



## 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 October 10, 2023

#### Meeting Called to Order

A regular 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 7:30 am on Tuesday, October 10, 2023, 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, Engineer  
Jeff Jones: Line Division Supervisor  
Joan Griffin, Business Manager  
Ellen McElroy, Customer Service  
Brianna Bennett, Sustainability Coordinator

#### Call meeting 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 107 of the Act of 2022 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.

### **Vote on MOU For Transfer of Land for new Substation**

Ms. Burns asked if all Board members had a chance to review the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) regarding the transfer of land for the new substation. The background to this matter stems from an agreement reached between HMLP and the Town, prior going to town meeting. HMLP sought authorization from the town to have the Select Board authorize, but not require, the transfer of this land to HMLP. The majority of the conditions outlined in the MOU had already been fulfilled by the time of the town meeting, and the Board was expected to have formally signed the document. Regrettably, due to a miscommunication, it was overlooked, and the Board never managed to have the document signed.

Mr. Morahan met with the town to discuss a way forward, and mentioned the MOU had not been signed, despite most of the conditions having already been met. Consequently, the Town is keen on us signing this MOU, which is why it is now before us for consideration. It's worth noting that the document is somewhat outdated, and a new MOU may be forthcoming.

Ms. Burns mentioned the town is also planning a series of community outreach initiatives to inform the public about the substation and gather their feedback. In anticipation of this, a new MOU may be necessary, particularly regarding the conditions pertaining to the substation's construction. Consultants have recommended that HMLP follow the state's permitting process for the substation, which supersedes our local zoning and site plan regulations. Consequently, the Select Board wishes for all parties involved to reach a mutual agreement on the matters that would have typically fallen under the town's site plan process before transitioning to the state process. This collaborative approach is favored by our consultants and is aligned with public feedback.

A motion was made to approve the MOU with The Town of Hingham

#### **Roll Call Vote:**

**Mr. Herrald: Aye**

**Mr. Reive: Aye**

**Ms. Burns: Aye**

### **Vote to Designate a Member of the Climate Action Commission**

Two years ago, the Town established the Climate Action Planning Committee with the task of developing a climate action plan. Ms. Burns noted that HMLP provided the funds to enlist a consultant to draft the Climate Action Plan. The completion of this plan was subsequently presented to the Town, and the Town decided to create a permanent Climate Action Commission responsible for the plan's implementation. HMLP is now required to designate a representative for this permanent Climate Action Commission, which will oversee the implementation of the plan as outlined. Given that this is a permanent commission, Ms. Burns suggested that it would be fitting to appoint Mr. Morahan. She believes that selecting the general manager as the representative would demonstrate Hingham Light's commitment to this project.

A motion was made to appoint Mr. Morahan as HMLP's representative to the Climate Action Commission.

**Roll Call Vote:**

**Mr. Herrald: Aye**

**Mr. Reive: Aye**

**Ms. Burns: Aye**

**Income Adjusted rate marketing update – Brianna Bennett**

Ms. Bennett has initiated marketing efforts for the Income Adjustment (IA) Rate. The notice was included in the HMLP monthly Invoice dated September 30, 2023. A full flier on the IA Rate will be sent out in the November 30th invoice, allowing those interested to submit their paperwork to HMLP by the end of December. Full-page fliers have been distributed to various Town Offices to include the Assessor's Department, Town Clerk's Office, Health Department, Library, Select Board, Senior Center, Treasurer's Office, Veterans Office, and the Zoning Department. Plans are underway to engage with the Food Pantry and local houses of worship.

Additionally, the flier will be marketed on various social media platforms. There is a financial assistance web page on the HMLP website. The rate can be found by going to [hmlp.com/assistance](http://hmlp.com/assistance). HMLP is considering organizing a senior breakfast event in November or early December in collaboration with the senior center and the Department of Elder Affairs to engage with the community to market the IA Rate.

**Approve Meeting Minutes - 9/12/23**

Discussed were some suggested revisions to the meeting minutes from September 12, 2023. Mr. Reive pointed out a correction: an extra 'S' in his last name that should be removed. Additionally, Mr. Reive discussed Sense Labs in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and clarified the specific costs associated with the smart meter itself, which is \$100 per unit. This means that replacing all the town's meters would cost less than a million dollars. The Sense package offers users the ability to use the Sense application for a one-time fee of \$30 per household, with no additional installation costs. Users simply log into the app to monitor energy usage.

