



Town of Reading Meeting Minutes

Board - Committee - Commission - Council:

RMLD Board of Commissioners

Date: 2022-11-02

Time: 5:30 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:**

Philip Pacino, Vice Chair; John Stempeck, Commissioner; David Talbot, Commissioner; Robert Coulter, Commissioner; Marlena Bitá, Chair.

Members - Not Present:

Others Present:

RMLD Staff: Erica Morse, Executive Assistant; Ben Bloomenthal, Director of Accounting & Finance, Tyler Abegg, Sr. Systems Administrator.

General Manager Candidates: Jonathan Blair, General Manager, Ipswich Electric Light Department; Jared Carpenter, Manager of Utilities Administration, Port of Oakland Public Electric Utility; Gregory Phipps, Interim General Manager & Director of Integrated Resources, RMLD

Minutes Respectfully Submitted By: Philip B. Pacino, Secretary Pro Tem

Topics of Discussion:

The meeting agenda and materials can be found on the RMLD website. The recording of this meeting can be viewed on the RMLD website and RCTV YouTube page.

Call Meeting to Order

Chair Bitá called the RMLD Board of Commissioner's (BoC) meeting to order at 5:30 PM and announced that the meeting would be held in person, remotely on zoom, and streamed live on RCTV and YouTube.

Opening Remarks and Introductions

Chair Bitá read the RMLD BoC Code of Conduct and noted that there were no remote attendees. Chair Bitá stated that Interviews for the General Manager position will not begin prior to 6:00 PM. Vice Chair Pacino served as Secretary at the meeting.

Executive Session

At 5:32 PM, Vice Chair Pacino made a **motion**, seconded by Commissioner Stempeck, move that the Board of Commissioners go into Executive Session pursuant to Massachusetts G.L. c.164 section 47D, exemption from public records and open meeting requirements in certain instances, to conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel or to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations with nonunion personnel; and return to regular session, for the continuation of regular session.

Motion Carried: 5:0:0 (5 in favor, 0 absent, 0 abstained) Roll Call: Vice Chair Pacino, Aye; Commissioner Stempeck, Aye; Commissioner Talbot, Aye; Commissioner Coulter, Aye; Chair Bitá, Aye.

The BoC relocated to the General Manager's Conference Room for the Executive Session. After the adjournment of Executive Session the BoC returned immediately to the AV room for the continuation of Regular Session.

Call Meeting to Order – Return to Regular Session

At 6:05 PM Chair Bitá called the RMLD BoC Open Session meeting to order.

Public Comment

Chair Bitá stated the following: the RMLD Board of Commissioners will not be taking public comment at this meeting. Any person who would like to provide feedback or comments relative to the finalists can do so via email following the adjournment of tonight's Regular Session meeting until November 3rd, 2022, 3:00 PM EST. Please email all correspondences to Erica Morse (emorse@rml.com), whose contact information can be found on the agenda posting for this meeting on the RMLD website.

Interview General Manager Candidates

Chair Bitá introduced the three General Manager candidates: Jonathan Blair, Jared Carpenter, and Gregory Phipps.

Chair Bitá explained the interview process. Each interview was allotted 50 minutes. Each candidate was asked five pre-determined interview questions with ten minutes to answer each question. Commissioners were permitted to ask follow-up questions. Any remaining time at the end of the interview could be used to address anything not mentioned. The BoC was provided 10 minutes between each interview to record notes.

Interview Questions

The five pre-determined interview questions were as follows:

