

**Mansfield Municipal Electric Department  
Minutes of Light Commissioners Meeting  
September 24, 2018**

**Present:** Chairman Jess Aptowitz, Vice Chairman Neil Rhein, Commissioner Steve Schoonveld, Commissioner Michael Trowbridge, General Manager Joseph Sollecito and Financial Assistant Jacqueline Lee

The meeting was held at the Mansfield Town Hall Room 3AB and called to order at 6:00 PM followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. Chairman Aptowitz stated that this meeting is being televised and taped for future broadcast and asked if anyone in the audience was intending to record the meeting to please state their intentions. No one did so.

A complete copy of the Board packet containing all documents that are referenced in the minutes is on file at the Mansfield Municipal Electric Department office.

**Citizens Comments-** none

**Motion: To appoint Steve Schoonveld acting clerk  
(Trowbridge/Rhein) Passes 4/0**

**Motion: To approve the minutes from the July 25, 2018 Light Commissioners meeting  
(Schoonveld/Trowbridge) Passes 4/0**

**Load and Sales Trends-** Mayhew Seavey of PLM gave a presentation of MMED's load and sales trends, saying MMED's consumption has declined steadily over the last ten years. The annual energy rate has been decreasing 1.8% annually. Solar power is one reason for this decrease and the bulk of this is from Branch Street. Mr. Seavey further explained that the peak demand never really went down until 2014 and that the demands for July and August 2018 would have been even higher if not for the new distributive generator and solar generation. He also pointed out that the number of residential customers has increased but residential sales have gone down due to energy efficient lights and appliances. Manager Sollecito said that non-residential sales have decreased primarily due to the loss of several large commercial customers. In fact, five of the 'Top 50' Industrial customers were lost in 2017. However, there are significant signs of revitalization of those facilities. Additionally, Mr. Seavey noted that July and August 2018 sales are up due to the hot weather and that these two months should produce a very healthy flow of revenue for MMED.

**Risk Management Update-** Mayhew Seavey stated that in September 2016 MMED started a new risk management program for purchasing energy. The purpose of the risk management program was to have a systematic approach so decisions are not made out of fear or greed. He stated that through August 2018 the contract price averaged 1% below the spot market price and was also below on the present forward market price. He said that winter prices are now outside the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile of prices over the last four years so there are no buying opportunities for the upcoming fall or winter. Spring and summer prices are within the 20<sup>th</sup> percentile so there are some buying opportunities for those months. He said that time triggers

call for purchases for October 2018-March 2019 and price triggers call for purchases for spring and summer through December 2021.

**Overview of Small Cell and 5G Technology by CTC-**Manager Sollecito introduced Andrew Afflerbach and David Talbot from CTC Technology & Energy who gave an overview of wireless small cell and 5G technology, deployment and operations. Manager Sollecito said that over the past six months, small cell technology has become a big issue both regionally and nationally. He said that municipal utilities have control over their own territory but IOU's do not have that option. He explained that the next generation of wireless communication will not use cell towers but will have to have wireless antennas closer which will have to be mounted onto buildings, streetlights, poles, etc. He also said that it is MMED's right as a municipal to refuse others the use of their poles and that the MMED linemen have safety concerns about this. Manager Sollecito wants to educate the Board on this issue and suggests it might be in MMED's best interest to set up construction standards. He said that CTC is able to help MMED develop policies so the standards are in place when MMED is approached regarding this issue.

Mr. Afflerbach said that there are 200,000 cell towers nationally and there will be millions of small cells. He said that if there are no policies in place then installations are uncoordinated and can look messy. Chairman Aptowitz questioned whether MMED owns half the poles in Mansfield and Verizon owns the other half. Manager Sollecito clarified that all the poles are owned jointly and it's the maintenance that is half/half.

Chairman Aptowitz asked where other towns are at with this issue. Manager Sollecito said they are all in the same boat from what he has learned while at NEPPA meetings. There is strong legal opinion that any FCC ruling will not override municipal light plants control over it's pole attachments. Nonetheless, it appears that wireless attachments will most likely be progressing over the next decade.

Mr. Afflerbach then discussed 5G technology saying the standards are still in development. No one knows what it is going to cost and there are still a lot of unknowns and questions. He thinks, however, that MMED should look into this.

Commissioner Trowbridge said he understood the need to protect the poles and also the aesthetics. He knows MMED needs to come up with a standard and wondered what Manager Sollecito was looking for from the Board. Manager Sollecito answered that he did not have an exact proposal for the Board to vote on but was just trying to educate them.

