

**Mansfield Municipal Electric Department  
Minutes of Light Commissioners Meeting  
February 23, 2021**

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**Present:** Chair Jess Aptowitz, Vice Chair Mike Trowbridge, Clerk Neil Rhein, Commissioner Frank Delvecchio, Commissioner Steve Schoonveld, Light Department Manager Joseph Sollecito and Mayhew Seavey of PLM

The meeting was held remotely due to the pandemic and called to order at 6:04 PM followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. Chair Aptowitz read the following:

“Pursuant to Governor Baker’s March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, 18, and the Governor’s March 31, 2020 Order imposing strict limitations on the number of people that may gather in one place, this meeting of the Town of Mansfield’s Light Commissioners is being conducted via remote participation. No in-person attendance of members of the public will be permitted, but every effort will be made to ensure that the public can adequately access the proceedings as provided for in the Order.

This meeting has been posted on the Town’s website. To provide virtual access to this meeting by the public, the Town is utilizing the GoToWebinar platform. The instructions are below on how members of the public attending this meeting virtually will be allowed to make comments if they wish to do so, during the portion of the meeting designated for public comment. Again, these instructions can be found below or on the Town’s website at [www.mansfieldma.com](http://www.mansfieldma.com)”

A complete copy of the Board packet containing all documents that are referenced in the minutes is on file at the Mansfield Municipal Electric Department office.

**Citizen Comments – none**

**Motion: To approve minutes of the December 2, 2020 Light Commissioners meeting (Rhein/Delvecchio) Passes 5/0**

**Roll call vote: Delvecchio-aye; Trowbridge-aye; Aptowitz-aye; Schoonveld-aye and Rhein-aye**

**Power Forecast and Risk Management Update –** Mayhew Seavey of PLM began by reviewing the background to MMED’s risk management strategy. He stated that previously MMED purchased all of its energy every five years from a single supplier. There was a risk to being locked in for five years. The current strategy was put into place in 2016 and MMED’s market position is reviewed quarterly. He explained about the two buying triggers, “price triggers” and “time triggers”. He said that MMED’s five transactions since the change were 2.5% more expensive than MMED would have paid prior to the new strategy. Mr. Seavey explained that this was due to the market being low at that time compared to the next few years. He also explained that the strategy will not result in the lowest prices in the short term but will over time.

At 6:28, Mr. Seavey lost power and Manager Sollecito completed the presentation. Manager Sollecito stated that they are going to monitor the market. He said that usually in the spring, you can expect to see prices come down.

Commissioner Schoonveld asked what percent of municipalities use this method to purchase their power. Manager Sollecito said he didn't know exactly but not many do. He said, however, that MMWEC does provide this as a service to all its members. Manager Sollecito does recommend that MMED continue with this process as he believes it is a good long-term strategy.

Commissioner Delvecchio questioned what if prices go up in the spring. Manager Sollecito answered that usually the vendors have the same benchmarks and tend to base pricing mechanisms on the most recent history. He said that that spring will probably have a decline in pricing based on the previous winter.

Clerk Rhein questioned why MMED wouldn't be buying now as prices are lower right now than 2019. Manager Sollecito said the forward market price is always slightly higher and explained that it is done in increments.

**Capital Purchase Recommendation** – Manager Sollecito told the Board that MMED is always monitoring their capital budget. He presented a memo from MMED's Engineer Chris Cox requesting that the fork truck and backhoe in the FY22 budget be purchased now. Manager Sollecito explained that the backhoe is badly aged and he believes the fork truck could be a safety issue since cable reels are sometimes heavier than the capacity of the existing reels. He said he would like to purchase these two items now.

Chair Aptowitz said he would like Scott Feeley from the Finance Committee copied on this assuming it is approved by the Light Commissioners.

Commissioner Delvecchio said that CIP will be considering this request.

Commissioner Schoonveld said that Manager Sollecito had mentioned being behind on some capital items and wondered what those items were. Manager Sollecito said it was the two bucket trucks, the storage building and the exterior repair work for the existing garage at 50 West Church Street.

Vice Chairman Trowbridge agreed with Chair Aptowitz that Manager Sollecito should reach out to Scott Feeley from the Finance Committee. He also inquired as to the status of the Light Commissioners approving the MMED capital budget improvement plan as other boards and committees look to the Light Commissioners first for approval. Manager Sollecito said the list was made last fall and Engineer Cox is updating the list for this Spring for FY22. Vice Chairman Trowbridge asked when they will get it. Manager Sollecito said it would be presented in March or April.

