

# Westfield Gas & Electric Municipal Light Board Regular Meeting Minutes February 5, 2020



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

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m.

## I. Call to Order

Chairman Sacco stated that this meeting of the Municipal Light Board is being electronically recorded in both video and audio by the Municipal Light Board. The recording of this meeting is for purposes of drafting the minutes and continue testing the capabilities of the technology and recording equipment in this conference room. The recording is not being streamed and will not be placed on any public website. Is anyone, other than the Municipal Light Board, recording the meeting and if so state whether it is an audio or video recording and whether the recording is being live streamed.

## 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, Thomas P. Flaherty  
Ward #6 Commissioner, Robert C. Sacco  
Appointed Commissioner, A. Edward Roman

Absent:

Present: 7 Absent: 0

## III. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

## IV. READING OF THE RECORD:

On motion by Commissioner Flaherty seconded by Commissioner Liptak, it was unanimously:

VOTED: To accept the minutes of the January 22, 2020 Regular Session Meeting of the Municipal Light Board as presented; and

To accept the minutes of the January 22, 2020 Executive Session Meeting of the Municipal Light Board as presented, but not release to the public at this time.

**V. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:** None

**VI. COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED BY GAS AND ELECTRIC:**

- a) **Acknowledgement – Amelia Park** – Note from Christina Pagella, Assistant General Manager of Amelia Park, thanking WG+E for its support of the 2020 Bruins Alumni Game. WG+E's support helped raise over \$13,000 for Amelia Park Arena and the Westfield Youth Hockey Association.
- b) **Acknowledgement – Cardona Family** – Letter from Karen Tyburski, Business Technology Instructor, Westfield Technical Academy, thanking WG+E for support of a Westfield Technical Academy student showing what it means to be good, caring people. Also included was a note from Shailee Cardona and Family, thanking WG+E for its generous donation to the family in their time of need. The Manager stated Shailee is a co-op student working at WG+E, with family in Puerto Rico. Shailee and her family had recently flown to Puerto Rico to attend a funeral, and while there several devastating earthquakes hit. Shailee's family's home sustained damage and WG+E employees took up a collection to help Shailee and her family pay for repairs. Employees donated over \$2,500 to her family.

**VII. REPORTS FROM THE GAS & ELECTRIC:**

**A. Action Required Items**

- a) **2019 Drug and Alcohol Testing Annual Report** The Manager reported that employees with either a commercial driver's license (Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration) or those working on, or associated with, gas pipelines (Department of Transportation CFR Part 199) are subject to random drug and alcohol tests. During the year a number of employees were tested and WG+E was in compliance with federal and state testing requirements. In 2019 employees, subject to Random Testing were tested at a rate of 50% drug and 10% alcohol. In total, twenty-two (22) employees were tested for drugs and three (3) for alcohol. There was one follow up drug test as required by the regulations. Ten (10) pre-employment drug and alcohol test were also administered. Commissioner Rivera asked if the legalization of marijuana in the state conflicts with the regulations. The Manager stated that marijuana is one of the drugs tested for and those employees subject to the testing must not use marijuana to remain in compliance.
- b) **City Engagement Report.** The Manager summarized WG+E's ongoing support for and interaction with the City of Westfield. The Department continues to actively participate in city meetings and events that promote the WG+E's on-going partnership with the City. Longstanding partnerships exist with Amelia Park Arena, Westfield Athenaeum, Westfield Boys and Girls Club, Westfield Technical Academy, and Stanley Park. At Amelia Park Arena and Westfield Boys and Girls Club we provided ongoing technical support and planned sponsor marketing within their spaces. Additional sponsored events have included – the Westfield on Weekends Concert Series, community athletic events, and the City's fireworks. The General Manager and staff

actively support numerous city, business and community programs and work diligently to build public awareness of these efforts. In 2019, we also provided major support for the 350th celebration helping with installation of the cake and participation in the parade. Collaboration on DPW projects and other local construction provide excellent opportunities for cost-savings on both sides.