1. This question is intended to help us understand your vision for how you would respond to a catastrophic {Level 5} event across Massachusetts that leaves both transmission and distribution networks flat. Please prepare a response in under 10 minutes discussing how, as the RMLD General Manager, you would respond to the following scenarios in this unprecedented situation as part of your efforts to restore power to RMLD customers. **People' Scenario:** Absentee rates are currently running above 15% at RMLD when this event hits because a new Covid strain had emerged, and public health officials were recommending isolation to prevent the spread. As a result, the workforce is stretched thin already: Important when approaching this scenario from GM does not get drawn to deeply into the weeds of things that there are experts within org within their capacity to solve in an effective and efficient way. **'Processes' (Loss of Applications and Telecommunications Providers) Scenario:** In addition to the power being out, the communications network at RMLD is down. The telecommunications lines and backup wireless are nonfunctional. Cellular service is extremely spotty due to tower damage. No internal communications systems are operational. Both internal and customer facing business applications are down as well. **'Critical Infrastructure' Scenario: A notification is received that because of the sudden loss of power, a flash occurred in one of the substations.** The flash started a fire, destroying two circuit breakers. All employees are safe. The local inspection authorities do not want anyone entering the area abutting this substation. But bringing the circuit breakers back online is the only way to restore power to the area.
2. All utilities try to shed the peak on ISO predicted peak days. How would you go beyond this to substantially suppress demand at all peak hours of all days to reduce power supply costs and reduce emissions? Please be specific to what you would do as General Manager of the RMLD to consistently produce a large-scale reduction of

the daily peak and why this might be important.

3. Please provide your vision and business plan that you would implement as GM at RMLD. How would you bring these unique skills to incorporate the RMLD team. What do you bring that can drive RMLD to meet the future vision of the business?
4. Please tell us what state, regional, and federal (specifically affecting Municipal Light Plants) or other policies you see on the horizon impacting the utility business. What policies would you advocate for and what might you oppose? Please consider this question in light of electrification, carbon reduction and peak management.
5. Please tell us why you think you are the right person for the RMLD General Manager position.

Jonathan Blair, General Manager, Ipswich Electric Light Department

Chair Bita introduced the first candidate, Jonathan Blair. Core interview questions can be referenced on page 2 of the meeting minutes.

Blair joined the meeting at 6:10 PM.

Commissioner Coulter asked question 1.

- Blair discussed his approach to the situation as the RMLD General Manager, with a focus on restoring power to RMLD customers.
- Blair emphasized the importance of the GM assuming responsibility for high level tasks, such as reaching out for Mutual Aid from regional and national public power organizations and utilizing legislative representatives for potential support and aid.
- Blair discussed the importance of managing organizations by removing obstacles and allowing experts to focus on their work.
- Blair noted that taking care of the crew and ensuring their well-being is a high priority.
- Blair discussed his approach to prioritizing the restoration of communication networks and utilizing backup resources.
- Blair discussed the importance of trusting experts, including the engineering team, and mitigating risks while solving the problem.

Commissioner Talbot asked question 2.

- Blair noted the importance of focusing on Peak demand reduction as it has a significant impact on the regional grid.
- Blair said that Peak demand is expected to increase with electrification and the strategic electrification of transportation and housing sectors.
- Blair discussed his approach to peak demand as a three-tiered problem.
 - Tier 1: deploying peak reducing technologies at the utility level, such as the generator and battery at substation 3 in North Reading, which can be easily defined, executed, and controlled in-house.
 - Tier 2: allowing customers to participate in reducing peak demand, either through incentives for distributed battery technology or by designing rates to drive behavior.
 - Tier 3: designing rates to drive behavior, using dynamic rate structures, such as time of use or EV rates, to communicate with customers and incentivize them to naturally avoid Peaks.
- Blair said tier 3 is the ideal standard, but it requires solid education and outreach to ensure customers understand the reasons for the rate structure and anticipate and adjust their behavior accordingly.

- Blair emphasized that economics could drive behavior and that designing and communicating rates that naturally avoid Peaks can lead to a perfect match of supply and demand, resulting in no more Peaks.

Commissioner Talbot asked a follow up question relative to Peak demand.

- Blair shared his experience with the Ipswich rate design and study, where he observed a larger component of distribution costs on a fixed level and variability in time of delivery.
- In terms of rate design, Blair suggested establishing a communication path for customers to understand variability and designing rates to pass on demand costs to the retail rate.
- Blair cited the example of Groton Mass's 4x40 rate, where customers are charged a 40-cent differential for four hours a day to drive behavior and empower customers to save and control their costs.

Chair Bita asked a follow up question about the impact of extreme rate disparity on customers with life-saving equipment that runs 24/7.