Chair Aptowitz suggested to Manager Sollecito that he let the CIP committee know that there is an urgency with the two items that have come up so that they will understand the special circumstances.

**Motion: To support the request to purchase the fork truck and backhoe pending approval by the CIP**

**(Schoonveld/Delvecchio) Passes 5/0**

**Roll call vote: Delvecchio-aye; Aptowitz-aye; Rhein-aye; Trowbridge-aye and Schoonveld-aye**

**Equipment Storage Building** – Manager Sollecito said that MMED’s equipment storage building which will be used for storage of transformers, equipment and vehicles was approved by the Planning Board. TBA Architects is working on the final design which should be finished by March, if not April.

Commissioner Schoonveld referred to Building Inspector Bob Blackman’s memo and asked about flipping the building. Manager Sollecito said he did consider it.

Commissioner Schoonveld also asked if there were any resident concerns as the building would be within 100 feet of the river. Manager Sollecito answered that he is not aware of any concerns.

Clerk Rhein echoed Commissioner Schoonveld’s questions about Mr. Blackman’s concerns about construction near the river. Clerk Rhein believes they should fully consider everything, particularly the neighbors, before moving ahead.

Vice Chairman Trowbridge commented on the vegetation and the trees within 100 feet and said that it was being allowed because it was a previously developed site.

Commissioner Schoonveld said he knew that they have the right to build there but wondered if they should and suggested this should be addressed.

Commissioner Delvecchio stated he is in agreement with Commissioner Schoonveld and Clerk Rhein. He thinks maybe it is worth a little more time to look at how this building is done.

Manager Sollecito believes these are fair questions and said they will revisit this again at the next meeting.

**MMED brand** – Manager Sollecito told the Board he has a new initiative that he would like to propose. He said MMED has never had a standard logo and he would like to form a committee to develop a standardized brand to be used on all MMED clothing, trucks, letterhead, etc.

Chair Aptowitz thought it was a good idea but doesn’t want to spend money.

Clerk Rhein is in favor of something more modern.

Commissioner Schoonveld suggested not using the word “Municipal”. Vice Chair Trowbridge commented that they are “Electric” not “Light” commissioners. Commissioner Delvecchio suggested using “Mansfield Electric”.

Chair Aptowitz said the logo should tie in part of the Town logo too. He told Manager Sollecito to work with his group then bring their ideas back to the Light Commissioners as they have expressed their sentiments to him.

**December 2020 financials** – Manager Sollecito presented the financial statements for December 2020. The net income through December is \$1.25 million and operating cash as of December is \$15.8 million. The generation charge payable which is money owed to the customers is \$478k. Energy kWh sales were down 5% from the year before while year-to-date sales were 2.3% higher. The depreciation fund balance is \$3.2 million.

**Hydro Quebec Power & Flow Rights deal** – Manager Sollecito said he had good news to pass along. MMED was able to take advantage of a power and flow rights deal with Hydro Quebec enabling MMED to purchase affordable power. This is a five year deal with no price fluctuations.

**MMWEC Solar project** – Manager Sollecito told the Board that MMED will be participating in a solar project in Ludlow, MA. It is an area with a lot of non-usable space so MMWEC is putting their solar project there. MMED will be one of six municipals partnering in this project.

**Comments from Commissioners** – Commissioner Delvecchio thanked Manager Sollecito for a job well done.

Chair Aptowitz said he had reached out to Manager Sollecito and Town Manager Kevin Dumas about the two part tree trimming policy in Town. The DPW takes care of any low hanging branches while MMED takes care of the higher ones. He has asked them to keep an eye out for anything prohibitive so that nothing interferes with any residents services.

At 7:17 the following motion was made.

**Motion: To enter into Executive Session for the following reason and to not return to open session**

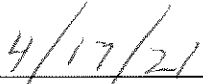
- a. Pursuant to M.G.L. Ch. 164, Section 47D and M.G.L. C. 30, Section 21, Exemption 3, to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the public body and the chair so declares

(Schoonveld/Rhein) Passes 5/0

**Roll call vote: Delvecchio-aye; Aptowitz-aye; Rhein-aye; Trowbridge-aye and Schoonveld-aye**

Respectfully submitted: Jacqueline Lee

  
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Signature of Clerk

  
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Date of Approval