- c) **Public Power Drawing.** The Manager reported that WG+E, as is the norm, participated in American Public Power Month & American Public Natural Gas Week again this past year, which occurred during the month of October. WG+E kicked off Public Power Month with its second Big Rig Rally, which was held in collaboration with Westfield on Weekend's Pumpkinfest. Kids of all ages were excited to check out the big rigs from WG+E, the Police and Fire Departments as well as the DPW. All customer bills sent out in October included an entry form to be returned for a chance to win one of three (3) \$100 WG+E Energy Credits. The three winning entries drawn by Commissioners Renaudette, Liptak and Sacco at this meeting and the winners were Robert Smith of 37 Salvatore Drive, Transom Scopes of 33 Airport Road and Ruth Witherall of 8-B Sunflower Lane. Each will receive a \$100 credit on their utility bill.
- d) **Westfield Warm Distribution Update.** The Manager stated that to date, all customers that have requested additional assistance through Westfield Warm who were qualified under the financial guidelines for LIHEAP or Good Neighbor Energy and have attempted to make regular payments towards their account, have received financial assistance through Westfield Warm. Most customers receive a payment from the Westfield Warm Fund in the amount of \$100-\$500 depending on their average monthly bills. Letters to approximately 211 customers were mailed notifying each customer that funds from the Westfield Warm Program have been applied to their account. WG+E will continue to take additional Westfield Warm requests throughout the winter. The funds from Westfield Warm have been applied to customer's accounts, which are reflected on the customer's next invoice. A total of \$44,200 has been applied to WG+E accounts to date, with a balance of \$10,800 remaining. The annual Westfield Warm funding of \$55,000 continues to be adequate. If the remaining funds are insufficient, a request will be forwarded to the MLB for additional funding.
- e) **2019 Electric Services Installed.** The Manager presented a report which showed in 2019, a total of 47 new electric services were installed, 41 residential and 3 commercial. After posting a low of 30 new services in 2011, there has been an average of 41 new services installed annually over the past ten years. The 2019 services installed represent a very slight increase in total number of new electric services installed when compared to 2018.
- f) **2019 Gas Services Installed.** The Manager provided a report with respect to gas services installed in 2019. A total of 94 new gas services were installed this year; 86 residential and 8 commercial. Over the last 10 years, an average of 129 services has been installed annually.
- g) **2019 Gas Leak Compliance Report.** Mike Lee, Operations Manager reported that locating, controlling, and eliminating gas leaks throughout the distribution systems is

critical to safe and efficient operations. The State has begun a tightening of gas leak (methane) response from utilities moving forward. WG+E remains in compliance with state and federal regulations for leak management. The addition of parameters proposed by the LDCs in joint response to information requests essentially provides that, within two years of finding a Grade 3 leak, the responsible company will determine whether the leak qualifies to be added to a program to repair that leak within the following two years. This allows companies up to four years to replace a Grade 3 leak. These parameters have been set because the large investor-owned utilities have hundreds to thousands of leaks that will likely not be resolved until the DPU-approved Gas System Enhancement Plan (GSEP) is completed. WG+E repairs gas leaks within timelines that are much more rapid than state mandated timelines. At year-end 2019, WG+E had a total of 33 leaks on record. This represents a decrease from the 54 recorded leaks at the end of 2018.

- h) **2019 Traffic Light Report.** Mike Lee, Operations Manager reported WG+E continues to provide prompt inspection, maintenance and repair services, including emergency response, for all municipally owned traffic lights within the City of Westfield. WG+E continues to respond to traffic light problems caused by either motor vehicle damage or maintenance requirements on system components. In 2019, a total of seven (7) vehicle accidents resulted in WG+E repairs. Sixty-one (61) inspections were performed and thirty-three (33) configure and repair requests were completed.
- i) **2019 Capital Electric Projects Report.** Operations Manager Mike Lee provided a report relating to all capital electric project results for 2019. Throughout 2019, there were 19 electric projects planned regarding new construction, upgraded services, or upgrades to the distribution system. Projects that were not completed were due primarily to weather constraints, funding availability, or external schedules, as noted in the report. All electric capital additions and upgrade projects performed by WG+E during the calendar year were noted on the report. Commissioner Roman inquired about the Shaker Road Project. Mr. Lee stated that project was partially completed due to limited line contractor availability to perform the work. It is expected that project will ramp up significantly in 2020. The WG+E had a very full and successful year with its capital projects.
- j) **2019 Capital Gas Projects Report.** Throughout 2019, there were 15 gas projects planned for, due to new construction, upgraded services, or upgrades to the distribution system. Gas projects were addressed in a timely manner and projects that were not completed were due primarily to weather constraints, funding availability, or external schedules, as noted in the report. The Operations Manager stated that, generally, the estimation process for capital projects has been very close to actual costs. Mr. Lee noted the increase in costs associated with new service installations is due to higher quantities than originally planned. The Manager emphasized that 2019 was a very successful year with both electric and natural gas capital projects.
- k) **2020 Capital Gas & Electric Construction Plans.** The Operations Manager presented an overview of potential capital electric and gas projects anticipated for 2020. As in the

