



HINGHAM MUNICIPAL LIGHTING PLANT

31 Bare Cove Park Drive
Hingham, MA 02043
(781) 749-0134 FAX (781) 749-1396
www.hmlp.com

General Manager

Thomas Morahan
tmorahan@hmlp.com

Board Members

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

MEETING HINGHAM MUNICIPAL LIGHT BOARD

February 11, 2025
Zoom Meeting
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84108097736>

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, February 11, 2025.

Present:

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

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

Guests: Zoe Eckert - MMWEC - Sustainable Energy Program & Policy Senior Manager
Thomas Hargrave - MMWEC-Energy Efficiency Demand Response Coordinator

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 are hereby advised that this meeting and all communications during this meeting may be recorded by the Hingham Municipal Light Plant 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 stated that although there are no items under *Other-New Unforeseen Business*, she would like to discuss a request of the Board, from Energy New England, to write a letter in support of a water quality permit for First Light Power in Turner Falls, Massachusetts. The comment period for this request ends on February 24, 2025 so it would have to be added to this agenda as the Board does not meet again until March 2025.

NextZero presentation

Zoe Eckert and Thomas Hargrave are from NextZero which is the business that runs the demand response program for HMLP. Ms. Burns stated that they are here to explain to the Board how they court manufacturers to join their program as well as how the program is currently working. Ms. Eckert discussed OEM Integrations, Customer Applications, Customer Data Collection and the Transmission and Capacity Cost Avoidance Report.

OEM Integrations

Current OEM Integrations: Ms. Eckert provided a slide of each of the products and manufactures that are currently available within Connected Homes as well as those that are currently in Beta testing and should be available within Q2 of 2025.

Upcoming OEM Integrations: Ms. Eckert provided a slide of upcoming integrations. She stated that Stepwise, Franklin Whole Home Battery, and Tesla Powerwall should be available in Q2 of 2025. In addition, there is a list of electric vehicle brands that are currently in beta but will be available in Connected Homes in Q2. Virtual Peaker is working on an integration with GM but it will be a long-term project.

Available OEM Integrations: Ms. Eckert provided a slide of available integrations. She reiterated that if there is a brand that you would like Connected Homes to engage with, just let MMWEC know. MMWEC investigates if there are any startup costs to get them into Connected Homes and then all 17 of the participating MLPs vote on the program. If the device type gets approved by the MLPs, then it will be added to the program and the cost will be shared among all Connected Homes MLPs. If the device does not have the votes, then the integration can still be completed by an MLP; however, that MLP will bear the full cost of the integration. Costs vary from zero to \$10,000 but they cannot be shared in an executive session. If a brand is not on the list, then they will need to set up the API integration with Virtual Peaker as a first step.

Ms. Eckert asked the Board and HMLP if there are any manufacturer types that people are looking for with Connected Homes. Mr. Herrald responded that he gets asked about Ecobee thermostats. Ms. Eckert stated that Ecobee is likely in the API stage right now but she will provide Ms. Bennett with an update. Ms. Bennett asked for a status on Ford and Rivian. Ms. Eckert stated that Ford has pulled out nationally of all demand response programs as they want their own program; however, she has also heard that this is a common behavior with Ford and there is a high potential that they will rejoin the program. As for Rivian, Ms. Eckert will check with Virtual Peaker as they may not have the API integration setup. Ms. Eckert will provide an update to HMLP on Rivian once she has more information.

Ms. Burns questioned how mini-split controllers control the actual mini-split, is it an app or hardware. Ms. Eckert responded that it is both (app and hardware) because there is a little device that connects to the mini-split and then reads the app and controls the device.

Ms. Eckert will send over the OEM integration costs to Ms. Bennett so that she can share them offline with the Board.

Ms. Eckert explained that Connected Homes ability to talk to a device is based on the customer's Wi-Fi and no personal identifiable information is accessed. She stated that the biggest challenge is to ensure that customer's equipment successfully reconnects to the Wi-Fi when there is an interruption or upgrade in a connectivity device.

Customer Applications

Mr. Hargrave works on the Connected Homes program and he discussed how *pending* applications are handled. A pending application is one where a homeowner has submitted the application to be in Connected Homes but did not follow prompts to enroll their device once their application was submitted. He stated that submitted applications are reviewed within a week and then the customer is promoted to enroll their device. Connected Homes does assist customers in adding devices. If a device is not enrolled then Mr. Hargrave will send an email twice monthly to notify them that the process is incomplete. If a customer does not reply to the emails, then they are removed from the program so Connected Homes can prioritize active customers. Once removed, a customer can easily be placed back on the program if they successfully enroll their device.

Customer Data Collection

Mr. Hargrave explained that in order for Connected Homes to communicate with a Tesla electric vehicle during a peak event, it must have telematics enabled. Telematics allows Connected Homes to wirelessly send commands to the vehicle and then manage the energy usage. Telematics are manufacturer specific so Connected Homes does not have the ability to change. Mr. Hargrave stated that we need to make the customer aware that manufacturers have their own sets of data requirements that we do not have visibility to, nor do we have the ability to change these requirements. Connected Homes (MMWEC) only have visibility to three pieces of information: (1) is the car at home (2) is it charging and (3) the state of the charge. Mr. Hargrave did state that a lot of customers are upset that they have to agree to the "Vehicle Commands"; however, while not explicitly stated in their terms, customers are allowed to bypass.

