

**MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING  
BURLINGTON ELECTRIC COMMISSION**

**Wednesday, June 10, 2020 – 3:00 pm**

The regular meeting of the Burlington Electric Commission was convened at 3:07 pm on Wednesday, June 10, 2020 via Microsoft Teams Video Meeting.

Please note that Channel 17 was unable to record this meeting due to staffing issues.

Commissioners Chagnon, Herendeen, Moody, and Stebbins, participated via Microsoft Teams beginning at 3:07 pm, while Commissioner Whitaker joined the Microsoft Teams meeting at 3:30 pm.

Staff members present via Microsoft Teams included Darren Springer, Paul Alexander, James Gibbons, Mike Kanarick, Munir Kasti, Laurie Lemieux (Board Clerk), Dave MacDonnell, Andrea McNeil, Paul Pikna, and Emily Stebbins-Wheelock.

**1. Agenda**

There were no changes to the Agenda.

**2. Public Forum**

No one from the public was present via Microsoft Teams.

**3. March 11, 2020, April 29, 2020, and May 13, 2020 Meeting Minutes**

Commissioner Moody made a motion to approve the minutes of the March 11, 2020 Commission Meeting; the motion was seconded by Commissioner Herendeen.

The Board Clerk, Laurie Lemieux, conducted a roll call vote by calling on the following Commissioners:

Commissioner Chagnon. Aye  
Commissioner Herendeen. Aye  
Commissioner Moody. Aye  
Commissioner Stebbins. Aye  
Commissioner Whitaker. Not yet present

Results: 4 Ayes with 0 Nays, the motion carries.

Commissioner Moody made a motion to approve the minutes of the April 29, 2020 Commission

Meeting; the motion was seconded by Commissioner Herendeen.

The Board Clerk, Laurie Lemieux, conducted a roll call vote by calling on the following Commissioners:

Commissioner Chagnon. Aye  
Commissioner Herendeen. Aye  
Commissioner Moody. Aye  
Commissioner Stebbins. Aye  
Commissioner Whitaker. Not yet present

Results: 4 Ayes with 0 Nays, the motion carries.

Commissioner Herendeen made a motion to approve the minutes of the May 13, 2020 Commission Meeting; the motion was seconded by Commissioner Chagnon.

The Board Clerk, Laurie Lemieux, conducted a roll call vote by calling on the following Commissioners:

Commissioner Chagnon. Aye  
Commissioner Herendeen. Aye  
Commissioner Moody. Aye  
Commissioner Stebbins. Aye  
Commissioner Whitaker. Not yet present

Results: 4 Ayes with 0 Nays, the motion carries.

#### **4. Commissioners' Corner**

Commissioner Stebbins expressed how saddened everyone is about the sudden passing of BED's McNeil employee Mike Russell. Commissioner Stebbins stated that the Department and Commission are appreciative of Mr. Russell's dedication to the City of Burlington.

#### **5. General Manager's Update**

BED's FY21 budget, approved by the Commission, will be presented to the Board of Finance tonight, June 10, and formally submitted for review to the City Council on Monday, June 15, and likely voted on by the Council until its June 29 meeting.

Mr. Springer stated that, in addition to the other efforts the Department has made to control costs and to be consistent with what the Mayor has asked of the City general fund, BED will be holding off on implementing July 1 COLAs for non-union employees making over \$100,000 at this time, as a means of helping mitigate some of the risk for FY21. Mr. Springer also stated that, if our budget is

managed well and revenues turn out as expected, it is possible that we may be able to implement a portion or perhaps all of the COLA at a later point in time.

Mr. Springer also stated that, as Commissioner Stebbins reported, BED is sad to report that Mike Russell, a yard worker at the McNeil Generating Station, passed away at his home on May 18, 2020. The Department offered Employee Assistance Program services to all BED employees in need, and the BED team has been in touch with Mike's family and offered condolences. Mike's obituary stated that Mike enjoyed his time working at McNeil. Mike will be missed.

