

Vice Chairman Agnitti called the meeting to order at 5:01 p.m. in the BELD Board Room. Those present at the meeting included Vice Chairman Anthony Agnitti, Secretary James Regan and General Manager William G. Bottiggi, all of BELD and Mr. John Cass, resident. Chairman Thomas Reynolds was not in attendance.

I. Minutes of Prior Meetings

i. April 16, 2024 Open Meeting

Voted: on motion of Mr. Regan, to accept the minutes of April 16, 2024 Open Meeting as written. Mr. Agnitti stepped down and seconded. So voted.

II. Items for Action

i. Braintree Super Saturdays Request

Mr. Bottiggi explained that the Braintree Special Needs Recreation Program is having their annual golf tournament and would like BELD to advertise. There was discussion. Mr. Agnitti made a motion to advertise at the golf tournament. Mr. Regan recused himself on this item. Since there was no second this motion did not go through.

III. Items for Discussion

i. Floating Solar Array on the Reservoir

Mr. Bottiggi explained that he met with the Tri-Town Board in Randolph. He continued: they are concerned about water quality which makes sense. They are worried about what could happen in the future if we put these pontoons on the water. The pontoons are made out of high-density polyethylene which is what water pipes are made out of so that shouldn't be an issue. The solar panels themselves are non-toxic. Mr. Bottiggi thinks that this may still be a possibility, but the Tri-Town Board is not completely convinced that it's a good idea yet. We just wanted them to be aware of this before any further steps are taken. He gave them some informational slides; we would be covering 11% of the reservoir, not the majority of the reservoir. There is a mussel that is on the endangered species list that lives in the reservoir so we will have to make sure we do not negatively impact them. Mr. Regan asked if the solar arrays would be in an area that the public could see them. Mr. Bottiggi said you may be able to see if you drove by on West Street. You could see it from the water treatment plant area. There is a line being run from the Braintree Water Treatment Plant over to the old Randolph Water Treatment Plant location. We would stay away from that line. This is very preliminary, a few years away if it even happens. The next thing to do would be to find out who at the DEP approves water from a water quality standpoint and have a meeting with them – water quality is everyone's concern. Mr. Bottiggi will be working with the consultant from NJ on this – BELD is not paying for this consultant because their interest is in signing a purchase power agreement.

There was discussion about the last time we were interested in having solar arrays on the reservoir and it was not the right time. This administration at the Statehouse is more progressive and greener. There is really no place to put large solar arrays in eastern MA due to no open space – bodies of water are the biggest open space. There was discussion on other steps we should take once we have further information available to us. Mr. Bottiggi explained we have applied for a grant through the

federal government: this is part of the Inflation Reduction Act. We are working with a company, Beacon Climate and there are 8 municipal utilities and we all put our ideas together and submitted for a grant. If approved, in the fall, it would pay for 50% of this project, which will dramatically reduce the cost of the power. This would be ideal. There was further discussion on how green BELD's power in relation to the State's guidelines.

ii. Sound Thinking/ShotSpotter

Mr. Bottiggi reported that this has been in the news lately. He explained, he and Police Chief Cohoon spoke with a reporter at NPR and there are environmental justice issues associated with Sound Thinking/ShotSpotter, the gunfire detection system. It is usually placed in communities where there is a lot of crime – so more gunfire. Chicago has decided to not renew their contract with them. Boston is renewing their contract. The reporter asked for his opinion on this. Mr. Bottiggi explained that he is trying to protect the electrical infrastructure. He continued, right now we are moving forward and are waiting on the police because they had to go out to bid on this. That process is ongoing. He thinks by the end of the summer the police will sign the contract with them with BELD contributing 75% of the cost. There was some discussion on Thayer and if they would be interested in contributing.

iii. Potter Demo Update

Mr. Bottiggi explained that the stack is currently coming down – the top third was taken off in 2 lifts. It is a steel stack with a gunite liner. He explained the procedure that is being done. The air-cooled condenser is gone, the air intake structure is gone and once the stack is gone, we are done. They will take the scrap away as well.

iv. BEST (Boston Engagement for Students) Boston, UMASS Boston

Mr. Bottiggi received a call from a UMASS Boston professor, Ed Cook. They have a program for their College of Management business students where they work with businesses to get the students real world experience. Mr. Cook said that they want the students to help solve a problem and after some thought Mr. Bottiggi decided to have them work on the EV program. He explained: EVs are getting very popular in Braintree – this is called the adoption rate – and we have an EV Incentive Program. The problem is how do we identify who has EVs in Town – what we would like to know is when someone gets an EV can we be notified, via call or email, so that we can explain the program to them and possibly have them join. Mr. Regan commented this has been a problem – the State has the MA vehicle census. Mr. Bottiggi said it is just once a year and it is still not easy. Mr. Regan agreed – it is hard to decipher. There are around 500 EVs in Braintree right now and there are about 280 in our EV program. This is considered high – a 65% penetration rate – compared with other sections of the county. Another part of this Mr. Bottiggi wants them to do is look at our program and compare it to other programs around the country. We offer \$8 per month as an incentive to charge off peak. We want them to see if we can do better. There will be 2 students and we are having a kick-off meeting on May 29. UMASS Boston pays for them to come and Mr. Bottiggi has asked ENE's EV people and Pasi Miettinen– they help us with our incentive program - to come to the meeting. We will be able to give the students some direction. The plan is for Mr. Bottiggi to meet with the students once a week – for 10 weeks. They will then make a presentation at the UMASS Club in Boston and Mr. Bottiggi will go to that meeting.

