

VILLAGE OF LUDLOW ELECTRIC LIGHT DEPARTMENT  
COMMISSIONERS MEETING MINUTES  
Thursday, December 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  
Legal Attorney: Matthew Bloomer

OTHERS PRESENT:

Jean Strong

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Commissioner Baitz called the meeting to order at 4:35 p.m.

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

1. Matthew Bloomer made a recommendation regarding the discussion of the cost-of-living increase for 2024; he recommends moving that to an executive session at the end of the meeting, because it would impact the collective bargaining negotiations.
2. **MOTION made by Robert Brandt and seconded by Nicholas Baitz to move the discussion to an executive session. Motion passed unanimously.**
3. Brian Benoit asked for consideration in adopting the 17<sup>th</sup> edition of the new OSHA Manual.
4. Robert Brandt said it can be discussed, but it isn't on the agenda and therefore cannot be voted on.
5. Matthew Bloomer stated it would be best to leave the discussion until it's warned, unless it is something that Brian needs to happen urgently, but it should wait.
6. Brian Benoit acknowledged that it was no urgent.

**RATEPAYER ISSUES FROM PAST MEETINGS:**

**Annual Budget:**

1. Tom Petraska stated that we have an annual budget; it's an estimate of course, \$9.4 million, and it will probably change after our year-end, so I would like to let this ride until January, until we can get some better numbers, but we do have a budget at this point to work with.
2. Michael Gadway stated that now changing is very easy and he could have a number in minutes.

**Approval of the 2024 Holiday Policy as Presented:**

1. Nick Baitz asked if anything had changed from last year.
2. Tom Petraska stated there were no changes.
3. Robert Brandt asked if this is the same as the town schedule.
4. Tom Petraska stated that he doesn't know if the town acknowledged Christmas Eve.
5. Robert Brandt said they did this year.
6. Robert Brandt stated they went home half a day.
7. Tom Petraska stated it falls on a Wednesday of this next year and if you want to add that half a day to this one, that's fine.
8. **MOTION by Robert Brandt and Nicholas Baitz seconded to give them half a day on Christmas Eve, because it's in the middle of the week. Motion passed unanimously.**

**Approval of 2024 Payment in Lieu of Taxes to the Village of Ludlow in the Amount of \$26,104.70, Which is Unchanged From the Prior Year:**

1. Robert Brandt said he would make a motion to approve the budget and asked Tom Petraska if the town was good with that.
2. Tom Petraska stated yes.

3. Michael Gadway stated that because the electric department is owned by the village, we cannot tax yourself, so we do a payment in lieu of taxes.
4. Robert Brandt said he did not know that.
5. **MOTION by Robert Brandt and seconded by Nick Baitz for approval of the 2024 payment in lieu of taxes to the Village of Ludlow in the amount of \$26,104.70. Motion passed unanimously.**

**Discussion regarding COL increase for 2024:**

1. Brian Benoit stated that this was the item we moved to discuss in executive session.
2. Nicholas Baitz stated he understood.

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

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

**December 2023**

|                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| Street Light Maintenance: | We had zero streetlight maintenance.   |
| Meter Reading:            | Meter reading is almost done. They just finished the main routes today and will be doing the industry routes tomorrow.   |
| Substation Maintenance:   | Monthly checks.  |
| Underground Locates:      | We had seven underground locates.  |
| Line Maintenance:         | We put up some neutral brackets on Buttermilk Falls to help prevent unnecessary trips.   |
| Services:                 | Multiple service upgrades.   |
| Line Construction:        | Our line construction on the 103 project is just about near the end. The underground wire is pulled in and just need a good day to terminate the ends and get the recloser programed and tested. |
| Safety Meeting:           | We had rigging this month and new rain gear was issued to all the guys.  |
| Vehicle Maintenance:      | We put new tires on the one-ton and did some welding on a trailer.   |

**Board Comments on Foreman's Report**

1. Robert Brandt stated you're talking about connecting and disconnecting that 103 line and is that how you switch the power over to the new line.
2. Brian Benoit stated that once the underground wire is terminated, we can phase it out and then we need to program the recloser. We'll have to have a company come in and do that. They program and test it and then we can start killing the old line that's next to the river; kill it up to the doggy daycare.
3. Nicholas Baitz asked if that's back-fed.
4. Brian Benoit stated it will be back-fed from the hotel to the condos and then to Shopper and then to doggy daycare and it'll be cut there.

**APPROVE THE MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 28, 2023, BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MONTHLY MEETING:**

**MOTION by Commissioner Robert Brandt and seconded by Commissioner Nick Baitz to approve minutes as written from November 28, 2023. Motion passed unanimously.**

**DEPARTMENT MANAGER'S REPORT DECEMBER 28, 2023:**

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

**December 28, 2023**

**Update on Solar Project:**

The Light Department, with VPPSA, continues to have ongoing discussions with MHG, the solar developer, to develop a purchase power agreement and an interconnection plan. The target date for the project completion is late 2025.