Mr. Springer stated that BED continues to be in Phase I of a three-phase reopening plan. In Phase I, we still are having everyone who can work productively from home do so, but also, we are returning some employees back on-site who had not been on-site during the emergency. Previously we have had dispatch, McNeil staff, one line crew, one utility generalist, IT, and limited additional staff on-site. We are now allowing for more of the operations team back on-site, as well as utility generalists and some on the Finance team. Phase II will include employees who cannot work productively from home to return. Once we reach Phase III, the timing of which will depend on additional State and City guidance, we anticipate roughly one-third of the workforce will work on-site at 585 Pine Street at any one time to achieve safe physical distancing. The Center for Safety Team of Paul Alexander, Mike Flora, and Jeff Turner have done great work to ensure that we have adequate cleaning and sanitizing supplies, face coverings, regular cleaning crew and periodic deep cleaning. These team members now are taking a rotation to serve on-site as our health and safety officers, as required by VOSHA and State regulations as we resume operations. We also have resumed some services, such as engineering field visits, limited projects for line and field crew, and a broader reopening of the Waste Wood Yard at McNeil through a tripling of the number of daily appointments.

Mr. Springer welcomed Andrea McNeil, our new Finance Director, who now is officially part of the team. Mr. Springer also welcomed back Ben Pfeil as the new Working Crew Leader, and Corey Hurley as a Lineworker First Class A. Ben and Corey are both former BEDers who return to us from GMP and VEC, respectively. With several pending retirements, we are pleased to have Ben and Corey bring their experience and expertise to our talented and hardworking line crew.

Mr. Springer stated that the Department created the annual Jim Reardon Public Service Award. This award will be presented annually to an employee who exemplifies Jim's commitment to the City of Burlington, the State of Vermont, public service, and professionalism. While we had hoped to make a presentation in-person, BED was proud to announce on a recent employee Zoom call that Andi Higbee was the first award winner. The Zoom call included employees and several of Jim's family, including his wife, children, and siblings. Thank you to Commissioner Stebbins for joining with the BED Executive Team to evaluate nominations and make this selection. We congratulate Andi, and we will hang a plaque in the 585 Pine Street lobby. Andi received a \$50 gift card, paid for by the General Manager, and in true Andi spirit, Mr. Higbee made a contribution in Jim's name to Feeding Chittenden, which was an important organization to Jim and his family. Andi also will select our first Defeat the Peak non-profit partner for the 2020 season, helping them likely receive a \$1,000

contribution if we achieve our goal for demand reduction during the first peak event.

### Financials

Ms. Stebbins-Wheelock, Manager of Strategy and Innovation, reviewed the April 2020 year-to-date financial results.

Ms. Stebbins-Wheelock started with an update on loads and reviewed several charts showing how loads are looking through June 6. Residential sales continue to track above forecast, with the warm weather of Memorial Day week causing an additional increase. Commercial sales are continuing to trend significantly lower than forecast. Total system load is approximately 8-9% lower than expected, with the decline in the commercial sales more than offsetting the slight uptick in residential sales.

Ms. Stebbins-Wheelock reviewed additional charts of daily sales versus temperature that showed COVID-19 data points consistently lower for weekdays, weekends, and two of the Department's larger customers that account for 30-45% of commercial sales. The data suggest that loads are still depressed, most likely due to students not being in session, large employers continuing to work from home, and the hospitality industry just starting to reopen.

Ms. Stebbins-Wheelock reviewed the budget-versus-actual results for the month of April FY20. Due to the effects of COVID-19, the Department reports a net loss of \$1.37M, almost double the net loss that was budgeted for April. The variance is due to several factors: decreased sales to customers; increased operating expenses due to labor budgeted for capital projects that have been deferred, delayed, or stopped hitting operations; loss of revenue from customer contributions to delayed/deferred capital projects (of which substantial amounts were budgeted for April, May, and June); and fuel costs at McNeil greater than budget due to the planned McNeil outage being deferred from April to September. Decreased loads resulted in savings on energy purchases through ISO New England. The Department's currently projects FY20 year-end net income at breakeven or a slight loss due to COVID-19.

Mr. Springer stated that the Department is still tracking expenses, including staff time and purchases, related to COVID-19 in the hopes that we can submit these expenses for reimbursement from FEMA.

Capital spending is holding steady at just under 50% of the FY20 budget, and we do not anticipate significant changes over the next month or two. The Department is continuing to spend limited amounts on IT Forward and small capital projects but will not be completing some major capital projects budgeted for FY20 such as the McNeil economizer replacement.

As of April month-end the Department has 128 days cash on hand, the debt service coverage ratio is well above target, and the adjusted debt service coverage ratio remains

below target, in part due to impacts from COVID-19.

