



Town of Reading Meeting Minutes

Board - Committee - Commission - Council:

RMLD Citizens Advisory Board

Date: 2020-05-21

Time: 6:30 PM

Building:

Location:

Address:

Session:

Purpose: General Business

Version:

Attendees: **Members - Present:**

Mr. Jason Small, Vice Chair (North Reading); Mr. George Hooper, Secretary (Wilmington); Mr. Vivek Soni (Reading); Mr. Joseph Markey (Lynnfield)

Members - Not Present:

Mr. Dennis Kelley, Chair (Wilmington)

Others Present:

Mr. John Stempeck, Board of Commissioners
Ms. Coleen O'Brien, Mr. Hamid Jaffari, Ms. Wendy Markiewicz, Ms. Kathleen Rybak, Mr. Charles Underhill
Public: Mr. James Satterthwaite, 8 Hunt Street, Reading

Minutes Respectfully Submitted By: Mr. George Hooper, Secretary *George Hooper*

Topics of Discussion:

PER GOVERNOR BAKER'S MARCH 10, 2020, ORDER SUSPENDING CERTAIN PROVISIONS OF THE OPEN MEETING LAW, G.L. c. 30A, §20 THIS MEETING WAS HELD REMOTELY VIA ZOOM.

1. Call Meeting to Order and Introductions – J. Small, Vice Chair

Vice Chair Small called the meeting of the Citizens' Advisory Board to order at 6:30 PM and noted the meeting was being audio recorded.

2. General Manager's Update – C. O'Brien, General Manager
Materials: Infections Disease Outbreak Plan (EOP-20-03 HR)

COVID-19: Ms. O'Brien reported that the RMLD has developed a comprehensive Infectious Disease Outbreak Plan (EOP 20-03 HR), which is being shared with the Town's incident command as it is updated. The Plan is stamped a "living document" due to the regularity of the updates (as information is received from the Board of Health, Governor's office, etc.). The emergency response team comprised of senior management has been meeting daily at 10:00 AM since March 3rd working diligently to ensure that all matters related to COVID 19 and its impact on RMLD as an essential energy provider align with employee and customer safety. RMLD is currently under remobilization toward normal operations and approaching back to Phase A. Ms. O'Brien reviewed some of the safety measures in place to accommodate public opening of the Ash Street offices once allowed, as well as some of the ongoing practices in place to accommodate business under current conditions. Ms. O'Brien reported that the RMLD remains in full business and electric continuity. Everyone's diligence in following the strict safety protocols, which are mandated and monitored in accordance with EOP 20-03 HR, continues to result in no illnesses. Ms. O'Brien thanked the staff who have been working on-site or remotely for

this essential business, and especially during the two storms since COVID began - RMLD customers were restored in record time. Ms. O'Brien wished all RMLD staff, as well as all RMLD customers, continued good health.

20-Year Agreement Extension: Ms. O'Brien reported that Reading and North Reading have voted through their boards of selectmen; a certified letter from each town is pending receipt. Wilmington voted through their board of selectmen. Ms. O'Brien noted that Wilmington changed from town meeting to a board of selectmen vote; their certified letter has been received. Lynnfield is still listed as using their town meeting for the vote. However, they have reported that they are trying to go to a board of selectmen vote; they will keep us informed of their progress. Mr. Stempeck asked when the Town Meeting would take place. Mr. Markey responded that Mr. Dolan had reported (to him) that the Board of Selectmen had approved the extension, and they just had to send a letter. Mr. Markey agreed to follow-up with Mr. Dolan. If it does need approval at town meeting, it will be Saturday, June 20th.