Ms. Burns entertained a motion to approve the minutes of September 12, 2023.

**Roll Call Vote:**

**Mr. Herrald: Aye**

**Mr. Reive: Aye**

**Ms. Burns: Aye**

**Financials: 3-year Summary and YTD – August 2023**

In August, the kilowatt-hour sales exceeded 2 million but fell short of 2021 levels. Revenue for the

month reached \$3.5 million, consistent with previous years. Expenses saw a slight reduction, resulting in a net income of \$900,000 for August 2023. Mr. Morahan reported that HMLP is in excellent financial shape this year. Year-to-date, the net income stands at \$3.4 million. Although kWh sales have declined, revenue has increased. The significant revenue boost came in August due to the recent rate change. Expenses remain in line with expectations, and net income for the year now stands at \$3.4 million.

Ms. Griffin will monitor our financial status throughout 2023 to ensure we do not surpass an 8% threshold, and we may need to consider lowering the PCA if necessary. Ms. Burns inquired about the consequences if HMLP exceeds the 8% limit. Mr. Morahan explained that in such a scenario, HMLP would be required to notify the DPU. Ms. Burns stated any surplus funds would be earmarked for the transmission project. This allocation is a significant part of the rationale behind the proposal for a 6% increase each year for the next three years. The goal is to accumulate sufficient revenue by the end of this period to meet bond payments without the need for another rate increase, at least not one of the same magnitudes.

### **Updates: Transmission Line Project, EV chargers, HMLP Solar, Municipal Solar, Landfill Solar, Capital Projects**

Mr. Morahan reported that HMLP has made progress on the transmission line project. He recently met with Tom Mayo and Joe Fiser, and successfully secured the MOU. Now, the environmental team, led by Tighe and Bond, will be collaborating with Emily Wentworth to develop the next MOU. The goal is to ensure that we address all the town's needs and requirements for their processes before proceeding to obtain the comprehensive permit from the state.

HMLP has kept the town of Weymouth informed through regular updates. The Mayor of Weymouth has shown interest in meeting with the HMLP team, and plans are underway to schedule a meeting in the upcoming weeks. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss the project's current status and establish a timeline. The goal is to submit the permit application by the end of the fourth quarter, ensuring it reaches the siting board by year-end. Following the permit filing, a new phase involving community meetings will be triggered, with the entire process expected to take about two years from application submission to the Siting Board's final decision.

Mr. Morahan suggested considering going to the town meeting for bonding next year due to a prolonged procurement timeline for essential equipment. Since Eversource may not purchase the equipment until after the siting process, there's a proposal to explore assuming the risk and procuring the equipment independently, if permitted by Eversource. This proactive approach aims to minimize construction delays by ensuring the availability of necessary equipment. However, it's a matter we will need to assess in the upcoming months, but it's important to note that it wouldn't be feasible to address it within this year.

During the discussion, Mr. Reive inquired about the lead time for transformers, believing they were part of the new substation project. Mr. Morahan clarified that this project doesn't include a transformer at the substation; that would be a separate future project. Currently, the focus is on expanding the station footprint at Hobart Street to accommodate a transformer. At this location, they will be installing GIS switchgear for the transmission line, which will provide power to that location and back to Hobart. This setup will grant the capacity for a third line at Hobart. However, the addition of a station transformer is

deferred because the existing load doesn't justify it.

Mr. Reive expressed his concern, stating that if they are investing in a new substation, it should be capable of operating independently of the Hobart station. Mr. Girardi confirmed that the new line could cover the entire Hobart area and supply the town. Still, the installation of a new transformer and expansion of that component isn't currently necessary due to the existing load conditions.

Mr. Reive again expressed his concern regarding the scenario where a rapid transition to heat pumps during a severe cold snap could lead to the use of resistive heat as a backup. In such a situation, if one of the transformers were to fail, the entire town would rely on the remaining two transformers.

While there is sufficient line capacity to bring power into the town, there wouldn't be enough transformer capacity to regulate the voltage, which is a cause for concern.

