



## Town of Reading Meeting Minutes

### **Board - Committee - Commission - Council:**

RMLD Board of Commissioners

Date: 2019-06-20

Time: 07:00 PM

Building: Reading Municipal Light Building

Location: Winfred Spurr Audio Visual Room

Address: 230 Ash Street

Session: Open Session

Purpose: General Business

Version: Final

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

David Talbot, Chair; John Stempeck, Vice Chair; David Hennessy, Commissioner; Thomas O'Rourke, Commissioner; Philip B. Pacino, Commissioner

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

### **Others Present:**

RMLD Staff: Coleen O'Brien, General Manager; Hamid Jaffari, Director of Engineering and Operations; Charles Underhill, Assistant Director of Integrated Resources; Wendy Markiewicz, Director of Business, Finance and Utility Technology; Tracy Schultz, Executive Assistant

Citizens' Advisory Board: Vivek Soni

Town of Reading: Karen Herrick, Finance Committee; Mark Dockser, Select Board; Vanessa Alvarado, Select Board.

Bob and Kathy Bythrow; Janice Conyers; Geoffrey Coram; Daniel Covey; Nicholas DaSilva; Miyoung Diedrich; Ellis John; Andrew Hikade; David Kopelman; Norman Kozlowski; Bruce MacKenzie; Gordon McIntosh; Rachel Nadolny; Micahel Nazzaro; Robert Rainville; John Sano; Ethan Sawyer; Michael Shapiro; Lisa Supple; Jaykiran Teraiya; Robert Underwood; Jonathan Wisco; Ernest Wronka; Ken Young; Jim Grier; Joe Malek; Christopher Crane; Kim Rose; David Williams; John Rogers; David and Gayle Smith; Denise McCarthy; Michael Rosa; Celeste Krache; Niew Nguyen; Lam Tran; Peter Kracke.

**Minutes Respectfully Submitted By:** John Stempeck, Secretary Pro Tem

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### **Topics of Discussion:**

#### **Call Meeting to Order**

Chair Talbot called the meeting to order and read RMLD's Code of Conduct. Chair Talbot announced that the meeting is being videotaped at the RMLD office at 230 Ash Street, for distribution to the community television stations in North Reading, Lynnfield, and Wilmington.

#### **Public Comment**

Chair Talbot asked Mr. Pacino to serve as Board Secretary. There was no Citizens' Advisory Board member in attendance and no public comment.

## **Solar Workshop – presentation and public dialogue (main boardroom)**

### **a. Introduction and Purpose of Workshop**

Chair Talbot explained that the purpose of the meeting is to engage with the public regarding solar generation.

### **b. Presentation**

#### **1. Solar Economics and Impacts**

Mr. Underhill discussed solar economics, including fitting solar to the load profile, distribution options, the cost per watt and federal, state, and RMLD incentives. Solar impacts, including weather, capacity and transmission peaks, phantom load, and system efficiency were reviewed, as well as the effects of shade, panel location and panel orientation.

Solar goals and objectives.

#### **2. System Examples**

Mr. Underhill explained the components of a solar system.

#### **3. RMLD Solar Goals and Objectives**

Mr. Underhill discussed providing ratepayers with opportunities, meeting legislative objectives, developing sustainable rates, and minimizing adverse consequences.

### **c. Current RMLD and other Solar Programs**

RMLD's current offerings were reviewed, including Solar Choice.

