

Minutes:

Stowe Electric Commissioners' Meeting:

July 26, 2023 at 8:30 am at Town of Stowe Electric Department Conference Room with remote participation available via Zoom.

Present:

BOARD MEMBERS: Heidi Scheuermann, Vice-Chair and Sara Teachout, Commissioner

STAFF: Jackie Pratt, General Manager, Brent Lilley, Director of Operations; Patricia Waugh, Business and Human Resources Manager and Amber Ives, Clerk of the Board

GUESTS PRESENT: Michael Vigeant, CEO, Great Blue Research

VIA ZOOM: Larry Lackey, Chair and Michael Lazorchak, Manager of Regulatory Compliance

Call to Order: Due to remote participation, L. Lackey requested that Vice-Chair, H. Scheuermann run the meeting. H. Scheuermann called the meeting to order at 8:39 am.

Agenda Approval:

S. Teachout moved to approve the warned agenda, the motion was seconded by H. Scheuermann and the motion carried.

Approval of June 28, 2023 Meeting Minutes:

On a motion made by L. Lackey and seconded by S. Teachout, the minutes of June 28th were approved.

Executive Session:

The Board moved to go into Executive Session at 8:42 am to discuss a personnel matter and J. Pratt was asked to stay. P. Waugh was invited to join the Executive Session.

At 9:08 am, S. Teachout made a motion to exit Executive Session, L. Lackey seconded and the motion carried.

P. Waugh left the meeting at 9:08 am.

L. Lackey left the meeting at 9:36 am.

Great Blue Research Survey Results:

J. Pratt explained that Stowe Electric Department (SED) elected to hire Great Blue Research to conduct a customer survey as J. Pratt felt it was important for SED to understand customer intent in regard to solar and heat pump installation and to get a baseline on customer satisfaction and areas for improvement.

M. Vigeant provided the Commission and staff an overview of the results of the 59-question survey and informed the Commission that it was completed by 373 customers which represented about 7% of SED's customer base. M. Vigeant explained that Great Blue Research felt confident in the mix of ages, type of residents (full or part-time) and income levels represented by the survey.

M. Vigeant discussed the following highlights:

- A. 93% of survey respondents had a net-positive rating for Stowe Electric compared with the national average of 80.2% for public power utilities.
- B. 4 out of 5 people surveyed support public power and 79% of respondents said that community ownership of the utility is important.
- C. 62% of customers surveyed indicated that they would prefer to receive emergency communications via text.
- D. 92% of customers surveyed who reported experiencing a power outage in the past year said the amount of time to restore power was acceptable and 59% found SED's outage communication acceptable.
- E. 42% of respondents conveyed that they plan to purchase an electric vehicle (EV) within the next five years and an additional 28% anticipated purchasing an EV more than five years from now.
- F. Customers ranked the following topics as most important:
 - 1. Reliability
 - 2. Cost of electricity
 - 3. Carbon reduction
- G. According to respondents, SED outperformed the national benchmarks in "reliable service" (91% compared to the national average of 73%) and honesty/integrity (89% compared to the national average of 63%).

The Board requested that M. Vigeant and J. Pratt work together to create a survey for commercial customers as the Commission felt it would be beneficial information for SED as businesses represent a large portion of the customer base.

Guest, M. Vigeant left the meeting at 10:04 am.

Financial Report:

The Commission and staff discussed operating financials and the status of the current rate case.

Grant Request/Status Update:

J. Pratt provided the Commission with an overview of the various grants that SED had applied for: grant name, agency providing the funding, the project tied to the grant, amount of the award, as well as, the current status of the grant and project.

General Manager Highlights:

J. Pratt informed the Board that she had recently met with NextEra Energy to discuss progress of the Outback Acres solar development. J. Pratt notified the Board that supply chain issues and CPG delays have pushed the commercial operation date (COD) out to August 2024 and that SED has been in touch with Energy New England (ENE) to ensure that they take the new COD for this project into consideration in SED's power supply and Renewable Energy Standard (RES) planning.

J. Pratt apprised the Commission to her recent interview with the American Public Power Association's (APPA) 'Public Power Now' podcast on which J. Pratt discussed SED's microgrid feasibility study, the Moscow Mills revitalization project, SED's partnership with the University of Vermont (UVM), and the Nebraska Valley Solar farm.

J. Pratt notified the Commission that she will be receiving nomination to fill a vacant at-large seat on the Northeast Public Power Association (NEPPA) Board of Directors. If elected, it would offer a great opportunity to ensure that SED has a strong voice at NEPPA and to expand Vermont's influence within the organization.

In addition, J. Pratt discussed SED's community involvement, the inclusion of electric liens in property tax sales, the current status on conversion to National Information Solutions Cooperative and how the heavy rainfall on July 10th affected Moscow Mill.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:18 am.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Amber Ives', written in a cursive style.

Amber Ives

Clerk of the Board