



Westfield Gas & Electric Municipal Light Board Regular Meeting Minutes February 11, 2021

Location: Gas & Electric Operations Center, 40 Turnpike Industrial Rd. Conference Room, Westfield, MA

The meeting was called to order at 5:45 p.m.

I. Call to Order

Chairman Roman stated that in accordance with Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting law, G.L. Chapter 30A, Section 20, and the Governor's March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitations on the number of people that may gather in one place, this meeting of the Municipal Light Board will be conducted via remote participation. The notice for this meeting invited members of the public who wish to listen to the meeting to do so by calling in telephonically to any of the numbers provided in the meeting notice. This virtual meeting will be audio recorded and, per the WG+E MLB Video Policy, the recording will be available on the WG+E website within one week. The Chairman asked if anyone, other than the Municipal Light Board, was recording the meeting. Hearing none the Chairman welcomed the public that may be listening to the meeting.

II. ROLL CALL was taken as follows:

Present: Ward #1 Commissioner, Kevin M. Kelleher
Ward #2 Commissioner, Ray Rivera
Ward #3 Commissioner, Dawn Renaudette
Ward #4 Commissioner, Francis L. Liptak
Ward #5 Commissioner, Joseph B. Mitchell
Ward #6 Commissioner, Robert C. Sacco
Appointed Commissioner, A. Edward Roman

Absent:
Present: 7 Absent: 0

III. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: None

The Manager announced that the audio and video would be shut off until 6:00 p.m.
The Meeting reconvened at 6:00 p.m.

V. REPORTS FROM THE GAS & ELECTRIC:

A. Action Required Items

a) **General Manager Interviews.**

Thomas P. Flaherty Sr – The MLB interviewed Mr. Flaherty. General and standardized questions as to background and interest in the position were initially asked by individual Commissioners. Chairman Roman asked for an outline of his educational background and relevant professional experience; Commissioner Renaudette asked about which accomplishments in his career he is most proud of; Commissioner Mitchell inquired about the biggest change he dealt with and how he adapted; Commissioner Liptak asked about acumen and expertise in statutory and industry regulations, labor relations and negotiation of labor agreements; Commissioner Rivera asked about the rapidly changing utility industry and what trends the candidate believes are on the horizon; Commissioner Kelleher asked about how Mr. Flaherty manages relationships with ratepayers, employees, City officials and the general community; and Commissioner Sacco asked about the steps the candidate would take to integrate himself into the Department and identify issues and opportunities. The candidate had prepared written statements for each of these standardized questions which he referenced during his response and following these general questions, during an open forum Commissioners made individual inquiries as to areas they felt were relevant to the search process. Commissioner Liptak stated having the respect of his coworkers is important and asked how the candidate felt others at the WG+E would receive him. Commissioner Renaudette stated Mr. Flaherty has many years of experience on the WG+E Municipal Light Board and asked how this experience will benefit him and how could it work against him. Commissioner Rivera stated that the candidate typically works on his own and asked how he'd transition to becoming a leader in charge of such a large workforce. Commissioner Mitchell asked Mr. Flaherty for a specific example of when he had to learn something in depth and on the fly and what was the result. Commissioner Kelleher asked the candidate what threats he believes green energy pose to the utility. Commissioner Sacco stated the candidate has experience in energy rates and asked how the Board should feel comfortable with the operational and management demands entailed within this position. Commissioner Liptak asked if the candidate would feel comfortable leading power restoration efforts after a significant event. Commissioner Rivera asked for the candidate to summarize his management style and how that style would keep the team together, obtain results and inspire loyalty. Mr. Flaherty and emphasized his community ties and involvement, as well as his long work history in retail energy sales.

At 6:38 p.m. Commissioner Mitchell moved to recess the meeting until 7:00 p.m. Commissioner Sacco indicated that if the other applicant was available early and prepared to proceed that a shorter recess may be appropriate.

On the motion of Commission Mitchell, seconded by Commissioner Renaudette it was unanimously:

VOTED: To recess the regular meeting of the Municipal Light Board meeting until 6:48 p.m. and interview the remaining applicant if he is available and ready to proceed. If not, recess until 7:00 p.m.

The Manager announced that the audio and video would be shut off until approximately 6:48 p.m.

The Meeting reconvened at 6:49 p.m.

John J. Leary - The MLB interviewed Mr. Leary. General and standardized questions as to background and interest in the position were initially asked by individual Commissioners. Chairman Roman asked for an outline of his educational background and relevant professional experience; Commissioner Renaudette asked about which accomplishments in his career he is most proud of; Commissioner Mitchell inquired about the biggest change he dealt with during his lengthy career and how he adapted; Commissioner Liptak asked about acumen and expertise in statutory and industry regulations, labor relations and negotiation of labor agreements; Commissioner Rivera asked about the rapidly changing utility industry and what trends the candidate believes are on the horizon; Commissioner Kelleher asked about how Mr. Flaherty manages relationships with ratepayers, employees, City officials and the general community; and Commissioner Sacco asked about the initial steps the candidate would take as new General Manager to identify issues and opportunities. Following these general questions, during an open forum Commissioners made individual inquiries as to areas they felt were relevant to the search process. Mr. Leary responded in detail to all the questions that were asked and outlined his background, goals and objectives. He emphasized his involvement as IT Manager at WG+E, the expansion of Whip City Fiber and his involvement with other divisions. Mr. Leary believes as the industry and the technology it uses evolves, you need someone with a technical acumen, which he possesses due to his many years in the technology field. Chair Roman asked how Mr. Leary would go about filling his current position if he was chosen as General Manager. Commissioner Kelleher commented on the candidate's enthusiasm regarding his work here and asked about his ability to transition into the General Manager's role and the difficult decisions the GM position is often faced with. Commissioner Mitchell asked Mr. Leary for a specific example of when he had to learn something in depth and on the fly and what was the result. Commissioner Sacco affirmed the candidate is well-versed in the IT and fiber division and asked how he is capable of managing the electric and gas sides of the business.

- VI. NEW BUSINESS:** Chairman Roman wanted to discuss each Commissioner's views on the candidates. Commissioner Rivera stated candidate discussion is not on this evening's agenda but is on the next meeting's agenda. He voiced his concern that such a discussion may conflict with requirements of the open meeting law and as such, the discussion should wait until the next meeting. Commissioner Mitchell agreed and indicated the MLB could discuss process at the commencement of the next meeting.

VII. ADJOURNMENT


On the motion of Commission Rivera, seconded by Commissioner Renaudette it was unanimously:

VOTED: To adjourn the regular meeting of the Municipal Light Board meeting.

Chairman Roman declared the regular session portion of the meeting adjourned at 7:41 p.m.

A TRUE RECORD.

Attest:



A. Edward Roman, Chairman

Documents Presented at REGULAR SESSION February 11, 2021

Reference Letter for Thomas F. Flaherty, Sr from Perry F. Bernstein, Esq. VP Energy Marketing Global Partners (Retired)
Reference Letter for Thomas F. Flaherty, Sr from Bob Paul, former MLB and City Council member, President Com Energy (Retired); VP Commonwealth Gas/Electric (Retired); Senior VP Commonwealth Edison (Chicago) (Retired)
Reference Letter for John J. Leary from Aaron Bean
Reference Letter for John J. Leary from Rev. Warren J. Savage, Director Albert and Amelia Ferst Interfaith Center, Westfield State College
Reference Letter for John J. Leary from Lisa McCarthy, President Home Fragrance/Yankee Candle