- Blair acknowledged the concern and mentioned that it was one reason why they paused on implementing such a design in Ipswich.
- Blair emphasized the need to consider equity and social responsibility in rate design.
- Blair suggested engaging the customer base and penetrating within the community to understand the unintended consequences of rate designs.
- Blair added that it is not a one-size-fits-all approach and that they could adapt to different customer needs.
- Blair suggested targeting the middle 80 percent of the customer base who follow trends and ensuring they have smart thermostats and chargers to adjust their demands and not penalize their neighbors and fellow customers.

Chair Bita asked question 3.

- Blair stated that he would first want to understand what's going on in RMLD and the work that has already been done before prescribing any solutions.
- Blair's vision, implemented in Ipswich, is to prescribe the power portfolio with named carbon-free sources (hydroelectric facilities on the Housatonic River) as much as possible while maintaining financial parity with alternatives like bilateral hedge contracts and selling the Renewable Energy Certificates until they need to comply with the will of the Commonwealth or customers, whichever is more restrictive.
- Blair emphasized that being carbon-free is distinct and different from being renewable and that his proposal would aim to acquire as much power as possible from carbon-free sources while prioritizing more affordable power and meeting the 50 percent carbon-free requirement mandated by the Commonwealth by 2030.
- Blair acknowledged that each community is different, and his proposal would aim to build on the work that has already been started at RMLD rather than replace it.

Vice Chair Pacino asked a follow up question relative to Blair's experience dealing with unions.

- Blair explained his experience dealing with two different unions in his current role and finds it straightforward to work with them.
- Blair said he believes that having a collective bargaining agreement in place removes conflict and makes it easy to address issues such as rewarding good behavior, documenting and solving bad behavior, and determining pay and holidays.

Vice Chair Pacino asked a follow up question about Blair's successes and failures while negotiating with unions.

- Blair shared a parable about negotiating and finding common ground, and his approach to opening up a productive dialogue to understand the interests of both parties.
- Blair emphasized the importance of understanding the people he works with, taking steps to make them feel valued and heard, and correcting problems before they become grievances.
- Blair noted that formal processes such as verbal and written warnings, suspension, and termination are available, if necessary, but Blair prefers to solve problems before they escalate.

Commissioner Stempeck asked question 4.

- Blair explained the importance of participating in trade associations and agencies such as Energy New England (ENE), Massachusetts Municipal Wholesale Electric Company (MMWEC), and Northeast Public Power Association (NEPPA) to stay informed about conversations and policies beyond the local level.
- Blair highlighted the opportunities presented by grant funding, such as the benefit of receiving American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds and the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) and acknowledged the challenge with how to best utilize those funds and avoid squandering the opportunity.
- Blair shifted to capacity constraints on available generation in the region, citing recent reports from ISO New England about fuel shortages and rolling blackouts that are becoming increasingly relevant in New England.
- Blair emphasized that direct engagement with ISO and support for policies at the federal level through the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) are necessary to make sure our voices are heard, as customers and stakeholders in the regional grid.
- Blair discussed transmission constraints, mentioning the work that MMWEC has been doing to advocate for Municipal Utilities to be able to own transmission and be part of the solution in building out the transmission infrastructure.
- Blair noted that transmission costs are a significant and growing component of rates that customers are feeling, and that it is important to stay informed about these issues and make our voices heard beyond our borders.

Chair Bitz asked a question to clarify the best way to engage with ISO NE.

- Blair emphasized the need to engage directly with ISO New England, either through FERC at the federal level or less formally through legislative representatives.
- Blair stressed the importance of the GM maintaining a good relationship with legislative representatives to ensure that the utility's voice is heard in both formal and informal communications.

Vice Chair Pacino asked a follow up question relative to Blair's interactions with the four towns.

- Blair acknowledged the special nature of RMLD, as it serves four different communities and has the potential to make a positive impact beyond Reading.
- Blair emphasized the importance of building relationships with the leadership teams of the four communities that RMLD serves. He recognized that RMLD is the governing body and serves customers beyond Reading's borders.
- Blair suggested that the Citizens' Advisory Board and the General Manager should engage outside of the framework to understand the concerns of customers in Wilmington, Lynnfield, and North Reading.

- Blair stressed that it was important to avoid a "Reading-centric" approach and to engage with customers in all four communities.

Vice Chair Pacino asked question 5.

