for years 2020 and 2021 to retire RECs and buy replacement RECs to cover the rest of the load. The Vice-Chairman explained to the Board that he felt uneasy about his vote at the April 1<sup>st</sup> meeting due to the current economic situation. Due to the COVID-19 virus, 13% of the U.S. population has filed for unemployment and the Vice-Chairman finds it is not fair to the rate payers to throw away \$600k-800k by retiring RECs. While climate change is real and a threat to the planet, the Vice-Chairman finds the current economic situation does not allow HMLP to spend money it does not have to spend. The Vice-Chairman expects HMLP will see a steep drop in revenue as rate payers may choose not to pay their electric bill as service will not be shut off during this time.

#### **MOTION**

**A motion was duly made by the Vice-Chairman to reconsider the vote taken on April 1, 2020. The Chairman seconded.**

The Secretary opined that while we are in unprecedented times and facing a large economic impact, HMLP has a substantial cash balance to weather the storm. The 2020 Budget provides for a \$3.8m profit which offers a substantial cushion before dipping into reserves. Selling RECs is moving backwards from the goal to be 100% carbon free by 2050. When HMLP sells the RECs HMLP is giving someone else the right to pollute and HMLP cannot claim renewability anymore. Selling RECs sends a bad signal to the community and the rest of Massachusetts that climate change is negotiable. The Secretary asked the Vice-Chairman to separate the big picture issue and the immediate crisis issue. He expressed that the Vice-Chairman made the right decision at the April 1<sup>st</sup> meeting and asked him to stay with that decision. The Secretary suggested that the Board should create an emergency fund to assist customers in paying their electricity bill. The GM is unsure how or if the Board can do this. The Chairman weighed in and explained that HMLP has over the years signed sales contract with

significant renewable projects to enable them to be constructed (wind, solar and hydro). HMLP gets rights to the power being generated but gets RECs along with it that HMLP can trade and reduce the effective cost of the power to rate payers. If the Board retains the RECs they are basically adding a surcharge to everyone's bill of approximately \$60 per meter per year. The prudent thing to do is to spend the money on projects to be as green as possible. The Board also owes a duty to the rate payers to keep the rates as low as possible. Dr. Ben Kerman, Hingham resident and member of the Energy Action Committee, expressed his opinion that the focus should be on climate change and not the current COVID-19 situation that will eventually disappear. Selling the RECs would be a mistake. Dr. Kerman asked the GM what the financial impact for HMLP is anticipated to be as a result of the coronavirus. The GM explained that he does not know what the financial impact will be but he has heard from both commercial and residential customers and they fear they will be affected financially and may have to choose between what bills to pay. Prior to COVID-19 there were approximately 6-10 customers every month who did not pay and got shut off. During the COVID-19 timeframe customers will not be shutoff for nonpayment. Pam Harty, Hingham resident, explained that she believes holding onto the RECs right now is worth trying to do. Joann Heileman, Hingham resident, explained that she agrees with the Secretary and is in favor of not selling the RECs. Kathleen Sutton, Hingham resident, would also like to retire RECs and believes that climate change is an invisible scary. Brenda Black, Hingham resident, asked the Board how many households were not able to pay their electric bills back in 2008. The GM and Chairman explained this information is not known at this time as the HMLP office is closed and employees are working remotely. Laura Burns, Hingham resident, former Selectman and current Senior Intern to Representative Joan Meschino, opined that HMLP can find a way to assist/respond to customers who are having trouble paying their electric bill and the Board should focus on the bigger picture of climate change and retire RECs.

#### **VOTE**

**The Board unanimously voted to reconsider the vote taken on April 1, 2020.**

#### **MOTION**

**A motion was duly made by the Chairman to rescind the vote made on April 1, 2020 with respect to RECs. The Vice-Chairman seconded. The Chairman and Vice-Chairman voted in favor of the Motion. The Secretary opposed the Motion. The Motion carries 2-1.**

#### **MOTION**

**A motion was duly made by the Vice-Chairman to grant the GM the authority to make decisions regarding retiring RECs and/or buying replacement RECs. The Secretary seconded and they unanimously voted to grant the GM the authority to make decisions regarding retiring RECs and/or buying replacement RECs.**

#### **Motion to Adjourn**

**On a motion duly made by the Vice-Chairman and seconded by the Secretary it was unanimously approved to adjourn the meeting at 0810.**

