Princeton Municipal light department

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**BOARD OF LIGHT COMMISSIONERS**

**OCTOBER 19, 2016**

**REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

**The meeting was called to order at 5:00 PM.**

**Present were: Commissioner/Chairman, Jim Whitman, Commissioner, Chris Conway and PMLD General Manager, Brian Allen. Commissioner, Tim Cochrell arrived at 5:10 PM. Residents – Justin Griffin and Kimball Hall.**

**Agenda:**

The Board voted unanimously in favor (3-0) to accept the October 19, 2016 agenda as presented.

**Meeting Minutes:**

* The Board voted unanimously in favor (3-0) to approve the September 14, 2016 regular meeting minutes as presented.

**PMLD Financials:**

* ***Bank Balances -*** The Board reviewed the bank balances as of October 19, 2016. The Citizen’s Bank Operating account has a balance of $169K, the Depreciation account has a balance of $595K, the MMDT Savings account has a balance of $826K, the Unibank Operating account has a balance of $9K, the Meter Deposit account has a balance of $34K. $20K in the MMDT Rate Stabilization Fund Account is earmarked to put towards the OPEB obligation. The Board acknowledged that $216K has been invoiced to the town and paid to PMLD by the town for the Utility Poles Make-Ready Work. All bills are being paid in a timely manner.
* ***2016 Year-to-Date Working Budget –*** The Board reviewed the 2016 working budget analysis spreadsheet dated 10/17/2016 (a copy is placed on file). The target measure for revenue and expenses through July is 66.72%. Revenue is slightly above target and expenses are slightly below target. Mr. Allen explained that the Make-Ready expenses are being line-itemed in outside vendors, stock purchases, truck/transportation and payroll expenses, inflating those line items and resulting in over-budget figures on paper; however those expenses are offset by the town reimbursement that is received and recorded as revenue.

**Unfinished Business:**

* ***Fiber Make-Ready Work –*** Mr. Allen stated that PMLD is ahead of schedule and currently running below the cost estimate that was given to the Board of Selectmen back in May 2016 at the beginning of the project. There are approximately 30 poles left to perform transfers on and PMLD anticipates that this work will be completed before the end of November 2016. The Board thanked Mr. Allen for his leadership, efforts performed by all employees in the field and successfully staying within budget and ahead of schedule. Mr. Allen explained that his goal was to manage this project with the utmost level of professionalism and care to show town officials and residents the commitment PMLD has in providing service to them and their vested interest in producing a quality job.
* ***Tree Trimming Request for Proposal –*** Mr. Allen stated that 3 bids were received. The bids were opened on September 21st and All Reliable Services (ARS) came in at $163K, Lewis Tree Services at $201K and Northern Tree Services at $302K. PMLD accepted the ARS bid and as allowed in the RFP removed a $43K portion from the bid to meet the $120K budget that PMLD had originally set. ARS accepted the job and will begin work October 24th with completion within 90 days. Mr. Allen reminded the Board that PMLD has not filled the 4th lineman position to allow for those funds to be redirected towards funding a Tree Services contractor to handle a major portion of tree trimming each year.
* ***Bucket Truck Replacement Vehicle –*** Mr. Allen confirmed that the leasing paperwork is final with Kiley Co. and the new bucket truck was delivered the week of October 10th. The truck has been registered and insured through the insurance agent, PMLD logo’s will be affixed to the truck on October 21st and the radio will be relocated to the new truck the week of October 24th. The old bucket truck will be auctioned through the [www.govdeals.com](http://www.govdeals.com) website. The Board inspected the new truck after the meeting.

**New Business:**

* ***Discuss Princeton’s Involvement with the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center’s (MassCEC) Renewable Energy Trust Fund (RETF) –*** Mr. Allen presented the Board with copies of literature about the MassCEC and the renewable energy fund. The Board acknowledged Mr. Griffin and Mr. Hall who were present for the discussion to understand the department’s position on membership in the RETF and eligibility grants. The Board acknowledged that towns/cities must be a member of Green Communities first and pay an annual irrevocable membership fee that is currently set at approximately $8K per year.

Mr. Allen shared the feedback he received from 5 municipal light departments in Massachusetts who are members of the RETF. He asked for their opinion on being a member, reason for it, activity levels and overall satisfaction. Mr. Allen explained that all of them joined the RETF initially to pursue a specific grant for a project that the department was working on for the town. They stated that the process to receive the grant money was very involved, required professional services and that costs incurred were higher than anticipated. Their overall residential customer participation level has been low to no participation since membership. Admittedly, they all would not have joined if it weren’t for the major town project.

Chairman Whitman explained that the Board has met with the MassCEC in the past and considered membership a few times, but ultimately voted not to join for one reason or another. Most recently the Board tried to work with the MassCEC and the Department of Energy Resources (DOER) on efforts to have the state purchase wind renewable energy credits, only to have it denied by state officials leaving Princeton once again to seek a solution on their own.

Mr. Allen reminded everyone of the Home Energy Loss Prevention Services program (HELPS) that PMLD offers to all residents. The annual fee for 2016 is estimated at $7,300. Residents have access to rebates and incentives throughout the year to replace and upgrade their major in-home equipment and appliances like a refrigerator, washing machine, dishwasher, power strips, installation of energy saving insulation or heating system, etc. The HELPS program is advertised and promoted to residents each year and information is readily available; however at the end of Q3 2016 Princeton activity included just 8 in-home energy audits and 3 appliance rebates. The Board’s task when voting into any local or state program is to maximize benefit and minimize financial burden to ratepayers, so they use great caution to evaluate risk and reward. An irrevocable monthly charge for the benefit of some or none is a risk the Board has opted not to take year after year.

Commissioner Whitman explained that larger municipals have the workforce and funds to hire professional grant writers to allow them to compete for renewable energy trust fund grant money. Grant money is never a guarantee especially if the grant is highly sought after.

Mr. Griffin and Mr. Hall asked about the operation and maintenance of the Princeton windfarm. They asked if the Board would consider being a member to allow them to use the MassCEC to help with improving the operability of the wind turbines. Mr. Allen explained the efforts put forth by the Commissioners, the PMLD employees and himself regarding managing, maintaining and the proactive pursuit of technologies and programs that will increase the production, efficiency, financial picture and life of the turbines. Mr. Allen explained that the Massachusetts Municipal Wholesale Energy Company (MMWEC) on behalf of all municipal light departments has been actively lobbying the State department to acknowledge the RGGI money that all municipals pay in each year, which could make municipals eligible now and in the future to participate in the state programs like the renewable energy trust fund for wind and solar projects that are currently not available to them at this time without membership and additional fees with other state departments/agencies.

Mr. Griffin and Mr. Hall thanked the Board for the information and insight into the department’s efforts to manage the department and windfarm and stay on top of emerging technologies and opportunities. Mr. Allen assured them that he is still working other avenues to allow Princeton residents future access to state programs, but explained that things do not move quickly at the state level so we must be patient but diligent and let these conversations and decisions move at their own pace.

* ***LED Street Light Conversion Project –*** Mr. Allen explained that all necessary paperwork has been submitted through MMWEC to receive grant funding through the DOER to replace all of the incandescent street light fixtures with LED light fixtures. This is phase one of the project. The hope is to roll out another phase to purchase additional LED lighting for decorative lamps and/or private property fixtures.

**At 6:10 PM the Board voted unanimously in favor (3-0) to adjourn.**

***Respectfully Submitted,***

***Christine Trudeau***

***Recording Secretary***