- Blair acknowledged the other highly qualified candidates and stated that he has been doing a similar job for six years in Ipswich, which is 20 miles away from RMLD.
- Blair mentioned that both regions share similar constraints, weather patterns, legislative impacts, and vendors.
- Blair's experience in Ipswich is very translatable to Reading and that he is familiar with the region and community, which will be an advantage in performing the duties of the General Manager at RMLD.
- Blair highlighted that he is not intimidated by the idea of leading the biggest Municipal Light Plant in the Commonwealth and that he is ready for the job on day one.

Vice Chair Pacino asked Blair about his thoughts on the 20-year agreement between the four other towns served by RMLD.

- Blair stated that he does not have many thoughts on it now and would have to dig deeper, but believes it is a beneficial agreement for both the customers and towns.
- Blair said that (Municipal Light Plants) MLP's, like RMLD, provide affordable rates, a lower carbon footprint, higher reliability, and better customer service than Investor-Owned Utilities (IOUS).
- Blair mentioned that being part of an MLP benefits the towns in terms of economic development and attracting energy-intensive businesses.
- Blair said that from the RMLD perspective, serving more customers helps build their brand, ability to have a positive influence, and supports their business model.

Chair Bitz thanked Blair for applying and for his time.

Blair left the meeting at 6:50 PM.

The BoC was given ten minutes to review their notes.

Jared Carpenter, Manager of Utilities Administration Port of Oakland Public electric utility

Carpenter entered the meeting at 7:05 PM.

Chair Bitz introduced the second candidate, Jonathan Blair. Core interview questions can be referenced on page 2 of the meeting minutes.

Commissioner Coulter asked question 1.

- Carpenter discussed the steps that should be taken, with a focus on rotating staff, ensuring safety, and efficient communication.
- Carpenter discussed the importance of inventorying the available staff and understanding who has training in other departments and can handle different roles.
- Carpenter said it is crucial to ensure that staff are deployed to the main substations, prepared to observe any issues, and know what protocols to follow to isolate power from the main transmission grid.
- Carpenter discussed his approach, as the face of the organization, to communicating with key contacts and emphasized the importance of the GM physically visiting the four communities and different departments (fire, police, and town managers).
- Carpenter emphasized the importance of putting up signage in high traffic areas explaining the situation and the work being done.

- Carpenter said that the GM should be present at the substation site where the outage occurred, to liaison with onsite emergency personnel and ensure the issue is resolved by following the appropriate safety regulations.

Commissioner Talbot asked question 2.

Commissioner Talbot requested that Carpenter touch upon the Port of Oakland and what is going on in Oakland California.

- Carpenter discussed his education and experience related to engineering and energy systems and emphasized his passion for energy efficiency and demand response.
- Carpenter discussed the work he focused on to curb peak demand while at RMLD previously, such as opening various programs, battery projects, and working with commercial and industrial sectors to mitigate their peak demand.
- Carpenter noted that in his current role at Port of Oakland (another public utility), he has implemented programs to save power during peak days, including communicating with users and turning off the largest users temporarily.
- Carpenter emphasized the importance of using advanced controls to manage EVs, and noted he has implemented EV rates to generate revenue and keep rates low.
- Carpenter discussed the implications that California is currently experiencing relative to increased EV adoption and warns that EVs will completely shift peak demand and cause new problems that will require preparation to avoid high costs.

Commissioner Talbot asked Carpenter to explain what he would implement at RMLD relative to peak demand.

- Carpenter discussed his approach to reducing peaks and keeping customer bills low, by putting controls on residential customer heat pumps (water heaters etc.), to mitigate emergency peak demands and having a credit on customer bills which helps to reduce peaks and keep customer bills low.
- Carpenter emphasized the importance of education and communication with commercial and industrial customers to understand their peak demand and find ways to optimize their systems.
- Carpenter highlighted the value of adding solar and batteries at commercial and industrial locations to control demand spikes and optimize solar with financing mechanisms.
- Carpenter noted the new tax credit benefit for solar plus storage, which needs to be taken advantage of quickly to control demand spikes and avoid New England demand spikes.

Chair Bitá asked question 3.

