

Chairman Thomas Reynolds called the meeting to order at 5:01 p.m. in the BELD Board Room. Those present at the meeting included Chairman Reynolds, Vice Chairman Anthony Agnitti, Secretary James Regan and General Manager William G. Bottiggi, all of BELD. Also present was Ms. Meredith Boericke, resident.

I. Minutes of Prior Meetings

i. November 15, 2024 Open Meeting

Voted: on motion of Mr. Regan, seconded by Agnitti, to accept the minutes of November 15, 2024 Open Meeting as written. So voted.

II. Items for Discussion

i. Budget

Mr. Bottiggi reported that we have finished with the 2025 budget. He continued we are going to finish the year with \$30 million. The target is \$21.5 million and that's three months of expenses. The biggest job is replacing the switchgear at Station 8. Mr. Bottiggi gave details on this project and history on all the substations. Once Station 8 is completed we will have three state of the art substations – good for the next forty years. Mr. Bottiggi answered the Commissioners' questions. There will be an increase in the electric rate of ½ cent, which is a 3% increase March 1, 2025. That will put BELD at 16 cents/kilowatt hour for our residential customers. That still competes favorably with other electric rates around us.

Mr. Bottiggi reviewed the rest of the budget with the Board. Our power supply is very well hedged, and we will be 85% green in 2025 per the Greenhouse Gas Emissions Standard. There was discussion on the OPEB – BELD is fully funded for 2026. There was further discussion on the budget.

Voted: on motion of Mr. Regan, seconded by Mr. Agnitti to support Mr. Bottiggi's budget. So voted.

ii. Duke Engine Acquisition

Mr. Bottiggi explained that this item is for the two engines on BELD campus and the two engines near Fireking. He has been working with Duke as they want to sell those engines. They own them and we have a shared savings agreement. They have found a company – Whetstone – and they have come in and done their due diligence. Mr. Bottiggi signed his consent for them to transfer ownership today. The engines will be sold by the end of the year and Whetstone is still going to use Tangent to run and dispatch them.

iii. Common Street/Convergent Battery Update

Mr. Bottiggi reported that Convergent has sent a letter to the Town withdrawing that project from the Planning Board. He spoke with the Convergent team and said BELD is here for the Town and the Town doesn't want it and the residents are pushing back so they are going to look for another spot in town. There was discussion.

iv. Watson I GSU Transformer

Mr. Bottiggi reported the Step-Up Transformer for Watson 1 has a ground in it and it has had a ground in it, off and on we have detected it, over the years. He continued this is not a crisis at all.

Typically, when you have a ground that is an issue it creates heat and that heat degrades the oil. So you do oil tests to see if you have a problem. He explained that the ground has come around again - there is a bushing that handles grounds and we thought we had a faulty core bushing. It wasn't - we replaced the bushing and we had the same results. We are working with the manufacturer and they said we do not have a problem - and just do testing on the oil every six months to monitor. The transformer is fifteen years old and it should have another twenty five year life so we do not see this shortening its life. Mr. Reynolds asked about any debris. Mr. Bottiggi explained that there wouldn't be debris; a ground effectively heats the oil if it's bad enough and causes contamination of the oil. If that were to happen we would process the oil to purify it. Mr. Bottiggi expressed we do not have a problem - he just wanted the Commissioners to be aware of this issue and we will continue testing. There was discussion. The only transformer we have of any significant age is one at Station 10 and we are going to replace it in the next few years.

v. Watson IEP

Mr. Bottiggi reported that the Watson Inventory Energy Program (IEP) has started. He continued this is a program that started because ISO-NE is very worried about not having enough natural gas for all of the natural gas fired power plants - this is year two, we participated last year. They pay us \$650,000 to make sure we have 72 hours worth of oil to be able to run full load, both units for 72 hours. That is about ½ million gallons of oil. There was discussion.

vi. EEA Proposed Clearinghouse Program

Mr. Bottiggi reported that the EEA Clearinghouse Program is one of the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs programs. He explained that municipal utilities are exempt legislatively from those policies that the administration creates. Right now, MassSave is the big one and there are some other departments. The EEA wants to create a clearinghouse where all the programs are brought together and will all be run out of one new administrative office. The EEA are pushing to require municipal utilities to participate.

Mr. Bottiggi commented on his residential electric bill in Marshfield: Eversource charges about 4 - 4 & ½ cents per kilowatt-hour of rates that do energy efficiency, electric vehicles and heat pump programs. If EEA is successful in forcing BELD into this program our electric rate would go up by 4 cents a kilowatt hour immediately. That would be a 30% increase in BELD's bills. This would mean that the utilities would collect the monies and give it all to the State. Then our customers will work with contractors to put in heat pumps or other energy efficiency improvements and need to get the money back from the State. What we do here is very efficient but at the State level there would be more processes and money spent to administer it.

BELD and other municipals are trying to work with the State - but we will sue if we have to. Chapter 164 does not allow the State to do ratemaking for municipalities. When investor-owned utilities want to change their rates they go to the State and they have a rate case. Then the State approves their rates. The State cannot force BELD to raise our rates - only the Commissioners, who represent the residents in Braintree, have the power to raise our rates. There was discussion. There

is a Municipal Light Plant caucus that is comprised of State Senators and Representatives who have signed a letter that was recently sent to Governor Healey and the EEA saying that they do not think this is a good thing to do. This issue will be ongoing.

vii. Banners

Mr. Bottiggi reported that he received a call from Rosemarie Lauria, wife of Dan Lauria, long-time realtor in Braintree. Dan is a military veteran and they put a banner up for him down near Weymouth Landing. She explained to Mr. Bottiggi that the banner did not mean anything where it is and asked if it could be put up outside his old office on Washington Street. We have a policy to not put anything on our utility poles – but Mr. Bottiggi made an exception this one time. There was discussion.

viii. Mr. Regan Announcement

Mr. Regan announced his last meeting will be the January 2025 meeting as a BELD Commissioner. He continued, due to family issues he needs to end his term at BELD. Mr. Regan explained that he has been at BELD for nineteen years, that Mr. Agnitti was here before him and Mr. Reynolds before both of them. He said that he has witnessed what Mr. Reynolds has accomplished and wanted to make a motion. There was discussion.