Transmission and Capacity Cost Avoidance

Mr. Hargrave presented an analysis of the Hingham devices enrolled in the Connected Homes program and how much money has been saved as a result of enrollment. He stated that Hingham is one of the best positioned MLPs. Sixty percent of the devices that are enrolled are electric vehicles or EV chargers which carry ten times the savings of an HVAC device. Ms. Eckert said she will provide HMLP with the transmission and capacity cost avoidance calculation in the quarterly reporting moving forward.

Rate Study discussion

Ms. Burns would like to discuss the timing for the next rate study. It was originally thought that a rate study would be done every three years. Mr. Morahan stated that it has already been three years since we began our last rate study. He believes that there is a lot of work to be done on the integration of Weir River Water into the HMLP Customer Service and Billing so he would prefer to start a rate study after October 2025 or next year. Ms. Burns asked her fellow board members their thoughts on a rate study and Mr. Reive said it may be prudent to ask the vendor if things have changed substantially to pursue another study. Mr. Herrald questioned the risk to HMLP of not doing a study and having too high or too low rates. Mr. Morahan said that the budget file that Mrs. Griffin maintains monthly provides us with an indication of where we are financially but also allows us to utilize the PCA (power cost adjustment)

to adjust revenue as needed. Mrs. Griffin responded that she is comfortable with the rates because she has the flexibility to change the rate through the PCA or through the fuel adjustment. Mrs. Griffin believes that another rate study will just make sure everything is in the correct bucket versus not controlling our revenue. In addition, she stated that she would like to get more time under these rates as we are only in the third year. Mr. Reive voiced his concern over using the PCA and its volatility. He believes that it is used quite often and he would prefer that it be more consistent and spread over a longer period of time, rather than at a higher rate for a shorter period of time. Mrs. Griffin responded that Hingham Light has to address our changes as they come up. Ms. Burns asked that Mr. Reive and Mrs. Griffin schedule an offline conversation about the PCA.

Ms. Burns asked Mr. Morahan which vendor he would want to use for a rate study and he responded that he was good with the one we used prior (Utility Financial Solutions (UFS)). Ms. Burns stated that she does not have concerns about UFS's competence in models, results, and data but she does feel that their method of presenting resulted in a lot of wasted time. She expected a written report that laid out conclusions and recommendations so that the information could be reviewed prior to the meeting for a more productive session and then reference material for after the meeting. Mr. Morahan suggests a meeting with UFS to discuss expectations and he will set that up for a few months. Mr. Reive asked who the other MLPs used for their rate studies and Mr. Morahan stated that he will compose a list and send it to the Board.

Board Meeting recordings

Ms. Burns asked the Board how they feel about having their recorded meetings on the internet from a security perspective. She stated that the meeting minutes are the legal record of the meeting so the Board is meeting the legal requirement. Ms. Burns suggested archiving the recording and if someone made a request to view a meeting, they would receive a link to access it. Mr. Herrald and Mr. Reive were both supportive of that suggestion. Mr. Reive also suggested requiring account access where an individual would create a username and password that would then be provided access. Ms. Bennett suggested making the recording "private" in YouTube so an individual would have to request an access code to view them. The question of consistency across Boards in Hingham was raised and Ms. Burns stated that when she was on the Select Board she worked hard to convince boards to record their meetings; however, there was not much success. Ms. Burns suggested that the staff come back with a proposed policy on recording and storing board meetings. Ms. Bennett stated that HMLP averages twenty views on a given meeting.

On Board Manual for New Commissioners

Ms. Burns suggested an on-board manual, both virtual and hardcopy, for new commissioners that would include bullet points 1-5. Mr. Herrald added that the link to the state Conflict of Interest materials

1. All the policies that the board has created, which are those listed on the policy pages of the website.
2. Organization chart
3. General Manager's current contract and any amendments to it
4. Attorney General's handbook on the Open Meeting Law
5. Secretary of State's guide to the Public Records law
6. State Conflict of Interest training materials.
 - a. The General Manager provides the state with new board members email so they are notified that the training must take place every two years. An acknowledgement of the material is required every other year.

Ms. Burns asked that anyone with an idea can send it to Mr. Morahan and then if the Board thinks it is a good idea, she will bring it back as policy. Mr. Morahan offered to send Ms. Burns a document from Deirdre Lawrence, HMLP legal counsel, which lists the Board's responsibilities.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

December 17, 2024 meeting minutes are still under review and will not be approved at this meeting.

The meeting minutes for January 14, 2025 were approved.

There was a motion to approve the January 14, 2025 meeting notes.