- Carpenter emphasized the importance of saving energy within the system to meet the Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) and encouraged sharing ideas for energy conservation.
- Carpenter discussed Port of Oakland's power portfolio which was 83% green in 2020 and had lower rates than the local IOU.
- Carpenter proposed creating a rate for EVs that applies 100% renewable energy, which increases revenue and meets the RPS requirements.
- Carpenter noted that EV charging stations should be placed near highways and business parks to attract transient users and generate more revenue.
- Carpenter said that developers who specialize in EV infrastructure could become new customers for the company and pay for the majority of the development costs while buying green energy at a rate for EVs.
- Carpenter noted that California's Community Choice Aggregators (CCAs) are increasing competition for renewable energy resources and suggested investing in

renewable energy generators and securing long-term contracts to avoid price increases for ratepayers.

Chair Bitz asked Carpenter a follow up question about how he plans to provide leadership and encourage team participation in executing the plan.

- Carpenter said that the first step is to communicate that the climate plan is a good thing and to focus on finding solutions.
- Carpenter emphasized the importance of fighting against unnecessary government regulations and protecting the company from them.
- Carpenter encourages his team to share any ideas they may have for internal energy savings and to optimize existing resources.
- Carpenter discussed the need to find new resources through energy purchasing and being open to everything.
- Carpenter provided an example of using the customer service team to promote rebate programs to customers.
- Carpenter stressed the importance of shedding load inside the system to buy less from outside the system and control it as a team.

Vice Chair Pacino asked a follow up question relative to Carpenter's experience dealing with unions.

- Carpenter noted there may be disagreements regarding overtime and ensuring equity among staff.
- Carpenter emphasized the importance of carefully reading and understanding MOUs and agreements.
- Carpenter discussed the challenges associated with changing job specs, which can be complicated and may require additional funding and pay considerations.
- Carpenter stated that communication is key and highlighted the importance of being open-minded and talking early about potential changes or issues.
- Carpenter highlighted the importance of communicating with union leadership and understanding their perspective, is crucial to avoiding problems.

Commissioner Stempeck asked Question 4.

- Carpenter discussed the challenges associated with meeting certain regulations, such as the requirement that fleet vehicles must go electric, but finding electric line trucks is difficult. Exemptions for certain vehicles can be requested from the state.
- Carpenter emphasized the importance of collaborating with other public utilities to work together to be heard in the state legislative space and meet the various regulations.
- Carpenter noted that the Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) is going to be revised and certain generation sources will be removed from the eligible list and cited the example that large hydro facilities above 30 megawatts are not considered renewable in California.
- Carpenter discussed the obligations required by RPS and noted that each generator's output must be reported and tracked monthly.
- Carpenter discussed EV adoption and installation, noting that financial credits will be associated with the purchase of EVs to help accelerate use and that networks of EV chargers should be installed strategically, and the money for them should be distributed equitably.
- Relative to transmission outages, Carpenter said that maintaining some control over the narrative during outages is important to ensure that you are doing all you can to provide your customers with power.

Commissioner Talbot clarified that Carpenter is referring to things that are currently happening in California, which he foresees coming to Massachusetts.

- Carpenter explained that in 2016, a law was passed in California allowing transmission line operators to preemptively shut off power in order to prevent disasters, such as wildfires caused by dry and windy conditions under transmission lines.
- Carpenter highlighted the importance of advocating for and keeping track of such events and ensuring that insurance covers them.
- Carpenter said that utilities should prepare themselves to mitigate power loss as much as possible and keep critical businesses online.

Vice Chair Paino asked a question relative to interaction with the Four Towns and Economic Development.

- Carpenter suggested spending time with the towns and tenants to see if the utility can offer anything to help bring in new tenants.
- Carpenter suggested promoting lower rates to small businesses and offering cheaper rates to help promote economic development and attract new businesses.
- Carpenter suggested branding the utility as a great place for businesses to come.

Vice Chair Pacino asked question 5.

- Carpenter discussed his passion for Public Power, the industry in general, and his home utility (RMLD).
- Carpenter empathized that he learned a lot from RMLD, prioritizing low rates and providing reliable, sustainable, and green power, but acknowledge that he has learned a lot along the way as well.
- Carpenter said he adds value by bringing a unique perspective and atmosphere to the utility, making it more engaging and fun for employees.
- Carpenter noted he is dedicated to the business and cares deeply about Public Power.