## **6. Strategic Direction**

Mr. Springer reviewed the original and red-lined versions of the proposed Strategic Direction that was included in the Commission packets. Commissioner Herendeen stated that he likes the modifications and appreciates the hard work put into this updated version. Commission Whitaker also shared positive words about the Strategic Direction and added that she would like more information regarding the role BED plays in equity, inclusion, and diversity including a goal on diversity in staffing and a change in language regarding transportation. Mr. Springer asked that the Commissioners forward him and Ms. Stebbins-Wheelock any suggested changes, additions, etc. These changes will be incorporated into a new draft and provided in the July Commission Packet and will be added to the Agenda for a vote in July.

## **7. Annual Reliability Matrix Update**

Mr. Kasti stated that in 2019 BED experienced 236 outages, of which 138 were planned and 98 unplanned. Planned outages are used for construction, preventative maintenance, repair and upgrade for existing and new services. These planned outages are a tool to prevent unplanned outages. From 2018 to 2019, BED experienced an increase of 81 outages, of which 61 were planned and 20 unplanned.

Mr. Kasti reviewed System Average Interruption Frequency Index (SAIFI), which measures the average number of interruptions per customer. In 2019, BED's SAIFI was 1.03, indicating that on average every customer experienced 1 outage. SAIFI was higher in 2019 compared to the previous five years due to the storms we experienced last year.

Mr. Kasti reviewed Customer Average Interruption Duration Index (CAIDI), which measures average time in hours required to restore service to an interrupted customer. In 2019, BED's CAIDI was about 0.75 hours or 45 minutes. In summary, on average, every customer in 2019 experienced an outage that lasted approximately 45 minutes.

Mr. Kasti stated that last year Burlington experienced 10 tree outages caused by five major storms that occurred on June 13, July 30, October 17, November 1, and November 27. Without these events, BED's SAIFI would have been 0.28 interruption per customer and CAIDI would have been 1.08 hours. Of the 21,820 customers impacted by outages throughout the year, 15,883 were from these five events.

## **8. Addition of Andrea McNeil to the Signatory List for BED Accounts**

Mr. Springer stated that he and Ms. Stebbins-Wheelock are presently signatories on the BED accounts, and Mr. Springer, Ms. Stebbins-Wheelock, and Mr. Kasti are signatories on the McNeil accounts. The Department requested that the Commission approve the addition of the Director of Finance, Andrea McNeil, to the signatory list on all bank accounts, both BED and McNeil.

Commissioner Herendeen made a motion that the Burlington Electric Commission approve adding Ms. Andrea McNeil as a signatory on all BED accounts; the motion was seconded by Commissioner Chagnon.

The Board Clerk, Laurie Lemieux, conducted a roll call vote by calling on the following Commissioners:

Commissioner Chagnon. Aye  
Commissioner Herendeen. Aye  
Commissioner Moody. Aye  
Commissioner Stebbins. Aye  
Commissioner Whitaker. Aye

Results: 5 Ayes with 0 Nays, the motion carries.

## **9. Commissioners' Check-In**

Commissioner Herendeen asked about the #MyNZELife campaign. Mr. Springer stated that this is a social media campaign that Mr. Kanarick and Ms. Green are working on aimed at getting customers interested in programs that the Department is offering by sharing their experiences with technologies, including electric mowers, cold climate heat pumps, electric vehicles, or with other steps that they may be taking to reduce their carbon footprints not related to purchasing or installing a new system.

Mr. Kanarick stated that this campaign was to begin this week but, in light of the significant focus in our Country on racial justice, it did not feel like the right time to begin the campaign. The communications team decided to postpone this campaign for a couple weeks. Through the campaign, BED hopes that when customers start sharing their experiences, they will inspire others to take similar steps as well and hopefully utilize the added, significance incentives offered by the 's new Green Stimulus Package.

The #MyNZELife campaign will be transmitted via Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and posts on Front Porch Forum. Campaign information also will be posted on the Burlington Electric Department website and through advertising in the North Avenue News. Customers not comfortable posting on social media will be able to share their stories and photos with BED via email, and we will post for them.


Commissioner Moody made a motion to adjourn; the motion was seconded by Commissioner Herendeen. The Board Clerk, Laurie Lemieux, conducted a roll call vote by calling on the following Commissioners:

Commissioner Chagnon. Aye  
Commissioner Herendeen. Aye  
Commissioner Moody. Aye  
Commissioner Stebbins. Aye  
Commissioner Whitaker. Aye

Results: 5 Ayes with 0 Nays, the motion carries.

The meeting of the Burlington Electric Commission adjourned at 4:06 p.m.

Attest:

  
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Laurie Lemieux, Board Clerk