### **d. Public Dialogue and Q&A Period**

Mr. Dockser of Reading asked how to move forward with determining solar potential for municipalities. Mr. Underhill explained that town buildings would be examined to determine suitable rooftops for solar installation. RMLD could assist with behind-the-meter generation by developing a lease structure. If the towns express interest, RMLD would put together a proposal. The larger the scale and the more communities that participate, the more likely RMLD is to find suitable sites. Mr. Dockser asked how communities would communicate their interest. Chair Talbot stated the Select Board could let the RMLD Board know. Ms. Alvarado of Reading clarified that there are no current solar installations on municipal buildings in any of the four communities. Chair Talbot affirmed. Ms. Alvarado asked what an ideal solar installation would look like and the number of kilowatt hours that RMLD would like to see coming from municipal installments. Mr. Underhill explained an optimal site would be a two-story building with a flat roof and no surrounding trees. Ms. O'Brien asked if the MLP incentive was based on location. Mr. Underhill explained that the incentive is paid based on the size of the project. The location determines whether the project passes a minimum requirement threshold. Mr. Coram added that if the installation is done in a shaded area, while you would get the rebate for the installation, the payback time would be longer than seven years because of less power generation. Mr. Underhill affirmed. Mr. Sawyer of Wilmington asked for clarification on what is considered a municipal property and whether a project could be done on a leased property. Mr. Underhill replied that it could if the landlord was amenable. Mr. Soni asked about the fifteen percent limit on each feeder. Mr. Underhill explained that was established by the Department of Energy as a conservative estimate as to how much solar a distribution system can handle. Mr. Jaffari explained that a per-site system impact study is performed to determine how much current the system can handle before it is negatively impacted.

Ms. Conyers from Reading asked what the first step is. Mr. Underhill explained residents can contact installers if they are planning on buying the solar system. Then, residents should go on the Energy New England website and begin the application process for the system rebate. The system site will then be evaluated for feasibility. Mr. Covey of North Reading stated that he has solar on his home and he has been in the solar industry for about a decade. Mr. Covey clarified that RMLD does not have net metering and instead has live bi-directional metering and stated that he hopes RMLD transitions to the former. Mr. Covey stated that the payback period would be eleven years according to his calculations. Mr. Underhill explained that the six-and-a-half-year period he referenced includes RMLD's buyback energy rate, which is the market energy offset price at four cents a kilowatt hour. Mr. Underhill stated that net metering-same in and same out- is not sustainable. Mr. Underhill stated that RMLD doesn't make a profit but needs to maintain its electric system. Chair Talbot asked for future clarification about how RMLD stands with other municipals and its solar. Mr. Underhill stated that he can pull that information and that he knows other municipals don't offer an installation incentive.

**d. Public Dialogue and Q&A Period**

Mr. Stempeck added that RMLD has rates that are much lower than National Grid or Eversource. Mr. Grier of North Reading asked where RMLD is at with storage. Chair Talbot mentioned RMLD's grant for a grid battery. Mr. Underhill stated that there are no economically functional batteries at this point. Mr. Underhill mentioned the Tesla Wall and Mr. Stempeck stated that he had looked into it a few years ago and was given a quote of \$37,000 for the battery packs. A citizen (name undecipherable) stated that, per his cell search, a power wall costs \$7,800 per watt and it stores 4 kilowatts and you install two or three. That price includes installation. Mr. Underhill asked how many hours of storage that provides. The citizen was unsure and asked if the rebate applies to a power wall. Mr. Underhill explained it's only for the solar system. Mr. Hikade stated that he works for Revision Energy in North Andover and stated that one Power Wall is thirteen and a half kilowatt hours of usable storage. The average household uses between 21 and 27 kilowatt hours per day. The Power Wall has five kilowatts of continuous output for 2.7 hours.

Mr. Rogers of Reading presented slides that he had prepared for the meeting (unsolicited). The slides addressed residential solar adoption rates and homeowner savings. Mr. Rogers stated the average adoption rate off solar for Massachusetts residents is 5.6 percent; for municipalities it is 1.1 percent. RMLD's adoption rate is 0.4 percent. Mr. Rogers stated that RMLD should embrace solar.

