

MINUTES OF GAS & ELECTRIC COMMISSION MEETING
REGULAR SESSION
JUNE 17, 2020

A meeting of the Holyoke Gas and Electric Department was held on June 17, 2020 at 5:00 P.M. in the Department's offices. In attendance were Commissioners Hoey, Griffin and Sutter; Manager Lavelle; Superintendent Beauregard; Acting Gas Superintendent Brian Roy; Brooke McMahon, Kirk Jonah, Kate Sullivan, and Attorney John Ferriter.

CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman Hoey called the meeting to order at 5:00 P.M.

Chairman Hoey noted that remote participation in the Commission meeting by Commissioners was authorized by an Executive Order issued by Governor Baker on March 12, 2020 and is required due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

MINUTES:

On a motion from Commissioner Griffin, seconded by Commissioner Sutter, it was unanimously voted to approve the minutes from May 27, 2020.

REPORTS & RECOMMENDATIONS OF MANAGER:

Financial Report:

Ms. McMahon reviewed the draft April financial statements and gave an update on outstanding receivables and cash flow status. There was a brief discussion on the matter.

DIVISION REPORTS:

GAS DIVISION

Mr. Roy reported that wholesale natural gas procurements continue consistent with the hedging plan for the current 12-month procurement window. He then reviewed the June rate comparisons and reported that the Department remains very competitive in all rate classes. Mr. Roy then gave an update on the Department's response to recommendations from the recent DPU audit of the LNG facility, and he noted that 80% of the recommendations have been closed out, and the remaining items are on schedule for completion by the end of the year. He then gave an update on the status of leak reductions and noted that the full system leak survey has been completed and that the walking service survey began this month. He also gave a summary report of proposals that were received for non-pipeline solutions for natural gas capacity constraint relief. He then gave an update on ongoing distribution projects and he stated that Phase III of the Safety Management System (SMS) implementation would commence this month. He further reported that glass shields would be installed at customer service stations in the main lobby during the coming weekend, and that repairs to the drive-thru payment system were being implemented to keep that capability in place at least until the time that the main lobby is fully open to the public. There was a brief discussion on the matter.

ELECTRIC DIVISION

Power Supply:

Mr. Beauregard reviewed the June electric rate comparisons and reported that the Department remains competitive in all rate classes. He then gave an update on peak load reduction activities and stated that the two temporary portable generators were operating during the May peak hour. He also gave an update on the Citizens Energy Battery Storage project. He noted that NEC, the battery supplier to Citizens for the project, has announced the closing of its global operations. He further stated that NEC has indicated that they will honor their commitment to supply equipment and support for the Citizens project. Mr. Beauregard then reported that PTF revenues for the coming year would be approximately \$900,000 lower than the prior year (due to the reduction in 17L Substation operations and maintenance expenses) and that the new RNS transmission rates have increased by over 15.5% to \$129.3/kW-yr. There was a brief discussion on the matter.

TRANSMISSION & DISTRIBUTION

Mr. Beauregard reported that all non-emergency field work that requires access to a customer premise continues to be suspended until further notice due to the COVID-19 outbreak. He stated that crews have completed planned replacements of vacuum switches throughout the system and planned breaker maintenance at North Canal Substation. He also reported that crews completed all planned transformer replacements for the year, all planned manhole inspections, as well as planned transmission asset inspections. He then gave an update on operations activity related to several new marijuana cultivation operations. There was a brief discussion on the matter.

ELECTRIC PRODUCTION

Mr. Lavelle reported that hydro production is slightly ahead of plan year to date and that water flows have been very low for the current month. He also reported that fish lifting operations are ongoing and that over 300,000 shad and five sturgeon have been lifted to date this season. He further reported that contractors are slightly ahead of schedule on the Cobble Mountain governor replacement project. There was a brief discussion on the matter.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Jonah gave an update on help desk activity as well as sales and ongoing projects. He stated that most staff have returned to work at the office, with a few exceptions, and are supporting ongoing operations while observing proper hygiene and social distancing protocols. There was a brief discussion on the matter.

MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

Ms. Sullivan reported that staff continues to provide updates to employees regarding operational changes and required precautions to minimize risks related to the COVID-19 outbreak. She stated that, due to the pandemic, the Department would not be able to promote the Free Heating System Check-up program for customers. She then reported that the Electric Vehicle (EV) website has been launched and described the program details and incentives. She also gave an update on energy efficiency audit numbers and stated that several customers have taken advantage of the virtual audits, while others have decided to wait until a traditional audit can be performed. There was a brief discussion on the matter.

OLD BUSINESS: None

NEW BUSINESS:

RESIDENTIAL ENERGY ASSISTANCE REQUEST – 40 CHERRY STREET: Mr. Lavelle recommended that the Commission approve a residential energy assistance request, in the amount of \$10,000, for the owners of 40 Cherry Street for the installation of energy efficient windows and mini-split units in the two family home. After a brief discussion and on a motion from Commissioner Griffin, seconded by Commissioner Sutter, it was unanimously voted to approve the assistance per the recommendation of management.

BID AUTHORIZATIONS:

2020 DEPARTMENT VEHICLE REPLACEMENTS: Mr. Lavelle requested authorization to solicit bids for planned 2020 vehicle replacements. He stated that vehicle #23 (Gas Division) and vehicle #68 (Hydro Division) were due for replacement. Chairman Hoey encouraged staff to evaluate electric vehicles for replacements. Mr. Lavelle stated that staff continues to evaluate electric vehicle options for all replacements and will procure electric vehicles if available and the premium can be reasonably justified. After a brief discussion and on a motion from Commissioner Griffin, seconded by Commissioner Sutter, it was unanimously voted to authorize the bid per the recommendation of management.

BIDS RECEIVED:

REPLACEMENT OF NETWORK VAULT COVER (NO. 706): Mr. Lavelle recommended that the Commission award the contract for the Replacement of Network Vault Cover (No. 706) to Rousseau Brothers, Inc., the lowest (and only) bidder meeting all requirements of the solicitation. After a brief discussion and on a motion from Commissioner Griffin, seconded by Commissioner Sutter, it was unanimously voted to award the contract per the recommendation of management.

ELECTRIC STATION PARKING LOT & DRIVEWAY REPAVING: Mr. Lavelle recommended that the Commission award the contract for the Electric Station Parking Lot Repaving to Ondrick Materials & Recycling, LLC, the lowest eligible bidder meeting all requirements of the solicitation. After a brief discussion and on a motion from Commissioner Griffin, seconded by Commissioner Sutter, it was unanimously voted to award the contract per the recommendation of management.

ETHERNET SWITCHES AND LICENSES: Mr. Lavelle requested authorization for the expenditure of up to \$43,093 for the purchase of 2 Ciena Carrier Ethernet Switches and 5 Carrier Ethernet Switch licenses. He stated that the five licenses will cover the two new switches plus three existing switches that will be upgraded to 100Gb capability. After a brief discussion and on a motion from Commissioner Griffin, seconded by Commissioner Sutter, it was unanimously voted to authorize the expenditure per the recommendation of management.

COMMUNICATIONS:

06/12/20 – Draft Commission Meeting Minutes from 05/27/20

05/28/20 – JL/BM/Financial Statements, Balance Sheet April 2020

05/28/20 – JL/BM/Financial Report Summary – April 2020

06/08/20 – JL/LR/Residential Energy Assistance Request – 40 Cherry Street

06/11/20 – JL/SR/Authorization to Bid – 2020 Department Vehicle Replacements
06/11/20 – BB/CP/Bid Recommendation – Replacement of Network Vault Cover (No. 706)
06/11/20 – BB/SD/Bid Recommendation – Electric Station Parking Lot & Driveway Repaving
05/27/20 – KJ/TJ/Purchasing Approval – Ethernet Switches

NEXT MEETING DATE:

It was agreed that the next Commission meeting would take place on Wednesday, July 15, 2020 at 5:00 P.M.

ADJOURNMENT:

On a motion from Commissioner Griffin, seconded by Commissioner Sutter, it was unanimously voted to adjourn the Meeting at 5:49 PM.



HG&E Commission