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Press Release

RMLD Updates Policy on Renewables and Greenhouse Gas Reduction in Power Supply Procurement

Reading, MA – On February 24, 2021, both the Citizens' Advisory Board (CAB) and the Board of Commissioners (Board) voted to approve an update to Reading Municipal Light Department's (RMLD's) Policy 30, which specifies the procurement requirements of renewable and greenhouse gas reducing power supply. The updated Policy 30 is effective immediately. This was a collaborative effort between the Board of Commissioners, the Citizens Advisory Board, RMLD staff, and independent subject matter experts from the state and the utility industry over the course of several months.

During three recent Board meetings, the RMLD held training sessions regarding climate legislation, and hosted guest subject matter experts to further explain this very complex issue of pending state legislation and the ISO New England Market relative to renewable and non-carbon electricity generation requirements. These planning sessions summarized power supply procurement, portfolio balance, risk mitigation strategies, projected rate impacts, and business model differences between not-for-profit Municipal Light Plants (MLPs) like the RMLD and for-profit Investor-Owned Utilities (IOUs) like National Grid and Eversource. Extensive public comment regarding renewable energy, and proposed updates to RMLD's Policy 30 was heard during these training sessions as well as in several meetings leading up to the vote. These were all valuable inputs for a carefully considered Policy 30 update.

The resulting Policy 30 complies with pending Massachusetts Climate Policy legislation. For the first time, Massachusetts MLPs must comply with state power portfolio regulations, specifically the Greenhouse Gas Emissions Standards (GGES) for retail energy sales.

In addition, both the CAB and the Board approved the exclusion of future wood-burning biomass as an acceptable renewable or greenhouse gas reduction resource of generation under Policy 30. This exclusion for RMLD differs from the state's legislation, which presently includes wood-burning biomass as a qualifying generating source to meet greenhouse gas reduction goals.

The updated Policy 30 provides for annual non-carbon goals to minimize cost impacts to ratepayers. Specifically, the RMLD shall strive to make incremental changes on an annual basis, where possible, to mitigate potential rate shock. Unlike state legislation that mandates targets every decade, RMLD's Policy 30 strives for incremental annual goals to minimize rate shock due to the cost of more expensive non-carbon generated electricity. Further, this updated policy recognizes the ongoing balance of RMLD's mission statement priorities including ratepayer cost, risk management, service reliability, and the cost of non-carbon sourcing.

RMLD will also create a new "Renewable Choice Program" for customers who wish to purchase power products produced by non-carbon emitting resources ahead of the RMLD's greenhouse gas reducing power supply procurement goals. Additional details will be shared as the program becomes available.

Starting at the March 2021 CAB and Board meetings, RMLD staff will report in more detail on the non-carbon components of its power supply, including its Sustainable Certificate portfolio.

To read the updated Policy 30, please visit <https://www.rml.com/board-commissioners/pages/rml-policies> (see page 124).

To read Massachusetts' pending legislation, please visit <https://malegislature.gov/Bills/192/S9> and S13.

Please visit www.rml.com to see more RMLD policies, programs, and current news.

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