



# Town of Reading Meeting Minutes

## Board - Committee - Commission - Council:

RMLD Citizens Advisory Board

Date: 2022-07-28

Time: 6:00 PM

Building: Reading Municipal Light Building

Location: Winfred Spurr Audio Visual Room

Address: 230 Ash Street

Session: Open Session

Purpose: General Business

Version:

### Attendees: **Members - Present:**

Remote Participants: Mr. Jason Small, Chair (North Reading); Mr. Vivek Soni, Vice Chair (Reading); Mr. Dennis Kelley (Wilmington); Mr. Ken Welter (Lynnfield)

### **Members - Not Present:**

Mr. George Hooper, Wilmington

### **Others Present:**

Staff: Mr. Gregory Phipps, Ms. Julie Blackley, Ms. Kathleen Rybak

Others: Ms. Marlana Bitá, RMLD Board of Commissioners

Remote Participants: Mr. Christopher Haley, Reading Select Board CAB  
Liaison

**Minutes Respectfully Submitted By:** Jason Small, Chair

*Jason Small*  
Jason Small (Mar 28, 2023 14:51 EDT)

## Topics of Discussion:

### 1. Call Meeting to Order – J. Small, Chair

Chair Small called the meeting of the Citizens' Advisory Board to order at 6:00 PM and noted the meeting was being audio recorded. Chair Small asked all members present (in person and remotely) to state their names.

### 2. Interim General Manager's Report – G. Phipps, Interim General Manager

*Talent Acquisition and Talent Management:* Mr. Phipps provided a staffing update, noting three upcoming retirements: Mr. Leo Keefe, Ms. Maureen McHugh, and Mr. Charles Underhill. Mr. Phipps expressed appreciation for their contributions to RMLD. Mr. Phipps then reviewed the ongoing recruitment efforts and progress on filling current vacancies including engineering, line operations, Director of IT, Senior Network and Security Engineer, Director of Finance, and a new Human Resources position.

*Flex Time Pilot:* Mr. Phipps reported that RMLD began a flex-time pilot in early July; the pilot does not currently include line workers. There is a mix of different schedules with variability in terms of start and end times (four ten-hour days, four nine-hour days with a half day on Friday, or the more traditional five eight-hour days). Currently, the pilot is scheduled to end on September 2nd and will be re-evaluate then. The customer service window is open later each day (with extended hours on Thursday night) and closed on Fridays.

3. Communications Update – J. Blackley Communications Manager

**Materials:** Communications Update, presentation slides dated July 28, 2022

Ms. Blackley, the new Communications Manager, provided a review of initiatives currently underway including a Social Media Revival (Slide 2). Ms. Blackley noted the RMLD Facebook page had been dormant for five years and the Twitter page was being used sparingly for outage updates. Staff has begun posting to promote RMLD programs and events; the hope is that continual postings will help with organic growth on these social media platforms. Ms. Blackley then reported that RMLD will be sending hand-signed “New Customer Welcome Letters” as outlined on Slide 3. Currently, RMLD reaches out to new customers each month, with an email which is very “link heavy” that provides information about RMLD programs. These letters are an opportunity to provide more personalized communication. Ms. Blackley then reviewed Ongoing Efforts (Slide 4).

4. Hydro Quebec Phase I/Phase II Converter – G. Phipps, Interim General Manager

**Materials:** HQ Phase I/Phase II Converter presentation slides dated July 28, 2022

Mr. Phipps provided a general overview of the Hydro Quebec (HQ) Phase I/Phase II Converter (Slide 2), which is a high voltage transmission line that comes from Canada down to New England (into Massachusetts). With Phase II, Hydro Quebec increased the capacity up to 2,000 megawatts. RMLD has rights to 9.4 MW of that capacity but does not actually use the asset to receive power. RMLD sells the use rights to other US entities (including National Grid and Eversource) and receives dividends (~\$550,000) for RMLD’s equity share. As rights owners (equity share owners), RMLD also incurs costs to maintain the asset (~\$150,000 per year). The net/net to RMLD is approximately \$400,000 per year which directly offsets RMLD’s power supply costs.

Mr. Phipps then reviewed the History (Slide 3) of RMLD’s interest in the project. RMLD has maintained (as part of a coalition with other MLP’s) an interest in Hydro Quebec since day one. RMLD’s total entitlement to the Hydro Quebec Phase I/Phase II is 9.4 megawatts. The minimum (combined) commitment to do a joint purchase (with the other MLPs/equity holders) is approximately 100 megawatts. Mr. Phipps noted there may also be an opportunity to take advantage of flow rights, which RMLD is investigating; if successful, those flow rights would start in January of 2024.