Vice Chairman Rhein thought it would be good to have some standards. He wondered if there had been any research done on the safety of the radio waves. Mr. Afflerbach said it is pretty much up in the air and that he is not really certain about the safety of them.

Manager Sollecito said he would come back to the Board after he has developed some standards.

**Route 140 Roadway Lighting-**Manager Sollecito said in response to Commissioner Trowbridge's previous question regarding the state and Route 140 lighting, he did make inquiries from others here in Town (including Lee Azinheira). He determined that many

years ago, the state did not require any lighting and it was up to the Town to install and be responsible for the roadway lighting. Chairman Aptowitz would like a letter to go out to the state so that it is in writing and the state can't come back claiming they never said that.

Manager Sollecito said that within the information he presented to the Board regarding the Route 140 lighting he is recommending layout #1. He noted that it will be a transition for people because they're not used to the 'whiter & brighter' lights from the LED as compared to the High Pressure Sodium fixtures. Due to the concerns for 'glare', MMED selected the lower output option. However, the fixtures will be designed to distribute the light along the roadway much better than the existing fixtures. The cost of the project is approximately \$18,000. He also noted that this is not related to the Cabot Industrial Park lighting which is a separate project.

**Motion: To convert the 35 Route 140 roadway fixtures to LED technology for a total estimated cost of \$18,000  
(Trowbridge/Schoonveld) Passes 4/0**

**Update on Distributive Generator-** In terms of cost, Manager Sollecito told the Board that there were some items that were not originally anticipated including a \$35,000 extended service warrantee for the distributive generator as well as a Columbia Gas line installation cost of \$43,836. However, the total project is still within the original budget estimation. The savings achieved so far since the unit went operational in May is over \$700,000 in avoided 'Transmission' and 'Capacity' costs. He noted that the generator did save MMED \$330,000 in one month this year. He also noted that it is well on target for a 7-8 year payback. Finally, a sum of \$410,475.20 is being held from MiltonCAT because of sound requirements. Manager Sollecito said that he came to a verbal agreement with them last week and they will put sound blankets on the inside of the doors. He gave credit to both Chris Cox and Jeff Hayes for their hard work on this project.

**Project Update on 50 West Church Street Garage-** Manager Sollecito reminded the Board that the concrete floor project in this garage is complete. The old floor was falling, cracking and becoming a serious safety issue. The total cost of the floor replacement project actually came in much less than budgeted because they were able to eliminate the planned drainage system since there is no running water in the garage. Commissioner Trowbridge wanted to clarify that the Board never questioned that this was a safety issue but just wondered at what point do you start from scratch. Manager Sollecito agreed and said that the building is sound and the roof was recently replaced. He distributed pictures showing the completed flooring as well as the basement space.

**Update on Mansfield Community Assistance Fund-** Manager Sollecito reported to the Board that the Mansfield Community Assistance Fund has received \$5,370 in donations as of August 31, 2018. He reiterated what a really good program this is as all of the money that was donated stays in Mansfield.

**Update on credit card transaction rates-** Manager Sollecito reminded the Board that MMED renegotiated credit card transaction fees in 2016 with vendor Invoice Cloud. Since that time, MMED has saved \$154,000 in credit card processing expenses even though the number of transactions has actually increased.

**Update on Collections-** Manager Sollecito gave an update on collections. The statistics show that collections is at a steady state and he thinks that the staff does a great job. He attributes the improvement in collections to adjusting the due date on invoices in coordination with the termination notices. The residential customer chart he distributed showed 58 “protected” customers who represent approximately 70-75% of the debt. Chairman Aptowitz questioned whether MMED can recoup some of these monies by placing a lien. Manager Sollecito said for those who own the property MMED does place a lien but they cannot if the customer is a renter. He said that MMED will always work with people who are having difficulty paying their bill. However, all of the staff works to represent all 10,000 customers. Unfortunately, some people take advantage and abuse the system and thus increase costs.

Manager Sollecito also reviewed the commercial debt. Approximately 50 commercial customers owe \$120,000 to \$130,000 and one customer is responsible for \$15,000 of that. Chairman Aptowitz said that he was very frustrated. He said he will speak to Manager Sollecito after the meeting as he doesn't think they should talk about individuals publicly.

