

**Minutes:**

Stowe Electric Commissioners' Meeting:

September 27, 2023, at 8:30 am at Town of Stowe Electric Department Conference Room with remote participation available via Zoom.

**Present:**

BOARD MEMBERS: Larry Lackey, Chair and Sara Teachout, Commissioner

STAFF: Jackie Pratt, General Manager, Brent Lilley, Director of Operations; Sarah Juzek, Controller; Michael Lazorchak, Manager of Regulatory Compliance; Amber Ives, Clerk of the Board and P. Waugh, Business and Human Resources Manager

**Call to Order:** L. Lackey called the meeting to order at 8:34 am and noted that Vice-Chair, H. Scheuermann, was not present, but the meeting was able to proceed as there was a quorum.

**Agenda Approval:**

S. Teachout moved to approve the warned agenda. L. Lackey seconded the motion, and it was approved.

**Approval of August 23, 2023, Meeting Minutes:**

On a motion made by L. Lackey, and seconded by S. Teachout, the minutes of the August 23rd meeting were approved.

**Year End Financial Report:**

S. Juzek reported that Stowe Electric Department (SED) ended the Fiscal Year of 2023 favorable to the budget. Major factors affecting SED's net income included: reduced purchase power due to a mild winter; anticipated reimbursement from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for costs incurred due to Winter Storm Elliot; rate adjustments; revalued inventory; and a reduction in both legal and credit card fees.

S. Juzek informed the Commissioners that the Public Utility Commission (PUC) accepted SED's revised rate request of 7.95% and that during the month of October, ratepayers will see the rate reduction of 11.5% to 7.95% reflected on their bill. S. Juzek reported that in December, SED will issue a refund to ratepayers for the 3.55% rate difference for usage that occurred from February 2023 through August 2023.

The Commissioners and staff also discussed the audit, internal controls in regard to fiscal responsibility and potentially reviewing the financial policies in the beginning of 2024.

### **Stowe Electric Department Moscow Road Property Boundaries:**

J. Pratt familiarized the Commission with discussions taking place between SED and the abutting property owner, E. Carlson, to try to resolve some of the challenges both he and SED currently face regarding parking, property lines, and easements.

J. Pratt reported that SED and E. Carlson have come to a mutually agreeable proposal to realign some of the property boundaries which will result in a fairly equal exchange of land and will facilitate a better parking situation for both SED and the newly reconstructed Moscow General Store.

B. Lilley and M. Lazorchak voiced their support of the property boundary realignment and J. Pratt requested that the Board vote to support the proposed modifications as presented.

S. Teachout made a motion to authorize the General Manager to engage in Stowe Electric Department property line modifications as proposed to the Commission in the memo, maps, and letter from E. Carlson. L. Lackey seconded the motion, and all were in favor.

### **Office Improvements:**

J. Pratt alerted the Board to SED's need for more private office space for managers, especially for the Business and Human Resources (HR) Manager, P. Waugh, as she is currently in a shared, open-office space. J. Pratt stated that due to the nature of many HR conversations, it makes sense to provide private office space for this manager.

J. Pratt reported that through the simplified bid process, Office Environments has offered a reasonable, cost-effective solution that adds one additional workspace, provides private office space for the Business & HR Manager, and reuses some existing materials to keep costs down.

J. Pratt explained to the Board that while the cost of the project is not significant in terms of the overall budget, she felt it important to bring it to the Commission's attention as this work was not originally included in the five-year capital plan.

L. Lackey stated that the proposed office improvements do not require formal approval, but that the minutes should reflect that the Commission is supportive of the presented office modification and expenditure.

### **General Manager Highlights:**

J. Pratt updated the Commission on SED's transition to National Information Solutions Cooperative (NISC) enterprise system and informed the Commission that Service, Operations, and the new online customer portal (SmartHub), would launch beginning October 2, 2023.

J. Pratt informed the Commissioners that the Development Review Board (DRB) issued a permit for the storage barn at Cady Hill, and that there are permit conditions relating to the number of trips, lighting, and vegetation screening. The Commission questioned the conditions put on the permit and the DRB's authority to apply these limitations.

J. Pratt provided an overview of the work completed by the Operations team and discussed current open Operations positions and some of the challenges faced by SED to recruit and retain new staff.

J. Pratt also provided the Commission with updates on Information Technology, various projects and their related grants, student research partnerships, new grant opportunities, and the Electric Vehicle (EV) tariff.

### **Other Business:**

The Board and Staff rescheduled the October Commission meeting from October 25, 2023, to October 18, 2023.

At 9:36 am, L. Lackey made a motion to enter Executive Session to discuss a personnel matter. J. Pratt was invited to stay, and P. Waugh was asked to join the meeting.

The board made a motion to come out of Executive Session at 10:59 am, and the motion carried.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:59 am.

Respectfully Submitted,



Amber Ives

Clerk of the Board