Moving to Slide 4: Going Forward, Mr. Phipps noted Hydro Quebec is an important part of RMLD’s portfolio because it is non-carbon; the vast majority is hydro and a small portion is nuclear. However, currently there are no certificates linked to Hydro Quebec. A small group will be working with the state, MMWEC, and ENE to figure out a mechanism for Massachusetts to put in place some sort of (non-carbon) certificate recognition for the power coming down from Hydro Quebec. RMLD is interested in purchasing power; it is dispatchable, and it is stable power, which is critically important for RMLD. RMLD has begun working (through ENE) with individuals on the Canadian side to secure power purchase agreements.

Mr. Phipps reported that current going-forward options (unless something changes dramatically) is to maintain our rights and to the extent those rights if the opportunity presents itself (i.e., other entities want to sell their rights).

Moving to Slide 5: Key Actions, Mr. Phipps noted RMLD would like to secure as much of the rights to the Hydro Quebec resource as possible and to get into a supply agreement in preparation for our ability to use the line starting in January of 2024. There are already international agreements between Hydro Quebec and US entities, but it will be unique for RMLD

to source power internationally, as far as Canada is concerned. Mr. Phipps asked if there were any questions.

Mr. Soni reiterated that the project has been around for a while and RMLD has been an owner of part of a project but has not received power from the project. Mr. Phipps responded that was correct. Instead of RMLD using the asset to receive power, RMLD currently sells those rights; RMLD is in the third 20-year extension in terms of participating. In the past RMLD has not needed access to the power, but benefited from keeping the rights and it has been a positive financial gain.

Mr. Soni asked about timing issues; timing to get power from them, and then there's the timing for that power to be considered non-carbon. Are they two separate timelines? Mr. Phipps responded that there were two separate timelines. RMLD flow rights would not (potentially) start until (at the earliest) January 2024, and RMLD would need to have a contract with Hydro Quebec on the generation side to actually use the power through that transmission line. Hydro Quebec is a transmission facility not a generation facility; but they do own generation assets in Canada that are typically tied to this transmission line. That is the first piece.

The short-term timeline is for RMLD to get flow rights and then determine if we can use our 9.4 megawatts equity share (without being part of the 100-megawatt coalition). Then for whatever power that comes down, there is interest in having certificates tied to it. For RMLD that does not need to take place until 2030; RMLD's portfolio is already in good shape to meet the 2030 target of 50% of sales being non-carbon with the contracts we currently have in place. From a pricing standpoint, it is expected that Hydro Quebec will be looking for the non-carbon premium. What those numbers will be is not known, but generally speaking it is expected to be an affordable, reliable, stable, and non-carbon source of energy.

The group continued a discussion of the Hydro Quebec project relative to generation, transmission, bringing the transmission lines into the United States through the northern states, and availability of certificates, as well as additional initiatives that the RMLD will be exploring to meet the Climate Law regulations.

5. Reading Town Website: CAB Member Communication – G. Phipps, Interim General Manager

Mr. Phipps reported that the Town of Reading website includes contact forms with links (on all board pages) to allow the public to contact individual board members; an email would be generated automatically to the email address associated (linked) with that board member. The question for the CAB is what mechanism should be used to allow public contact to CAB members through the Town website. CAB members noted that they had received a communication from the Town Clerk relative to this request. The group discussed various options.

Mr. Phipps summarized the preference as follows: The Executive Assistant's email to be linked to all public inquiries directed to CAB members. An RMLD email address with a password will be created for each CAB member. The Executive Assistant will forward public inquiries to the individual CAB member(s) at their RMLD email address and notify the appropriate CAB member(s) when they have received an email. The CAB member could then respond through the RMLD email. Mr. Phipps noted no vote was necessary, but that he would take that as action item.

6. Scheduling – J. Small, Chair

Chair Small noted that an update from the General Manager Selection Committee was not included on the Agenda because the Committee had not yet met due to scheduling difficulties. CAB meetings were scheduled for September 15th at 6:00 PM (prior to the BOC meeting); October 13th at 6:00 pm. The October meeting will be the annual budget review to be held outside of Reading at a location to be determined; November 17th at 6:00 PM; and December 22<sup>nd</sup> at 6:00 PM. Coverage for the Board of Commissioners meeting was set as follows: September 15th, Mr. Welter; October 20th, Mr. Soni; November 17th, Mr. Kelley; and December 22<sup>nd</sup>, Chair Small.

7. Motion to Adjourn – J. Small, Chair

Mr. Soni made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Kelley seconded the motion. **Motion carried**, 4:0:1 (4 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 absent) by roll call vote of those present: Mr. Soni, aye; Mr. Kelley, aye; Mr. Welter, aye; Chair Small, aye.

The CAB meeting adjourned at 7:00 PM.

As approved on March 23, 2023.