

VILLAGE OF LUDLOW ELECTRIC LIGHT DEPARTMENT  
COMMISSIONERS MEETING MINUTES  
Tuesday, November 28, 2023  
4:30 P.M. BUSINESS OFFICE, 9 POND STREET

**PRESENT COMMISSIONERS:**

Chairman: Nicholas Baitz, Vice Chair: Robert Brandt

**OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Foreman: Brian Benoit

Department Manager: Thomas Petraska

Accountant: Michael Gadway

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

Jean Strong

Jay Jurkoic

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Commissioner Baitz called the meeting to order at 4:31 P.M.

**CONSIDERATION OF ANY CHANGES, ADDITIONS OR REMOVAL TO THE ADGENDA:**

None

**RATEPAYER ISSUES FROM PAST MEETINGS:**

**Job Descriptions:**

1. Nick Baitz asked for job descriptions, do we have that?
2. Tom Petraska said we do have job descriptions. Of course, the descriptions for the shop are going to change, based on the union negotiations. So, it's on hold right now. Along with the handbook.
3. Michael Gadway stated we do have job descriptions for the office personnel, which won't be changing.
4. Tom Petraska stated yes.
5. Nick Baitz stated so we're pretty much just waiting on the union.

**Recovery of GIS Fund From VPPSA:**

1. Nick Baitz asked about recovery of the GIS fund from VPPSA.
2. Tom Petraska stated we had a vote at this last meeting to refund funds to Ludlow. The vote was 1 to 7 against, so it failed; it didn't pass. So, no funds will be coming to Ludlow for the GIS program.
3. Nick Baitz asked about the annual budget.
4. Tom Petraska stated we've been working on that, Michael.
5. Michael Gadway stated yeah, we have started. We're on version two of our 2024 annual budget. We are still going through each line item based upon account number and activity code. We're making some assumptions as to revenue for next year, hopefully hoping for an 8% increase in revenue. I have budgeted at this point a 5% increase in labor for the year, and then most every other expense is going to be pretty flat, a 1% increase across all the other expenses. And that budget puts us at a budgeting for a \$34,000 loss for the year. And I'll have something finalized by the next meeting for you guys to look at and approve. We'll get it to you before the next meeting.
6. Robert Brandt asked and that's all assumed income and stuff.
7. Michael Gadway stated yes, it's all just assumptions. It started with 2023, where the revenue was down from prior years. That's why I think it's going to bounce back next year.
8. Tom Petraska stated you know, we had the COVID issue, and it's just been a mess the past few years.
9. Michael Gadway stated and then with the flooding stuff that went on, we lost a lot of revenue because of the flooding. So, I'm figuring about an 8% bounce back is realistic.
10. Tom Petraska stated we hope.

**Appointment of a Union Negotiating Team:**

1. Nick Baitz asked about the appointment of a union negotiating team.
2. Tom Petraska stated yeah, we're going to need a team to bargain with the union, and probably myself, Michael and Brian and our legal counsel, Matt.
3. Robert Brandt asked if Matt's done a lot of that.
4. Tom Petraska stated yes, for the city of Rutland.
5. Robert Brandt asked if that's the guy that was in here last. The lawyer that was in here last time.
6. Jean Strong asked what his name is.
7. Nick Baitz stated Matt Bloomer.

**Approve Purchase of Transco Units:**

1. Nick Baitz asked about the approval of the purchase of Transco units.
2. Tom Petraska asked to do a motion on that.
3. Michael Gadway stated that what we're buying is a little over 35,000 units of transpose that they're offering as an offset to our transmission expense. It's \$10 per unit, 35,000 units, so it's \$350,000, but we get a 12.5% return on that, so it's really a very, very good investment, and that is to help offset our transmission costs.
4. **Motion made by Robert Brandt seconded by Nick Baitz to purchase the Transco units. Motion passed unanimously.**
5. Robert Brandt asked if it was 35,000.
6. Michael Gadway stated yes, a little over 35,000. I don't have the exact number with me.

**Christmas Ham or Turkeys for Employees:**

1. Nick Baitz asked if Christmas ham or turkeys for the employees.
2. Tom Petraska stated the consensus of the employees this year was to not purchase the ham and turkeys. They'd rather have it in the way of a gift card and most of the people were for that.
3. Robert Brandt said so they can get what they need.
4. Tom Petraska elaborated gas, groceries, go out to dinner, whatever.
5. Nick Baitz asked are we going to vote on that or just do it.
6. Tom Petraska said it's up to you guys, sure.
7. Robert Brandt asked if we need just a consensus.
8. Nick Baitz asked and you've talked to all the guys.
9. Brian Benoit stated that I've talked to all the guys that have been here and received the turkeys and hams. I didn't talk to the new employees about it because they are not aware of that benefit.
10. Tom Petraska stated that the office was up for it.
11. Michael Gadway stated the hams are very nice and they're really good. I don't think they're worth the price we're paying for them.
12. Robert Brandt stated if everybody would rather have a gift card, then get them a gift card and noted that Christmas is right after Thanksgiving.