Vice Chair Pacino asked Carpenter, as a former employee, how he envisions his relationship with employees if he gets the GM role.

- Carpenter discussed his management style and emphasized the importance of communication in understanding people's needs and wants.
- Carpenter shared that one of the first things he does is ask every person what they like and dislike about their work to help maximize their likes and minimize their dislikes.
- Carpenter shared that he believes in going out into the field and visiting everyone regularly, not just once a year.
- Carpenter emphasized the importance of listening to and understanding the wants and needs of the community, the Boards, and the staff.
- Carpenter emphasized that he is not a micromanager and believes in giving people the tools to succeed while supporting them.

Vice Chair Pacino asked Carpenter about his thoughts on the 20-year agreement between the four other towns served by RMLD.

- Carpenter said it's great that the RMLD serves four communities and sees it as positive growth for the utility; Carpenter noted he supports the 20-year agreement and sees no problem with it.
- Carpenter emphasized the importance of the communities having something written down to hold the GM and staff accountable.

- Carpenter suggested consistently looking at the percentages and splits in the agreement and always being open to examining data and knowledge.
- Carpenter said the agreement keeps people engaged and invested in the utility.

Commissioner Talbot asked Carpenter to discuss his experience with the big peak that occurred during the recent crisis in California.

- Carpenter discussed peak weeks, which occurs when there may not be enough generation.
- Carpenter emphasized the importance of keeping the Diablo Canyon Nuclear Project online to keep the nuclear power plant in line.
- Carpenter said during events like these, they check power and Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) systems all day and night, and update staff and the board if necessary.
- Carpenter described these events as exciting and fun but acknowledged that bad things can happen.
- Carpenter emphasized the need for constant engagement, transparency, and communication with the board and staff.

Chair Bitz thanked Carpenter for applying and his time.

Carpenter left the meeting at 8:00 PM.

The BoC was given ten minutes to review their notes.

Gregory Phipps, Interim General Manager and Director of Integrated Resources, RMLD

Phipps entered the meeting at 8:10 PM.

Chair Bitz introduced the third candidate, Gregory Phipps. Core interview questions can be referenced on page 2 of the meeting minutes.

Chair Coulter asked Question 1

- Phipps discussed his approach to the situation using four categories: prevention, preparation, response, and restoration.
- Phipps explained that prevention measures include tree trimming, equipment maintenance, and substation updates.
- Phipps emphasized the importance of having a plan in place beforehand for preparation and response.
- Phipps noted an important step is to determine how long the outage will last and create a plan accordingly.
- Phipps highlighted the importance of planning ahead of time to store power for select customers or rolling customers and noted that RMLD has a battery system of 5 megawatts, natural gas generator of 5 megawatts, and 8 megawatts of solar power.
- Phipps said he would encourage the team to follow safety protocols for limiting COVID spread.
- Regarding outage duration and staffing, Phipps noted that for a short duration outage as much of the team as possible would stay; for an outage that lasts multiple days staffing would be staggered to prevent burnout.
- Phipps emphasized the importance of having a plan to get generation sources from other providers if necessary and noted that he has two contacts in place for temp generators.
- Phipps discussed the lack of internal communication systems in the scenario.
- Assuming the fiber loop is down, Phipps points out the availability of point-to-point radios for communication.

- Phipps emphasized the importance of having charged and working radios during restoration efforts.
- Phipps highlighted the need for preparation in terms of communication, including maintenance agreements with suppliers.
- Phipps noted the combination of hardwire and wireless communication in RMLD's distribution network and considered the possibility of using transmission or distribution wires as a communication network backup in case of total communication system failure.
- Phipps said his primary focus is to keep both employees and customers safe in all scenarios.
- Phipps highlighted the critical nature of communication, both among team members and with the leadership of the various towns.
- Phipps discussed his approach to entering the substation area in a safe manner, which is dependent on cooperation and communication of local inspection authorities, and RMLD staff.
- The internal E&O team would restore power, while ensuring that no other subsequent problems are caused.
- Phipps noted that preparation is key in quickly restoring power, and additional automation and equipment will be added to support the network.

