

Minutes:

Stowe Electric Commissioners' Meeting:

August 23, 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; Heidi Scheuermann, Vice-Chair and Sara Teachout, Commissioner

STAFF: Jackie Pratt, General Manager, Brent Lilley, Director of Operations; Sarah Juzek, Director of Finance; and Michael Lazorchak, Manager of Regulatory Compliance

Call to Order: L. Lackey called the meeting to order at 8:33 am.

Agenda Approval:

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

Approval of July 26, 2023, Meeting Minutes:

On a motion made by H. Scheuermann and seconded by S. Teachout, the minutes of July 26th were approved.

Tree Trimming Update:

J. Pratt provided the Commission with an overview of the reasons behind establishing an in-house Tree Crew at SED.

B. Lilley informed the Commission that in their first four months of operation, the team of three cleared over five miles of right-of-way, while removing twenty-five danger trees and sixty-six ash trees.

L. Lackey inquired as to the ash tree process and procedures. B. Lilley notified the Board that SED's goal is to not remove every ash tree, but to assess if the tree can be trimmed enough on one side in order to get the tree to lean away from the line, if not, then the tree is removed.

H. Scheuermann inquired as to the minimum mileage of vegetation management required by Vermont regulations. B. Lilley responded that Stowe Electric is required to trim twelve miles of line per year and M. Lazorchak noted that the Vermont Department of Public Service (PSD) is very positive about SED's Vegetation Management team and the progress that they have made.

L. Lackey asked B. Lilley about SED's trimming procedures for secondary line. B. Lilley responded that SED will prune the secondary line in order to keep the line clear and ensure that there are no trees rubbing on it.

J. Pratt and M. Lazorchak notified the Commission that SED plans to produce a tree trimming fact sheet that will help explain the vegetation management requirements and procedures to customers and that this informational flyer will be produced in conjunction with various internship opportunities and grants.

L. Lackey noted that based on the survey conducted by Great Blue Research, SED's customers recently ranked reliability as the most important aspect of their service, and that vegetation management is a key component in maintaining that reliability of service.

B. Lilley applauded the Tree Crew for the time and thought that the team put into the clearing of the right-of-way to help ensure that the vegetation management conducted remains aesthetically pleasing. B. Lilley also notified the Commission and Staff that the Town of Stowe Highway Department was also pleased with the tree trimming as it allowed light to filter through the tree canopy which will help with snow and ice accumulation in winter.

Moscow Mills Revitalization Update:

M. Lazorchak discussed various rate options for the hydroelectric energy produced at the Mill, such as an on-bill generation credit for low-income customers or a potential Green Tariff. M. Lazorchak explained that a green tariff allows SED to utilize the energy produced by the hydro to develop a rate that would allow customers to purchase 'green' power from the project.

J. Pratt notified the Commission that SED will complete a battery feasibility study to see if it is possible to add a small battery to the hydro and solar that will be located at SED's campus to provide a net-zero microgrid for resiliency during emergency operations.

S. Teachout commended SED staff for exploring all the various options related to the revitalization of Moscow Mills as she felt that it provided Stowe Electric's customers with options and opportunities.

M. Lazorchak alerted the Commission that the Second Office building Emergency Operations Center made it through Senate Appropriations review to potentially receive Congressionally Directed spending for the project.

General Manager Highlights:

J. Pratt updated the Commission that the Development Review Board (DRB) approved SED's storage barn on Cady Hill and that the Public Utility Commission and Department of Public Service have agreed that a 7.95% rate increase is reasonable and therefore, SED is expecting a final order on the rate increase in the near future.

J. Pratt discussed:

- Personnel updates
- The Green Jobs Summer Showcase held by Renewable Energy Vermont (REV) and Vermont Public Interest Research Group (VPIRG) on SED's campus on August 10, 2023.
- The Flood Victim Moratorium on electric disconnections
- SED's progress in conversion to National Information Solutions Cooperative (NISC)
- Distribution Automation project
- Vermont Electric Power Company equity call

J. Pratt and the Board spoke about the timing of financial reports and determined that going forward the Director of Finance would provide quarterly reports, and in the interim months, J. Pratt would include an update on finances in the General Manager Highlights.

Other Business:

J. Pratt notified the Commission that on July 19, 2023, Clear Water Filtration installed a Stenner meter and pump control modules to control injection pumps. This upgrade was made due to a recommendation from Clear Water Filtration and took place on the cistern house that supplies water to SED's campus. J. Pratt alerted the Board that a substantial leak in the piping inside the cistern house was detected during a follow-up visit on July 25, 2023. The leak occurred in a fitting installed with the new piping done by Clear Water Filtration when they installed the Stenner meter on July 19th. The leak was repaired on July 25, 2023.

J. Pratt apprised the Commission that on August 15, 2023, M. Gauthier checked the cistern house and noted a significant amount of moisture inside the structure along with what appeared to be early mold growth on the walls and substantial condensation on the equipment. M. Gauthier notified Clear Water Filtration and they responded the same day to evaluate the situation. J. Pratt informed the Board that Clear Water Filtration verified that it was early mold growth, and that Clear Water Filtration contacted a mold remediation company to render services on SED's behalf.

J. Pratt informed the Commission that on August 16, 2023, Gould Electric evaluated the electrical components inside the cistern house for possible damage and that they

notified SED that the heater in the cistern house needed to be replaced, but the other electrical components appeared to be in fair shape.

J. Pratt notified the Board that SED is working with Clear Water Filtration's insurance company regarding costs associated with the leak.

Executive Session:

At 9:30 am, H. Scheuermann made a motion to enter into Executive Session to discuss personnel matters. All were in favor, the motion carried, and J. Pratt was invited to stay.

At 10:25, the Commission and J. Pratt exited Executive Session.

Based on the discussion during Executive Session, S. Teachout made a motion to authorize a discretionary, one-time payment not to exceed \$10,000 in connection with the discontinuation of the meter-reader position at Stowe Electric and authorize the General Manager to enter into any related agreement. The motion was seconded by H. Scheuermann, all were in favor and the motion carried.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:26 am.

Respectfully Submitted,

Amber Ives
Clerk of the Board