**COMMENTS FROM RATEPAYERS:**

1. Jean Strong stated I've just got a couple of quick questions, based on what you said tonight, the job descriptions., they'll include, the ones that are done and will be done, what the qualifications are or what the training background is. That will be part of it.
2. Tom Petraska stated we're hoping to have some qualification requirements as well.
3. Jean Strong asked OK. And you said you have the job descriptions already for the office.
4. Tom Petraska stated yes.
5. Jean Strong asked if that was included in the job descriptions.
6. Tom Petraska stated no.
7. Jean Strong asked if it would be.
8. Michael Gadway asked, "included in what?"
9. Jean Strong stated in the job descriptions.
10. Michael Gadway asked if she meant the qualifications.
11. Jean Strong said usually there is, if you have a job for a manager or whatever, you have qualifications or what you want to see the background that person might have.
12. Michael Gadway stated that at this point, no, they're not in there, but they can be easily added, but if the commissioners want to see them, them yes.

13. Robert Brandt stated that there is such a difference between the field guys and the office help. I don't think those should be in the same book. We should have the listed.
14. Jean Strong stated I just think that even in the office you might have a job that you might want the person to have experience with Excel or something like that.
15. Robert Brandt stated that he doesn't think it needs to be in the handbook, but we're trying to get it.
16. Jean Strong stated that as long as they're available, I agree. I don't know that they have to be in the handbook, but they should be a part of this.
17. Robert Brandt agreed.
18. Jean Strong stated I was wondering who the one person was that voted to refund. Who would that have be.
19. Tom Petraska stated that was Ludlow.
20. Jean Strong stated but anyways, related to that, do we have any ongoing projects or programs with them that we don't have a contract for or that we're paying for something we're not getting.
21. Tom Petraska stated no, we do have a contract for the AMI and that is something that's going to happen here in the next few months.
22. Jean Strong stated OK, we have a signed contract with them and the board has seen that and signed off on it.
23. Tom Petraska stated yes.
24. Jean Strong stated that's all I have.
25. Robert Brandt asked speaking of that, next year we should be getting that.
26. Tom Petraska stated that probably late 2024. We're on the second tranche.
27. Jean Strong asked and we're paying for that now. Monthly.
28. Tom Petraska stated yes.

**APPROVE THE MINUTES OF OCTOBER 26, 2023, BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MONTHLY MEETING**

**Motion by Commissioner Robert Brandt and seconded by Commissioner Nick Baitz to approve minutes as written from October 26<sup>th</sup> and November 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2023. Motion passed unanimously.**

**FOREMAN'S REPORT NOVEMBER 28, 2023**

Foreman's report was given by Brian Benoit. He updated the Commissioners which included, but not limited to:

**NOVEMBER 28, 2023**

Street Light Maintenance	1 for a local organization for tree trimming, with an LED.
Meter Reading	Meter reading is underway. A little slow this month.
Substation Maintenance	Standard monthly Checks.
Urd Locates	21 underground locates this month.
Line Maintenance	Need to get recloser program to work on and set up new Proctorsville circuit we put up.
Services	Multiple service upgrades.
Line Construction	The 103, project is nearing the end. We just finished the installing the pipe and the dirt work for going across one of our

customers down in Proctorsville. I'll probably end up calling Groton back to help us pull in the line because that was part of the line construction.

**Safety Meeting**

We had rubber gloving this month.

**Vehicle Maintenance**

On-going. We had a brake job on L34 and went over to Reeds to get that done.