3. Integrated Resources Report – C. Underhill, Director of Integrated Resources
Materials: Revised IRD Monthly Report and Variance Analysis Report for March 2020

IRD Monthly Report and Variance Analysis: Mr. Underhill began his report with a review of the *2020 RMLD Total System Loads* (Slide 3), which shows the actual 2019 results, forecasted loads for 2020, and YTD through the first four months of the year. RMLD experienced the warmest January on record, and our loads came in a bit below what was projected (January-March). Mr. Underhill noted the February (2020) load is ~3% higher than normal because 2020 is a leap year. In April, the loads are down a bit; social isolation protocols in Massachusetts began in late March. Mr. Underhill noted that we had anticipated a baseline reduction of about 8% due to COVID 19; however, that estimate for the magnitude of the COVID impact were high (YTD).

Mr. Underhill then reviewed the *Heating Degree Day (HDD) Analysis* (Slide 4). The top line is the average or normalized heating degree days – it is either a 15 or a 20-year average for RMLD. Mr. Underhill noted that for a swing month like April, the percentage (variance) is a bit misleading because it is over a much smaller base, and the temperature swings do not always result in additional heating or cooling because the thermal mass of the buildings do not change as dramatically when the temperatures are closer to the balance point - not quite a direct correlation for heating degree days and heating requirements. For comparison purpose heating degree days for 2019 were included. Looking at the variance, this shows how weather can impact the (load) forecast. Mr. Underhill noted that he would be running the forecasting model to normalize the data in the next few days.

Mr. Underhill reviewed *RMLD Non-Power Supply Revenue* (Slide 5). There is a bubble in February because the load data is for a calendar month basis, but the billing revenue is based on billing cycles throughout the month; you could have two weeks' worth of data from one month appearing with a revenue adjustment in the next month. Mr. Underhill reported that RMLD is billing better than 95% of what we did a year ago. *RMLD Aging of Accounts* (slide 6) shows that for this period this year, as opposed to this period last year, we had a higher percentage of money actually come in the first 30 days and we've been holding our own with the aging of accounts. Slide 5 and Slide 6 tell us that our revenue position is better than we expected it to be at this point in the COVID-19 pandemic. Mr. Hooper asked if the load reflected an increase in residential use. Mr. Underhill noted that he had not been able to complete a class disaggregate assessment (due to staffing), but that will be completed soon. Mr. Underhill reviewed *Actual kWh Purchase by Resource* (Slide 7). Because the loads were down (through March), RMLD had sales into the wholesale market; our power costs remain stable.

EV Impact Assessment: Mr. Underhill stated that he was asked to look at the impact of electric vehicles (EV) on the RMLD system over time. *RMLD EV Impact Assessment* (Slide 8) illustrates this expected impact (with some assumptions on usage, number of EV units,

charging location, etc.). Mr. Underhill noted RMLD has an indeterminate number of EVs in the system. The estimate provided last year shows RMLD has ~250-400 EVs in the territory; 250 units was used for this analysis. Ms. O'Brien added that Energy New England (ENE) is trying to see if we can retrieve data on location of EVs from the RMV. Additionally, we are working with a couple of companies on the data that comes off of the meter to determine if there is an EV at the home. We continue to try to get better data on the number of EVs in our territory. Mr. Underhill stated we will be tracking those numbers as the program develops, but we have a way to go to reach 1% load impact on our system (2,260 vehicles).

IRD Program Activity: Mr. Underhill completed his presentation with a reviewed *IRD Program Activity* (slide 9) and progress on customer opt-in for the *Customer Notification System* (slide 10). Mr. Underhill noted some issues with the link for customers with Gmail accounts. Staff is working to correct the problem. Mr. Small and Mr. Hooper noted that they had signed up and found it very user-friendly, no problems.

4. CAB Input on Town of Reading Payment – J. Small, Vice Chair

Materials: RMLD Payments to the Town of Reading (document) and Revised Motions

Mr. Stempeck noted that there was alternate language put forth for the second suggested motion. What will be discussed is if that second motion is appropriate or not as an add-on or change to the original motion. Mr. Stempeck suggested we address the first motion, and then the second motion.