Mr. Sawyer of Wilmington stated that he is a tax preparer and that most of his clients who have solar lease it due to the high purchase price. Mr. Sawyer stated that he believes RMLD has such low solar penetration because customers only have the option to buy. Mr. Underhill explained that RMLD has a Solar Choice option for people who don't have large upfront resources available. A citizen from North Reading asked about maintenance of the solar panels. Mr. Underhill explained that if the panels are behind the meter, they are the customer's responsibility. Mr. MacKenzie of Reading asked if rooftop solar can power a furnace or a refrigerator if the power goes out. Mr. MacKenzie stated that he had looked into it years ago and there was no reasonably priced equipment to disconnect the house from the grid. Mr. Underhill stated that a solar system will not stay on in the event of an outage due to safety ... Mr. Kikade stated that the Tesla energy gateway will isolate from the grid and allow the solar array to power your battery. It works the same way a generator relay works so it isolates the grid to prevent backfeeding. Mr. Underhill stated that's applicable with the introduction of a battery system: that's more than just a solar system. Mr. Conlon from Dracut stated he is a solar installer and an electrician. Mr. Conlon stated that the most important piece of maintenance for solar is keeping trees cut back to prevent shade and deter squirrels. Mr. Conlon stated that there are systems that will function when the power goes down. There's a type of inverter that allows 2,000 watts when the sun is shining. Mr. Kracke from Reading asked for an explanation what the issues are with phantom loads. Mr. Underhill stated that the system needs to be sized according to how much electric is needed: solar behind the meter is invisible.

Chair Talbot thanked the crowd for their attendance and participation.

**Report on Citizens' Advisory Board Meeting on June 19, 2019**

Mr. O'Rourke stated that Mr. Jaffari gave an update on engineering projects.

**Approval of Board Minutes**

**March 21, 2019**

Mr. Pacino made a motion, seconded by Mr. Stempeck that the Board approve the meeting minutes of March 21, 2019, on the recommendation of the General Manager.

**Motion Carried: 5:0:0.**

**Small Business Energy Tax Exemption – Mr. Underhill**

Mr. Underhill reminded small businesses that they are responsible for submitting for an energy exemption through the Massachusetts Department of Revenue.

**RMLD Procurement Requests Requiring Board Approval  
IFP 2019-15 ABB OVR-3 15kV Reclosers**

Mr. Jaffari explained that invitations for proposals were sent to 12 vendors: three responded.

**RMLD Procurement Requests Requiring Board Approval****IFP 2019-15 ABB OVR-3 15kV Reclosers**

Mr. Pacino made a motion, seconded by Mr. O'Rourke, that proposal IFP 2019-15 for ABB OVR-3 15kV Reclosers be awarded to: Stuart C. Irby Company for a total of \$74,700.00, pursuant to M.G.L. c. 164 Section 56D, on the recommendation of the General Manager.

**Motion Carried: 5:0:0.**

**IFP 2019-16 Stand-by Generator and ATS**

Mr. Jaffari stated that invitations for bids were sent to 22 vendors: three responded. Two met the requirements but the lowest bidder took exceptions.

Mr. Pacino made a motion, seconded by Mr. Stempeck, that proposal IFP 2019-16 for Stand-by Generator and ATS be awarded to: Power Product Systems LLC for \$87,000.00, pursuant to M.G.L. c. 164, Section 56D, on the recommendation of the General Manager.

**Motion Carried: 5:0:0.**

**General Discussion**

Future meeting dates were discussed.

**BOARD MATERIAL AVAILABLE BUT NOT DISCUSSED**

Account Payable/Payroll Questions

**Executive Session**

At 9:28 p.m., Mr. Pacino made a motion, seconded by Mr. Stempeck, that the Board go into Executive Session to consider the purchase of real property, to discuss confidential, competitively-sensitive and proprietary information in relation to making, selling, or distributing electric power and energy, and to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining and return to Regular Session for the sole purpose of adjournment.

A true copy of the RMLD Board of Commissioners minutes  
as approved by a majority of the Commission.

John Stempeck, Secretary Pro Tem  
RMLD Board of Commissioners

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Stempeck", written in a cursive style.