**Board Comments on Foreman's Report**

1. Robert Brandt asked about the underground three-phase, as he hasn't seen that before, so he was curious.
2. Brian Benoit stated that we put a pipe from one pole to another pole going across the lawn, and we'll pull three wires into that pipe.
3. Robert Brandt asked if they're all in the same pipe.
4. Brian Benoit stated yes. We ended up putting a cabinet on their front lawn so we could do some switching and some feeding, and they also wanted a car charging station in the future, so that cabinet allowed them to easily put a three-phase charging station in.
5. Robert Brandt asked from Cavendish Point, it comes back up on the other side of the Castle's driveway or before that.
6. Brian Benoit stated just before the Castle's driveway is where we put the cabinet.
7. Robert Brandt asked if it went straight across the other side where the railroad tracks are.
8. Brian Benoit stated that was correct and it stops just before their fire entrance.
9. Robert Brandt asked if that other line down by December. We have whatever time we want.
10. Brian Benoit stated no.
11. Michael Gadway asked if TDS is on that other line.
12. Brian Benoit stated yes.
13. Michael Gadway stated so we won't take the poles down because TDS is on there. We need to negotiate with them.
14. Brian Benoit stated yes.
15. Robert Brandt asked will it be their responsibility then, if we're off. So, if we get another flood and it takes a pole out, that's their problem.
16. Brian Benoit stated yes.
17. Robert Brandt stated he didn't think initially the line need to be rerouted but after this flood and those poles, it's good to get it out of the floodplain and that it needed improvement.
18. Brian Benoit stated they did put four pipes in for communications; one TDS, one VTEL, one Comcast and a spare. So, they can switch over when they're ready. And those will be sold to them, when they're ready. It's not a free deal for them.
19. Robert Brandt stated that they rent our poles.
20. Brian Benoit stated that was correct.
21. Michael Gadway stated that TDS doesn't rent from us. TDS used to be Ludlow Telephone, so they're actually joint owners of most of the poles in town. We didn't inform them about this project ahead of time, so, we're going to be negotiating with them on if they want to attach, they're going to have to come up with some money.

**DEPARTMENT MANAGER'S REPORT NOVEMBER 28, 2023**

Manager's report was given by Tom Petraska. He updated the Commissioners which included, but not limited to:

**Update on Rate Increase:**

Today the Department received confirmation on our rate increase. The Public Utility Commission has approved a 1.9 % increase effective with services rendered on or after May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023. So that's going to be adjusted on the future bills and put in place.

**Update on VPPSA Grant Money:**

This month, the general manager from VPPSA, Ken Nolan, received confirmation from the Department of Public Service that the 5 million grant money was awarded and it is now in their possession to use for the AMI project.

**Update on GIS Project:**

At the November 1<sup>st</sup> VPPSA Board of Directors Meeting, it was voted not to reimburse LELD for funds it had spent on the GIS project. The vote was 1 in favor and 7 opposed.

**Update on Magris Solar Project:**

Tomorrow, the light department will be meeting with the solar developer for the Magris array. We will be discussing the PPA and the interconnection plans, so that's good that that's ongoing.

**Update on the Union:**

We originally had contract negotiations starting on December 19<sup>th</sup>. This date has been pushed out to after the first of the year, as requested by the union. That's on hold.

**Update on Motor Vehicle Accident:**

This weekend, Sunday, at around 2AM this past Sunday morning, we had vehicle take out a pole on 100 North. The pole was a very busy one with three phase, transformer, and underground service to a house. We were shorthanded and had to call in Green Mountain Power for assistance. The power was out until 10:45 that morning.

**Board Comments on Manager's Report:**

1. Robert Brandt stated that he thought they were going to take another pole out today with that tractor trailer coming out of Pleasant Street.
2. Brian Benoit stated that we wouldn't have gotten the help today like we had on Sunday because they all had their own outages.
3. Tom Petraska noted there were 20,000 outages.
4. Robert Brandt noted that the snow was pretty bad.
5. Brian Benoit stated that we got pretty lucky Sunday morning when I made that call. There's a sense of pride here in Ludlow and they've really never called Green Mountain Power for anything. It was hurtful in a way, but in another way, it's mutual aid and it's two power companies working together. I originally called for one digger truck and they showed up with a digger and four bucket trucks and a whole gaggle of guys and it was great teamwork.
6. Robert Brandt stated he thinks he saw a truck heading South. He didn't know what they were up here for, but he saw two headed South on 103.

**Ratepayer's Comments on Manager's Report:**

1. Jean Strong asked if the light department gets reimbursed from the car insurance company.
2. Tom Petraska stated if they have insurance, they do.
3. Jean Strong asked if they have insurance.
4. Tom Petraska stated that we don't know yet.
5. Michael Gadway stated that we haven't gotten the final police report yet and that we do bill their insurance companies.
6. Brian Benoit stated they are working on it. It was an expansive morning.
7. Jean Strong stated she would think so and that's why she wondered, well, one of the reasons. No one was hurt.
8. Brian Benoit stated that no, he walked away.
9. Michael Gadway noted that his car, on the other hand, didn't make it.

**OTHER BUSINESS:**

None

**ADJOURNMENT:**

1. **MOTION by Nick Baitz and seconded by Robert Brandt to adjourn. Motion passed unanimously.**
2. Meeting adjourned at 4:54 P.M.

Village of Ludlow Electric Light Dept.  
November 28, 2023

Respectfully submitted,

Tina M. Jarvis

Nicholas Baits, Charman *Nicholas Baits*

Robert Brandt, Vice Chair *Robert Brandt*

George Dunnett, Clerk \_\_\_\_\_