Voted: on motion by Mr. Regan, seconded by Mr. Agnitti, to rename the BELD boardroom to the Thomas Reynolds boardroom.

Mr. Bottiggi explained that he knew Mr. Regan was going to make his resignation announcement and he did some research. The Town Charter details how Mr. Regan's seat is to be filled. He continued option A is that the position is filled with whoever finished third in the last election and they get 60% or more of the votes as the person who finished first. The person who finished third was Mr. Steve O'Brien and he got 1,601 votes and Mr. Reynolds finished first with 3,090 votes. Mr. Bottiggi said 60% of 3,090 is 1,854 so Mr. O'Brien does not meet that standard. Mr. Bottiggi explained that option B is the vacancy gets filled by the remaining board members and that person will sit until the next regular election which is in November 2025. Whoever wins that election gets sworn in and starts immediately. There was discussion.

III. Items for Action

i. GM Review

Mr. Bottiggi went over his self-review and how the company is doing overall with the Commissioners touching on many of the items discussed under the budget discussion. He also focused on his role in promoting a safe work environment, as a representative of BELD at APPA and NEPPA and negotiating a new contract with the Union. He reported to the Board that BELD is one of only 2 municipal utilities in the U.S. got the gold level customer satisfaction award from APPA - BELD and one in Wisconsin. He concluded that he would like 4.5% increase.

Mr. Regan commented that Mr. Bottiggi's leadership has improved BELD in many ways. There was discussion among Board members.

Voted: on motion of Mr. Regan, seconded by Mr. Agnitti, to approve 4.5% increase for Mr. Bottiggi. So voted.

IV. Personnel Update

There was discussion regarding a recent hire and the meter department. Mr. Mitchell is an electrician but has been hired as a meter technician. There is a full compliment of workers in that department.

Mr. Bottiggi said there are really no openings but we do have a couple of people retiring and those positions will be posted internally first. There was further discussion.

V. Old Business (As Determined/Needed)

i. Station 9 Battery

Mr. Bottiggi reported that we completed transferring ownership of the Station 9 battery to Lightshift. He continued today they took operational control of the battery so now they can charge and discharge. We went through the contracts and handed it off to them and we will get 50% of the savings. For us, it was a demonstration project and we proved all the use cases. We received \$700,000 from the State and put \$1.7 million into the project and we have all our money back and a little more. It had become more of a distraction for our employees – we are focused on keeping the lights on and not running batteries.

VI. New Business (As Determined/Needed)

None

VII. Public Participation (As Determined/Needed)

Chairman Reynolds recognized Ms. Boericke. Ms. Boericke commented she wanted to recognize Mr. Regan’s decades of work at BELD and thanked him. She has two reasons for appearing before the Board. She is a new owner of an electric vehicle (EV) and has heard there is free charging at Town Hall. Mr. Bottiggi said we do not own those EV chargers – the Town does but they are not working currently. She also had heard that the chargers at the high school are not operational. Mr. Bottiggi explained the situation. He said the chargers were put in five to seven years ago and like everything else needs to be maintained. Most do not work at the schools, town hall and at the DPW facility. Our energy consultant is Energy New England (ENE) and they run our EV program for us. Mr. Bottiggi asked them to draft a proposal to take over management of the EV charging stations for the Town. ENE would have charged the Town a fee and the proposal included the Town charging users a fee to charge on their chargers – so it was no longer free charging as in the beginning. However, that would have covered the cost of the contract. Mr. Bottiggi gave the proposal to Mayor Kokoros at least three times over the four years he was in office and he did not want to move forward with it. There was discussion. Mr. Bottiggi said we are also increasing the incentives - \$250 toward installing the charger at your residence and \$12 per month to charge off-peak.

Ms. Boericke expressed an interest in the EEA Clearinghouse Program. She listened to the public comment hearing and there was only one commenter who was in favor of moving to the

clearinghouse model. She continued: the session was loudly against changing MassSaves as it is today. She listened in on the evening session and the only Municipal Light Plant (MLP) to call in was West Boylston. Ms. Boericke asked if Braintree, as an MLP, was submitting comments against this as part of the public record. Mr. Bottiggi said yes – Braintree belongs to the Municipal Electric Association of Massachusetts (MEAM) and he has a draft of a letter that will be going out tomorrow or Monday pushing back. Bob Rodephele is MEAM’s lobbyist/lawyer and Representative Jeffrey Roy is an advocate for light plants and is the recipient of the letter. There was discussion on BELD’s energy efficiency programs.

VIII. Tabled Items

None.

IX. Next Regular Meeting – Upcoming Meetings

i. **Tuesday, January 14, 2025 at 5:00 p.m.**

X. Executive Session (As Determined/Needed)

Not Needed.

XI. Adjournment

Voted: on motion of Mr. Regan, seconded by Mr. Agnitti, to adjourn the meeting at 6:04 p.m. So voted.

James P. Regan
Secretary