**Update on GIS, Mapping & Stacking:**

The GIS data was created by VPPSA was given to NISC and they were able to download the data and use it. On-going implementation meetings and schedules and training are now in effect and to use the software will be scheduled soon.

**Update on Union Contract:**

The Ludlow Electric Light Department bargaining team had numerous meetings with legal counsel to discuss revisions to the employee handbook and has been gathering information for our proposed collective bargaining agreement. Our first meeting with the union is scheduled for January 23<sup>rd</sup>.

**Update on the Purchase of Transco Shares:**

The funds for the purchase of the 2023 Transco shares from VELCO were transferred earlier this week, so that transaction is completed.

**Additional Comments:**

I'd like to thank Tina for doing our meetings. She has done a great job and look forward to keeping her on.

**Comments From Ratepayers:**

1. Jean Strong asked to see the proposed budget or if she could be emailed a copy.
2. Tom Petraska stated he could do that.
3. Jean Strong said she was curious that when the accident occurred on route 100 North, and there were poles damaged, what's going on with the insurance, because weren't we going to follow up.
4. Tom Petraska stated he does have coverage, we found that out from the police report. It is limited, and we still need to get all our bills from Green Mountain Power too.
5. Jean Strong asked if that was in the budget.
6. Tom Petraska stated there is nothing in the budget for that accident.
7. Jean Strong asked what the breakdown is, how much did it cost and how much were you able to file a claim for it.
8. Tom Petraska stated we cannot tell now because we do not have the invoices from Green Mountain Power for the work they did.
9. Jean Strong asked Tom Petraska when he expected those.
10. Tom Petraska stated I thought we would get it by now, but we haven't.
11. Jean Strong said she would think so.
12. Tom Petraska said it has been almost a month.
13. Michael Gadway said that will be 2023, it won't be 2024.
14. Jean Strong said we don't want to lose sight of that and I'm sure you won't.
15. Michael Gadway stated it was definitely on our radar.
16. Jean Strong said that she would think the board would want to know how much money was because of that.
17. Jean Strong asked how many vacancies do you have for linemen or do you have all you need or want.
18. Brian Benoit stated it would be nice to have one more lineman.
19. Jean Strong asked do you have an ad out there or recruitment.
20. Tom Petraska said we haven't.
21. Jean Strong stated you have not and asked are you going to.

22. Tom Petraska stated that it's also going to be a part of the budget if we decide to do that, so that's kind of two things that work together. We need to increase our budget if we're going to do that.
23. Jean Strong asked, the GIS system, who are we paying for that.
24. Tom Petraska stated NISC only.
25. Jean Strong asked how much.
26. Michael Gadway said that right now it's nothing because we haven't fully implemented it yet.
27. Jean Strong asked but you'll have a contract with them.
28. Tom Petraska stated yes.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION:**

1. **MOTION made by Robert Brandt and seconded by Nick Baitz to find that premature general public knowledge regarding the discussion of cost of living increases to be negotiated with the Union would clearly place the department at a substantial disadvantage. Motion passed unanimously.**
2. **MOTION made by Robert Brandt and seconded by Nick Baitz to enter Executive Session for consideration of cost-of-living increases, with the inclusion of the department attorney, the foreman, the general manger, the accountant and the note taker (as allowed under 1 VSA 313 (a) (1) (B)). Motion passed unanimously.**
3. Board entered Executive Session at 4:50 p.m.
4. **MOTION made by Nick Baitz and seconded by Robert Brandt to exit Executive Session. Motion passed unanimously.**
5. Board left Executive Session at 5:04 p.m.
6. **MOTION made by Robert Brandt and seconded by Nick Baitz to enter Executive Session with the inclusion of the department attorney, the foreman, the general manger, the accountant and the note taker, to discuss the employment and evaluation of department employees, as allowed under 1 VSA 313 (a) (3). Motion passed unanimously.**
7. Board entered Executive Session at 5:05 p.m.
8. **MOTION made by Nick Baitz and seconded by Robert Brandt to exit Executive Session. Motion passed unanimously.**
9. The Board left Executive Session at 5:50 p.m.

**OTHER BUSINESS:**

None

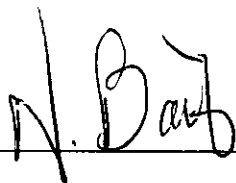
**ADJOURNMENT:**

1. **MOTION by Nick Baitz and seconded by Robert Brandt to adjourn. Motion passed unanimously.**
2. Meeting adjourned at 5:51 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Tina M. Jarvis

Nicholas Baitz, Chairman



Robert Brandt, Vice Chair

