



## OBSERVER CORPS REPORT

### **MARBLEHEAD MUNICIPAL LIGHT BOARD – 11-21-23**

Hybrid Meeting-Recorded by Video, available on the MMLD website via Vimeo (transcript available)

LWVM Observer: Steven Levy

The members in attendance were Simon Frechette, Adam Smith, Lisa Wolf (Chair), and Michael Hull. Joe Kowalik, the General Manager, was present.

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 pm. The minutes of September 5th both public and executive sessions were approved.

An executive recruiting firm is being retained for critical hires. The recruiter will start with the Engineering Project Manager and Information Systems & Technology Manager positions. Work will start in December.

The January 2024 rate changes were approved. The average residential customer will see a 9% decrease. The energy cost represents about 66% of our department expenses. Energy costs in 2023 dropped due to natural gas prices dropping.

MMLD will have a 2 million dollar surplus. We have two unfilled positions, which reduced expenses. Interest rates went up so our interest income has increased.

The second year of our utility tree trimming program has been completed, far ahead of schedule. One tree on Village Street is in the direct path of a main feeder line. John Fobert, Town Tree Warden has reviewed the situation and agrees that removal is appropriate in this case. MMLD will compensate that town with new tree plantings, location and tree species to be determined by the Tree Warden.

The town has had 10,300 digital meters installed throughout town for a decade. About 30 analog residential meters remain, due to electromagnetic radiation concerns by residents when the conversion to digital began. Given data presented by the General Manager that: (1) the electromagnetic radiation emitted by digital meters on the outside of a house is significantly less than a mobile phone, home wifi network, or microwave oven widely used in homes today, and (2) the continued use of analog meters will not allow for certain rate changes now being considered by the Board, including Demand and Time of Use rates, the Board voted 4-0 to eliminate further use of analog meters in 2024. The Dept. will work with homeowners who would like to shield the area around their meter where it is attached to their homes.

Daily energy usage peaks between 4 and 9 PM. The cost to the utility during these peaks is much more than normal. Historically the consumer pays the same no matter what month or time it is. Most Marblehead electric meters today are digital. MMLD wishes to bill customers for electricity usage that more closely reflects the actual cost. It is believed that this type of billing would encourage consumers to reduce their consumption during peak periods. MMLD and residents also have the option to install battery electric storage systems to reduce demand

during peak usage periods. Groton Municipal Light Dept is trying out this new “time of use” billing method. We intend to learn from their efforts.

Village 13 substation upgrade will begin in the spring. A ground-level “bridge”, designed to protect the force sewer main pipe from heavy loads that will travel on the Right of Way in front of Village 13 in 2024, is being reviewed with the Water and Sewer department and South Essex Sewer District. New fence and gates at the department’s main office at 80 Commercial Street, including the Hammond Park fence will be installed beginning in March 2024 and expected to be completed in 6 to 10 weeks.

The next scheduled regular monthly meeting is planned for 4 PM, December 19th. The meeting was adjourned at 6:15.