Mr. Morahan acknowledged the concern and explained that they had indeed discussed the possibility of adding a transformer due to the growth observed over the past decade. However, despite expectations of future load growth, the studies conducted thus far did not provide sufficient data to justify the cost of adding a transformer. Consequently, they decided not to approach the Siting Board to request a new transformer, as there was no empirical data to support the need for one, making it challenging to justify the expenditure. Mr. Morahan also noted that if, within the next five years, they observe an unexpectedly significant increase in load, they may need to revisit the conversation regarding a new transformer. However, based on the studies conducted, they do not anticipate such load growth for at least another 10 years.

### **EV Chargers**

Mr. Morahan reported that all the new EV chargers have been installed around town. The discussion revolved around several aspects of EV charging, such as implementing an idle fee, changing the pricing structure to allow dynamic pricing, and dealing with situations where people park in charging spots without being connected to an EV. They've updated signage to include a \$50 fine for non-charging vehicles. There's a grace period of around 30 minutes between the end of a charging session and the start of the idle charge. Payments are typically made through phone apps or dedicated EV cards.

There is an EV showcase planned for October 22, 2023 to celebrate the installation of the new charging stations and provide an opportunity for people to explore various electric vehicle models. The event, organized by Hingham Drives Electric will run from 11:00 a.m.- 2 p.m. at the Station Street parking lot.

### **Municipal Solar**

The Municipal Solar Committee has been actively working on implementing solar projects. They proposed that the town should own the Municipal solar arrays, as it would benefit both ratepayers and taxpayers. The committee has ultimately reached a consensus regarding the most suitable approach, which Ms. Burns said both the town and its residents have endorsed. It is believed that the most favorable course of action would involve the town owning the solar arrays. Ms. Burns believes there is a greater advantage in allowing taxpayers to own the arrays, as it would lead to potential reductions in the town's budget and create a source of revenue. This stands in contrast to the light plant owning the arrays,

which would primarily result in solar energy benefits while contributing to reducing the town's carbon footprint. However, the town's response indicated that they are not inclined to put debt before taxpayers, especially given the previous year's financial challenges.

### **Landfill Solar**

Mr. Morahan provided an updated on the landfill solar project, highlighting HMLP's collaboration with Solar Design Associates. The objective is to secure a contract for the design phase. Construction is expected next spring, contingent on successful developments, and despite the project's duration, there's optimism about its successful completion.

### **Capital Projects**

Ms. Burns discussed the capital plan and raised the question of how incorporating meter replacement projects within the next three years might impact the capital plan. She noted that their team met last week to discuss the capital plan and would continue meeting weekly to outline the plan for the next five years. HMLP has ongoing projects, including one on Hersey Street, which will enhance feeder capacity. Another project on circuit 9 is set to start next year after purchasing the wire, which will alleviate thermal loading on that feeder. They plan to provide a more detailed update on the capital plan at the next meeting.

Ms. Burns suggested that the following topics should be added to the agenda of the next scheduled Board meeting.

**New Meter Technology:** determine our approach to adopting new meter technology, and revisit the plan after examining the capital plan.

**Time-of-Use Rate Discussion:** delay the discussion on time-of-use rates? Or, what should be our approach to it?

**Solar Credit Review:** review solar credits separately from the time-of-use rate discussion, given our discussions with the utilities so far.

**Option for Contributing to Carbon Reduction Goals:** consider offering an option for customers to contribute to carbon reduction goals to potentially involve community solar projects as well.

**Community Solar in a Municipal Light Plant Town:** What would implementing community solar projects look like in our municipal light plant town?

**The Future of Batteries:** should we have a broader conversation about our battery plans, including the potential for utility storage and incentivizing home battery installations. What are our goals for introducing storage into the town?

**EV Credits:** discuss the electric vehicle (EV) credits, as we can't currently verify the charging times and whether they are charging during peak hours.

There were no further comments, Ms. Burns motioned to adjourn,

Motion to adjourn

**Roll Call Vote:**

**Mr. Herrald: Aye**  
**Mr. Reive: Aye**  
**Ms. Burns: Aye**

Meeting concluded at 9:00 AM