past, projects can be impacted on occasion by such matters as the City or State scheduling. The 29 projects were listed in order of priority.

- l) **DPU Termination Regulations.** Business and Finance Manager Jay Kline indicated that this annual report is provided for reference purposes and that there have been no changes to the regulations from the Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities. WG+E's termination timelines are more customer friendly than those required by the DPU. The Manager puts forth the process annually to the MLB to which WG+E must comply prior to the upcoming termination season.
  
- m) **Monthly Financial Reports.** Business and Finance Manager Jay Kline noted that the monthly and year-to-date purchased power expenses and net income figures presented in this report reflect actual amounts and year end results are certainly the best he's seen during the 8 years he's been with the Department. Through the month of December 2019, the Gas Division gain after increased contributions to the GRSF, CIAP fund and deferral into 2020, exceeds the original budgetary estimate by \$258k, while the Electric Division gain after deferral of funds into 2020 is currently \$273k more than the original forecast. Deferrals into 2020 are recommended due to the warmer than normal weather we've experienced in January and continuing into February. Such weather is sure to have a negative impact on both February and March revenues due to the lag in billing. A protracted cold spell in February or March is required to alter this forecast and lend long-term support to revenues. Telecom results for 2019 were similarly strong and may help pay down some of the debt, help build a Telecom construction fund or fund conservative expansion in 2020. Discussion was held relative to the coming threat of 5G wireless service to be offered by entities such as Verizon. Commissioner Roman reviewed the financials and stated they were good and that the Department enjoyed a very good, successful year. He is asking that our auditor perform reconciliation between current figures and those shown in the final auditing report, which will contain adjustments as is commonly done once final figures are received.

**B. Informational Items:**

- a) **Utility Issues.** Report was presented and accepted.
- b) **Utility News/Pulseline Articles** was presented.
- c) **Utility Courses Update** – was presented.

**VIII. OLD BUSINESS:**

- a) **MLB Meeting Video Policy** - The MLB continued its discussion from the prior meetings as to the policy relating to videotaping and/or streaming MLB meetings, with the benefits and detriments of each considered.

On a motion by Commissioner Kelleher, seconded by Commissioner Rivera, it was:

VOTED: That the Westfield Gas & Electric Light Department begin to live-stream the general session portion of its Municipal Light Board meetings as soon as the technology to do so has been tested and proven.

Motion passed 4–3. 0 absent

Discussion then ensued regarding the value of recording the meetings.

On a motion by Commissioner Flaherty, seconded by Commissioner Renaudette, it was:

VOTED: That in addition to the Westfield Gas & Electric Light Department live-streaming the general session portion of its Municipal Light Board meetings, the meetings shall be video recorded and made available through the WG+E website for 6 months following the meeting date, at which time they will be discarded.

Motion passed 5–2. 0 absent

Shortly thereafter additional discussion took place regarding the preference to rescind the live streaming and instead video record only.

On a motion by Commissioner Kelleher, seconded by Commissioner Rivera, it was unanimously:

VOTED: That Westfield Gas & Electric Light Department not live-stream the Municipal Light Board meetings but video record the general session portion of its Municipal Light Board meetings and within seven (7) days of the meeting make them available through the WG+E website for 6 months following the meeting date, at which time they will be discarded.

Commissioner Sacco's draft of the Municipal Light Board Meeting Video Policy was then discussed with suggested edits recommended. The Board agreed to review and ratify a final draft of the policy document at the March Meeting. Commissioner Roman commended Commissioner Sacco on his efforts preparing the draft prior to this meeting for the Board's review.