Mr. Hooper stated, as the most senior member on the CAB, that he had been following this issue for some time. Through the CPI they tried to develop something that was fair to all. Mr. Hooper noted that he and the Town of Wilmington are always concerned with what is best for the RMLD, the service they provide, and the way everything is operating in the community. Mr. Hooper noted that everybody has looked through this - the CAB has cooperated; from what he had seen, this is probably what is most fair for all involved. Mr. Hooper stated that he was ready to make the motion. Vice Chair Small asked if there was any additional feedback; there was none.

Mr. Hooper made a **motion** that the Citizens' Advisory Board recommend to the Board of Commissioners that the current annual Town of Reading, below-the-line, payment of \$2,480,506, be extended for payment dates of 6/30/2021 and 12/31/2021, in the amount of \$1,240,253 each, seconded by Mr. Markey. **Motion carried 4:0:1** (4 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 absent). Chair Kelley was not present.

Vice Chair Small asked if there was any other feedback or discussion regarding the second motion. Mr. Soni asked if Mr. Stempeck could explain the difference in the revised second motion. Mr. Stempeck reported that Mr. Pacino had suggested a revision to the motion. The top part of the motion is identical to the previous second suggested motion. The difference on the "revised" second motion is the addition of three sentences: "The annual result of the calculation formula will be annually presented to the RMLD Board of Commissioners 60 days in advance of the June 30 payment. In the event of any catastrophic event or events, as declared by the Department's General Manager, the RMLD's Board of Commissioners and the Department can adjust the payment to address the emergency. Catastrophic event or events will be defined by the General Manager of RMLD." Mr. Stempeck noted the Board of Commissioners would be looking at the motion at their meeting later in the evening. Mr. Stempeck stated that his comment would be that we do not need those three sentences because the 60 days in advance does not really do anything; we see what it is anyway - it is part of our function. As far as a catastrophic event, Mr. Stempeck stated he did not think that we should be prescriptive in terms of what the General Manager's job is already. She (or he) would already tell us if there is a catastrophic event, or assessed it as such. Mr. Stempeck noted his recommendation was to use the previous motion. Mr. Soni asked if Ms. O'Brien had any thoughts. Ms. O'Brien noted she agreed with Mr. Stempeck; you are just

reiterating what the law is and the General Manager's responsibilities under Chapter 164. However, whatever pleases the boards would be fine.

Vice Chair Small asked if anyone from the CAB had any comments. Mr. Soni responded that (as Mr. Hooper had said), he thought the CAB was pretty much in agreement with the first version as written. Vice Chair Small agreed, stating the first version and the plan that is laid out is very representative of being fair to both sides. The second half of the revised motion does seem a little redundant.

Vice Chair Small stated if everyone was in agreement, he would take the original motion from the Agenda unless anyone felt strongly enough to change it.

Mr. Markey made a **motion** that the Citizens' Advisory Board recommend to the Board of Commissioners that the annual Town of Reading, below-the-line, payment calculation, continue as two half payments on 6/30 and 12/31, and become that of 3.875 mils/kWh sale of the previous 3-year average of kWh sales from audited financial statements, starting with payment date 6/30/2022, seconded by Mr. Soni. **Motion carried 3:0:2**; (three in favor, 0 opposed, 2 absent). Chair Kelley was not present; Mr. Hooper had left the meeting prior to the vote.

5. Scheduling: CAB Meetings & Commissioners Meetings Coverage – J. Small, Vice Chair

The next CAB meeting was scheduled for June 18th at 6:30 pm, prior to the Board of Commissioners meeting. Mr. Small will cover the June BOC meeting.

The July meeting was tentatively set for July 16th at 6:30 pm

6. Adjournment – J. Small, Vice Chair

Mr. Soni made a motion to adjourn the Citizens' Advisory Board meeting, seconded by Mr. Small. **Motion carried 3:0:2** (3 in favor, 0 opposed, 2 absent).

The CAB meeting adjourned 7:27 PM.

As approved on April 22, 2021