Commissioner Talbot asked Question 2

- Phipps explained that capacity and transmission make up 40% of RMLD's cost structure, and reducing peaks is a massive economic and environmental benefit.
- Phipps emphasized the importance of educating customers on why it's important to reduce peaks and what steps they can take to do so.
- Phipps suggested different rate structures and tailored suggestions for each group to encourage load drops.
- Phipps said that accelerating time of use is another economic mechanism to encourage behavior change.
- Phipps explained that communication and tools like mobile apps and software platforms can help customers see what's going on and how to reduce peaks.

Chair Bita asked a follow-up question relative to RMLD's mobile app.

- Phipps said that RMLD is in discussion with a company that has a mobile app platform, which is being used by Florida Power and Light.
- Phipps noted that the team found this app to be particularly powerful and persuasive.
- Phipps discussed the process of launching the mobile app and noted that RMLD has allocated capital budget dollars for the project.
- Phipps discussed the implementation timeline; the MDM system is scheduled to be in place by Q1/Q2 2023 and the mobile app pilot could be in place by Q3/Q4 2023.
- Phipps said the new Communications Manager is doing a good job, but acknowledged the need for more communication around why it is important to shed the peak through platforms such as webinars etc.

Commissioner Stempeck asked a question about wall power Tesla's.

- Phipps discussed mechanisms for load reduction and energy storage solutions.
- Phipps noted that RMLD has had initial discussions with a third-party company that ran a program for storage systems, and has a meeting scheduled for next week to discuss how the program could work in RMLD's territory.
- Phipps explained that several mechanisms are available for the storage system, including turning off different pieces of equipment, releasing energy back into the network, and utilizing the EV space for storage.

- Phipps said RMLD is currently working on an RFP for 40 to 60 megawatts of traditional lithium battery storage systems and is working with two new companies to pilot 12-hour and 100-hour battery storage systems within RMLD territory.
- Phipps emphasized that securing land is a priority for the company as storage systems require land to function effectively.
- Phipps said that storage systems are potentially available on a residential basis, but he believes that the most significant leverage will be on a distribution scale basis.

Chair Bitá asked question 3.

- Phipps said he is in the process of reinforcing the team's understanding of RMLD's charter, which is reliable, low-cost, non-carbon.
- Phipps explained that each department has a different impact on all three points of the charter, and decisions made need to support at least one, if not all three objectives
- Phipps stated that the vision plan will lay out how all the things RMLD does support each one of the charters points.
- Phipps said that external projects such as Maple Meadows, which turns a landfill into a solar array, hit all three points of the charter.
- Phipps highlighted that the IRD team is focused on the power supply portfolio, which is already ahead of compliance requirements and will do more in terms of renewable choice.
- The customer service team is scripted and given talking points to help customers, especially in terms of how to do things beyond just paying bills.
- Phipps noted the E&O group is intimately involved in RMLD becoming more non-carbon, but the key thing for that group is their involvement in generation projects.

Vice Chair Pacino asked a follow up question relative to Phipps's experience dealing with unions.

- Phipps said that the team sees him as open, willing to listen, approachable, reasonable, and decisive.
- Phipps acknowledged that understanding the key drivers for the union and individuals is an ongoing learning process, as almost all employees are members of one of the three unions and have different motivations.
- Phipps noted that completing the Memorandum of Agreements for two out of the three unions taught a great deal, and more learning is needed for the third union.
- Phipps emphasized that trust is fundamental in managing and leading in a unionized environment, and the interviewee feels they have earned their trust.
- Phipps said that the goal is to incorporate metrics tied to non-carbon into the contracts, and the senior management team will include goals and targets for all three charter points in the next round.

Commissioner Stempeck asked Question 4:

- Phipps explained that ISO New England's role is to manage a network, not build a network, and the transition to non-carbon requires the involvement of state and federal agencies.
- Phipps emphasized that the 2021 Massachusetts Climate Bill is a good example of setting goals and targets, but specific mandates on how to achieve those goals should be avoided.
- Phipps noted that decentralization is a key strategy to bring generation closer to the point of use, and there is a need to generate within territory. However, there are challenges to achieving this, such as limited available land.
- Phipps explained that taxation can accelerate the adoption of changes and grants for within territory generation should be aggressively pursued.