**Financial statements-June 2018** – Manager Sollecito stated that the net operating income year-to-date through June was \$724,417 and the non-operating expense was \$22,966. For FY17, the net income through June was \$1,075,000. The generation charge receivable is at \$935,740. In terms of MMED's 'Cash Position' Manager Sollecito noted that it was a very warm summer (in July / August) with higher energy sales but he doesn't know how winter will go. He said energy sales for June 2018 were down from June 2017. Overall, year-to-date energy sales are also down from FY17.

**Review of MMED NDS software-** In response to the request that MMED move from NDS to MUNIS, Manager Sollecito's recommendation is that MMED stay with NDS. He said that he has had several conversations with both Town Accountant John Stanbrook and Town Manager Kevin Dumas and assured them both that MMED would create a bridge between NDS and MUNIS for both 'Accounting' (general ledger) entries as well as 'Accounts Payable' entries. Such a bridge would work by creating a 'raw data input' file that would be exported from NDS to upload into the MUNIS system. This would eliminate the need for hand-entry of data by Town staff. Payroll is presently done manually so data would be entered directly by MMED staff.

Manager Sollecito noted that there are numerous and very detailed utility modules within NDS covering 'Customer' interfaces, 'Purchasing & Inventory' 'Credit Collections' 'Meter Reading' and 'Billing' functions. These have been in place and refined since 2001 and have performed exceptionally well. He also said that ultimately if MUNIS did something NDS couldn't or if it would mean a significant improvement or if it would reduce costs then MMED would make the change. However, at present there is no obvious benefit to MMED ratepayers. Transitioning to MUNIS would be difficult and costly and there would be nothing to gain. Additionally, MUNIS has their own credit card processing operations which would either not easily interface with Invoice Cloud or MMED would most likely lose money on the savings from the fees that were just renegotiated with Invoice Cloud. Manager Sollecito said he has spoken to NDS about what the Town is doing and about bridges being built such as with the warrant process.

Commissioner Trowbridge asked what the cost would be to MMED to bridge to MUNIS. Manager Sollecito said he didn't know the exact cost but was confident he could make a bridge work and that it would be seamless. He said that it was his responsibility and the Board could rely on him to make sure this works successfully.

Chairman Aptowitz would like to hear from MUNIS that they can tie into NDS.

Commissioner Schoonveld believes it can be done.

Manager Sollecito said that at the end of the day it would be a costly transition and it wouldn't be better than what MMED has now.

**Future Meeting Items & Update on Transformer Replacement at Gilbert Street Substation-** Manager Sollecito said that at the end of October he would like to have a meeting after the evaluation on the transformer bids is complete. He said whether it is a formal meeting or just a meeting to address this one issue, he would like to meet at the end of October.

He also would like to discuss, probably in executive session, the right of way pipeline issue that has been previously discussed.

Another topic for future discussion is something that came up during all of the storms earlier this year about keeping customers informed through the use of an 'outage management' software application. It would help customers with cell phones even though they don't have electricity. Manager Sollecito said he was having a meeting with a software vendor this week.

**Update on Community Solar Landfill-** Manager Sollecito said he is waiting to see if the budget process for the state is complete. He has also spoken with Matt Ide from MMWEC about the possibility of future proposals but there is no rush as there are no incentives at this time.

**MMED Senior Luncheon-** Manager Sollecito invited the Board to the annual MMED Senior Luncheon to be held at the Council on Aging on Friday, October 26, 2018 at 11:30.

**Comments from Commissioners-** Commissioner Schoonveld asked if there was ever an instance where MMED was going to have to shut off the power to a certain area, what the policy is about notifying customers. Manager Sollecito said that for 'planned' outages the line crew will hand deliver notices to customer's doors approximately two weeks ahead of time and will also include a rain date on the notice.

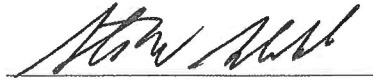
Commissioner Trowbridge commented that he thought the phone app to be used during outages for ratepayers was a good idea. He believed that would alleviate the number of phone calls MMED would get during a storm or outage.

Chairman Aptowitz questioned open job postings and who handles this. Manager Sollecito said that the apprentice lineman job posting should be closing soon and that Office Manager Laurie Anderson handles it.

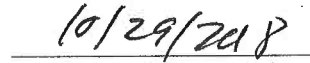
Manager Sollecito suggested Monday, October 29 for the next Light Commissioners meeting.

**Motion: To adjourn at 8:05pm  
(Schoonveld/Trowbridge) Passes 4/0**

Respectfully submitted: Jacqueline Lee



Signature of Clerk



Date of Approval