- b) **Municipal Light Board Bylaws** Commissioner Sacco's edits of the Bylaws of the City of Westfield Gas & Electric Light Department were then discussed with additional edits recommended. The Board agreed to review and ratify a final draft of the policy document at the March Meeting.
- c) **APPA Governance Workshop** The Manager stated he spoke to the American Public Power Association regarding instructor availability for an upcoming training session. The Board indicated a session on May 13<sup>th</sup> from 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm at the Operations Center first floor conference room would be preferable.

**IX. NEW BUSINESS:** None.

**X. EXECUTIVE SESSION:**

On the motion of Commission Flaherty, seconded by Commissioner Kelleher and on the basis of a roll call it was:

VOTED: To adjourn the regular meeting of the Municipal Light Board meeting and enter into executive session for the purpose of discussing strategy with respect to collective bargaining in that an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of WG+E, as noted on the agenda and not reconvene the Regular Session after adjournment from Executive Session.

Renaudette	"aye"
Liptak	"aye"
Flaherty	"aye"
Sacco	"aye"
Roman	"aye"
Kelleher	"aye"
Rivera	"aye"

Motion passed 7-0. 0 absent

Chairman Sacco stated that the Municipal Light Board would be entering into executive session for the purpose of discussing strategy with respect to collective bargaining in that an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of WG+E, as noted on the agenda, and would not reconvene the Regular Session after adjournment from Executive Session.

**XI. ADJOURNMENT**

Chairman Sacco declared the regular session portion of the meeting adjourned at 8:26 p.m.

A TRUE RECORD.

Attest:



Robert C. Sacco, Chairman

**Documents Presented at REGULAR SESSION February 5, 2020**

Municipal Light Board Regular Session Meeting Minutes – January 22, 2020			
Municipal Light Board Executive Session Meeting Minutes – January 22, 2020			
Acknowledgement – Amelia Park	Christina		
Acknowledgement – Westfield Technical Academy	Karen Tyburski, Business Technology Instructor and Shailee Cardona, Student		
2019 Drug and Alcohol Testing Annual Report	Beth Burns, HR Coordinator/Records Manager	February 5, 2020	Administrative & Organization Drug & Alcohol Testing Program AO-3.5
City Engagement Report	Lisa Stowe, CX, Marketing, Communications Manager	February 5, 2020	Communications\Customer Service\ Community Affairs City Key Accounts Summary Report CCA-2.9
Westfield Warm Program – Status Report	A. Paton, Customer Accounts/Collections Manager	February 5, 2020	Financial Low Income Customer Assistance
2019 Electric Services Installed	Jody M. Boucher, Utility Supervisor	February 5, 2020	Electric Utility Business Electric Service Installation EUB-3.1
2019 Gas Services Installed	Greg E. Freeman, Utility Supervisor	February 5, 2020	Gas Utility Business Gas Service Installation EUB-3.3
2019 Gas Leak Compliance Report	Patrick Levesque, Utility Supervisor	February 5, 2020	Gas Utility Business Gas Leak Control GUB-6.1, GUB-6.2
2019 Annual Traffic Light Report	Christopher R. LaVertu, Utility Supervisor	February 5, 2020	Communications/Customer Service/ Community Affairs Traffic Light Repair CCA-4.2
2019 Capital Electric Projects Report			
2019 Capital Gas Projects Report			
2020 Capital Gas and Electric Construction Plans			
DPU Termination Regulations	A. Paton, Customer Accounts/Collections Manager	February 5, 2020	Residential Termination Regulations Department of Public Utilities Consumer Division
December 2019 Financial Report	T. Fouche, Accounting Manager	February 5, 2020	Financial Annual & Quarterly Reports
Utility Issues	John W. Welch	February 5, 2020	Regulatory & Governmental Affairs Gas/Electric Regulatory Issues, RGA-1.4; RGA1.5
Utility News/Pulse Line	Beth Burns, HR Coordinator/Records Manager	February 5, 2020	Communications/Customer Service/Community Affairs Media Relations – CCA-1.6
Utility Course Update 2020 Seminars/Workshops	Beth Burns, HR Coordinator/Records Manager	February 5, 2020	Administration and Organization WG+E Training & Development, AO-3.6