- Phipps emphasized the importance of reinforcing the distribution network to make it less susceptible to catastrophic events.
- Phipps highlighted the importance of balancing regulation; legislation should allow for the generation of electricity without limiting the use of land for things like solar.
- Phipps explained that the state and different departments need to be flexible and balanced to make compromises that allow for power to be delivered to customers.
- Phipps noted that Climate Bill 2021 is massive and will take time to digest, but specific mandates on how to achieve goals should be avoided.

Chair Bitz asked a follow up question relative to grants.

- Phipps explained that the new grants under the Inflation Reduction Act have requirements and limitations, but MLP's, including RMLD, are well positioned.
- Phipps noted that there are different restrictions and qualifications on state and federal grants, but RMLD will still take advantage of them to benefit ratepayers.
- Phipps acknowledged the challenge of providing reliable power is costly, but the team is experienced in leveraging other funding sources that do not burden ratepayers.
- Phipps emphasized that RMLD will not pursue grants if they have a net negative impact.

Vice Chair Paino asked a question relative to interaction with the Four Towns.

- Phipps emphasized that RMLD has had success in rebuilding its reputation and relationship with the towns.
- Phipps said that in the case of Reading, the Inflation Reduction Act Direct Pay Tax Credit presents an opportunity to pursue putting solar on specific buildings.
- Phipps noted that Wilmington has been supportive, and is part of the team working on Maple Meadows and Route 125, which is beneficial for all ratepayers and citizens.
- Phipps emphasized that RMLD is trying to engage with various groups within each town and communicate the intention to serve the communities under the category of reliable, low-cost, non-carbon energy, which can attract business into the towns.

Vice Chair Pacino asked Question 5.

- Phipps said he brings a unique combination of skills, including personal energy, passion, a vision, decisiveness, and the ability to motivate the team.
- Phipps noted the energy industry is undergoing massive change. He brings experience in industries that underwent similar changes. He brings that experience and skills to this organization.
- Phipps highlighted his engineering skills and ability to work well with the engineering team.
- Phipps highlighted his business experience, ability to prioritize what needs to happen and ability to decisively say no.
- Phipps said he encourages cooperation and communication throughout the team, recruits new talent to the organization, lays out the vision, and prioritizes it with the input of others.
- Phipps noted he is proactive in recruiting additional customers and believes that the customer focus is critically important for the organization.
- Phipps said that his ability to work with the leaderships in the other four towns is a unique skill he brings to the organization.
- Phipps noted that overall, he wants the role and believes he would do a great job.

Vice Chair Pacino asked a follow up question on Economic development.

- Phipps views Economic Development as increasing the tax base by increasing the population from both businesses and residences in their territory.

- Phipps explained that one way to achieve this is by encouraging more businesses to come into the territory and create tax revenue.
- Phipps notes that RMLD's competitive rates for residential customers compared to other providers will attract businesses to the territory.
- Phipps noted that he wants to reconfigure their land and buildings to operate more efficiently and open up some land that the town can also use.
- Phipps sees economic development as an opportunity to be a catalyst for change and will include it in their Five-Year Plan.

Chair Bitá thanked Phipps for applying and his time.

Phipps thanked the Board for all their work.

Phipps left the meeting at 9:00 PM

Discussion of the General Manager Candidates

- The Boc discussed the process of selecting the GM candidate.
- It was decided that each commissioner would state their first choice with a brief reason as to why they chose the person in order of seniority. The person with the majority vote will be selected to fill the GM role.
- Chair Bitá thanked the GM Search Committee for all their hard work.

Adjournment

At 9:05 PM, Vice Chair Pacino made a **motion**, seconded by Commissioner Coulter, that the RMLD Board of Commissioners adjourn the regular session meeting. **Motion Carried: 5:0:0** (5 in favor, 0 absent, 0 abstained) Roll Call: Vice Chair Pacino, Aye; Commissioner Stempeck, Aye; Commissioner Talbot, Aye; Commissioner Coulter, Aye; Chair Bitá, Aye.

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


Philip B Pacino (Apr 20, 2023 11:53 EDT)

Apr 20, 2023

Philip B. Pacino, Secretary Pro Tem
RMLD Board of Commissioners