Vote:

Mr. Herrald -Aye

Mr. Reive - Aye

Ms. Burns - Aye

Updates: Transmission Line Project, Municipal Solar, Capital Projects

- *Transmission Line Project:* Mr. Morahan stated that he has not heard back from the Siting Board but he does have a meeting with Mayor Hedlund of Weymouth on Thursday, February 13, 2025 to give him a status briefing. Mr. Morahan is hopeful that some additional meetings can be scheduled with the City Councilors from Weymouth as well. Mr. Morahan has had individual meetings with Senator O'Connor, Representative Joan Meschino, and Representative James Murphy to brief them on the project. Mr. Morahan is waiting for the Energy Facility Siting Board to provide him with a schedule for when public discussions can begin. Mr. Morahan stated that he can do another informational meeting with the citizens of Hingham, if the Board feels the need, but he thought it was covered in the December 2024 open meeting regarding the rate increase.
- *Municipal Solar:* Ms. Burns stated that the Solar Task Force had proposed that the Town ask Town Meeting for funds to review the condition of roofs to evaluate the possibility of putting solar arrays on the roofs. Originally, the Town indicated that they would like a third-party project so the town does not have to front any money; however, they found that what municipalities pay for electricity is so low it is not appealing to third-party contractors to take on such a project. The Town is now in agreement with the Solar Task Force that Hingham should own the arrays so that they can project the exact savings which should be appealing to the taxpayers. The Town is proposing that they will ask some solar developers to verify the findings of the Solar Task Force regarding orientation of roofs and yield and then go to the state for a meta grant for the technical assistance for the project. Once they get the grant, then they would go to Town Meeting in 2026 with a proposal to fund some solar arrays on roofs. Ms. Burns feels that since the Select Board wants revenue generating projects on its list, this is good timing for the solar.
Mr. Reive questioned the cost of the study that the Town is proposing and Ms. Burns stated that she did not know. She said that the Town has some developers who have volunteered their time to help look at the roofs and verify the work of the Solar Task Force. Ms. Burns stated that no such study will be necessary on the new public safety building, Foster School, the new building at the Country Club, and the landfill because they are already "solar ready". Mr. Reive asked if HMLP could fund the study. Ms. Burns stated that all of the depreciation funds are already dedicated to the transmission project and the revenue from the RECs is being used to pay for the meter conversion. Ms. Burns said that we do not rely on any federal funds when questioned about the impact of President Trump's executive order freezing funds for green energy infrastructure.

- *Capital Projects:* Mr. Morahan stated that the last project in 2024, upgrading circuit 9, is now complete. No 2025 projects have begun. We are waiting on the MBTA for a permit to begin the insulator replacement project. The insulator project may have to be pushed off to the fall of 2025. Mr. Reive asked what the risks are of pushing the insulator project off and Mr. Morahan stated that it is a potential reliability issue as we have not had any additional failures, past the first one. Mr. Reive believes HMLP needs to get someone on the policy side to speak to the MBTA to get a response on the permit. Mr. Morahan will reach out to our local representatives for assistance.
- *Municipal Heat Pump Forum:* Ms. Bennett stated that the forum will take place on Saturday, March 22, 2025 from 12:00 pm to 3pm at the House of Prayer Lutheran Church in Hingham.
- *Food Drive:* The food drive to support the Hingham Food Pantry is going very well. It was on the flyer in the bills and printed in the message section of the previous month's bill.

Other- New Unforeseen Business

There is a request from Energy New England (ENE) for Hingham Light to support the 401 Water Quality Certification for First Light, Turner Falls Hydroelectric and the Northfield Mountain pump storage project. HMLP receives approximately 8% of our energy from First Light. Mr. Reive questioned what percentage is actually hydro or is some pumped, so that he can better understand the impact if the certification is not renewed. Mr. Morahan stated that he would have to get those figures from Ken Stambler at ENE. Ms. Burns explained that she did some research and found that some of the neighbors of the pump project oppose the certification because of the environmental damage that is being done to the river as well as the fact that it is sold as renewable energy but they use fossil fuels to pump the water. She stated that the Board has a responsibility to protect the 8% of our power supply that we rely on and that most of our contracts are long term so even if we dislike a practice, we cannot cancel a contract. Ms. Burns and Mr. Herrald do not feel that they have enough information to make an informed decision. Mr. Reive feels the Board has a fiduciary responsibility to ensure they are working diligently to decarbonize our power sources. Mr. Reive believes HMLP should support the letter and he has made a motion to do so. Mr. Herrald does not see any reason not to support the Mass. DEP, who is issuing the permit so he has seconded the motion.

Ms. Burns asked for a vote of all in favor or the motion to respond positively to ENE's request for support for the water quality certificate.

Mr. Reive - "Aye"

Mr. Herrald - "Aye"

Ms. Burns - "Nay"

The motion has passed.

Ms. Burns entertained a motion to enter executive session not to return to public session pursuant to Mass General Law, Chapter 30A, Section 21 A2 for the purpose of conducting a strategy session in preparation for negotiations with non-union personnel or contract negotiations with non-union personnel. Mr. Reive made the motion and it was seconded by Mr. Herrald.

Motion to adjourn the meeting.

Mr. Herrald: "Aye"

Mr. Reive: "Aye"

Ms. Burns: "Aye"

Meeting adjourned at 5:27 pm

Attachment: MMWEC presentation