Mr. Agnitti asked if they could also do this with the heat pump program. Mr. Bottiggi said he has another incentive going for that. He continued, that has been very successful – our rebate program – but it is expensive. We have spent ½ million dollars last year on rebates for heat pumps. Mr. Regan commented that people are upgrading and taking advantage of any rebates – Mr. Bottiggi agreed. You can save a lot of money heating your house if you use electricity using a heat pump in Braintree. That is because our electric rates are so low compared to the cost of oil especially – and natural gas is not cheap anymore. There was further discussion on heat/cooling pumps.

v. NEPPA Rodeo

Mr. Bottiggi reported that the NEPPA Rodeo was a big success – this year it was held in Hull. There were 15 teams this year. Our guys won the cut-out change event and they finished 4th overall. There was discussion.

IV. Personnel Update

Mr. Bottiggi reported that Mr. Cusack has retired and we have a job opening out for a Meterman A which is a fully qualified meterman. Mr. Fernandez, our Sr. Engineer, will be promoted to Principal Engineer effective June 2, 2024 – this is a management position. Mr. Reyno, the new electrical engineer starting in June, will be reporting to Mr. Fernandez. We have hired a fireman at the power plant – Mr. Leslie and we are having an intern there for the summer as well.

V. Old Business (As Determined/Needed)

None.

VI. New Business (As Determined/Needed)

None.

VII. Public Participation (As Determined/Needed)

Mr. John Cass was recognized. Mr. Cass introduced himself as a Braintree resident since 2013, after living in another town that had a lot of power outages and gave some more of his background. Mr. Cass said the Town is in an economic crisis because of the budget gap and he was wondering how BELD could step up and help lead economic development. One idea that he had was the development of an innovation center and an incubator – this would help to develop technology companies here in Braintree. Mr. Cass is in the tech industry and moved to Boston because it is a tech center as well.

Mr. Bottiggi explained we have a full-time Business Development Representative, Mr. Ford, and he works with businesses to encourage them to come into town. We have an Economic Development Rate for large businesses. Mr. Bottiggi listed some of the companies that have been on that rate. It gives them an aggressive electric rate for the first 2 years. We have been successful in bringing and keeping business in Braintree. In general, we have very appealing and aggressive rates. We are doing what we can, and we work with the Town. The issue we have is our electric load peaked in 2007 – we sold 390,000 megawatt hours (MWH) worth of electricity. Last year we sold 310,000 MWH – so our electric load has dropped by 80,000 MWH – that is over 20%. That is a huge loss of revenue for the Light Department. What we have done in order to stay solid financially is we have

reduced size: we had 108 employees in early 2000's and we are down to 79 now. It has been very challenging and we run very lean. Mr. Bottiggi reiterated we are doing everything we can to encourage the Town – this has been very frustrating to us. The new administration, Mayor Joyce really gets it. It has been frustrating for us to see businesses come and go – businesses come and go but in Braintree they are going. That is why we have vacant space in Braintree – Wood Road, Ivory Street. We do what we can – Mayor Joyce is going to hire an economic development manager and we will have Mr. Ford work closely with them.

Mr. Agnitti asked Mr. Cass what he was looking for – space, guidance, help with what BELD does? Mr. Cass said all three and brought up the City of Quincy: a group of investors set up the Quincy Innovation Center. Mr. Agnitti said he was a part of that. Mr. Agnitti continued it succeeded for a short amount of time and then all it did was attract non-innovated businesses that were trying to do start-ups. Mr. Cass commented on start-ups: early in social media he wrote one of the first blogs in the country as a professional blogger and wrote a book about skills & strategies for corporate blogging. He recalled a conversation with an economic development officer in NE who said you can go after the big companies, but it is usually the small companies and start-ups that are in need of the incubator. Mr. Cass feels there is a huge opportunity here in this area because of what has happened in the innovation district and the Seaport district. He thinks that Quincy may see the same migration of companies that we saw in Cambridge, to the MetroWest area. There was discussion.

Mr. Agnitti said what we could do here is to continue offer the low rates and you could also work with the Town. Mr. Bottiggi said he thinks that Mayor Joyce is talking about attracting businesses, and we will work with the mayor to help incent businesses to come to Town – but we cannot open an incubator. He continued: that is not our core mission and also, we don't do that – so we don't have the talent to do that and we are not going to start hiring people to do that. Mr. Bottiggi said that Mr. Cass had mentioned that Quincy did this, but it didn't come out of National Grid. Mr. Agnitti said it was actually 20 business people who invested.

Mr. Bottiggi said we have our hands full keeping the lights on. Mr. Cass said he understands that, but that Mr. Bottiggi said that you went from 390,000 MWH to 310,000 MWH. Mr. Cass explained that strategically - hopefully - in this administration we will have growth but who knows what the next administration will be. He continued: for the long-term security of BELD, it is in BELD's interest to see that there are mechanisms for growth. He continued further: I'm not saying you necessarily have to get into it. This would follow along with BELD founder Thomas Watson who thought outside the box.

Mr. Bottiggi said there is a Wood Road organization that has been formed to redevelop Wood Road. Mr. Ford is on that committee. We will participate in everything to help economic development. Mr. Agnitti said we can get you to coordinate with Mr. Ford. Mr. Bottiggi said that Mr. Ford has been getting involved with Mayor Joyce's economic development ideas. Mr. Bottiggi explained that this is going to have to come from the mayor - not from BELD. Mr. Cass said he thinks there is an opportunity with the success that BELD has had. Mr. Bottiggi said that Mayor Joyce does not have anyone yet but has it in her plans to hire someone and economic development is the lifeblood of the town. This town has not had any – the loss of sales for us is just a symptom of what has happened in the town. There was further discussion on the huge potential for growth.

VIII. Tabled Items

None.

IX. Next Regular Meeting – Upcoming Meetings

i. June 18, 2024 at 5:00 p.m.

X. Executive Session (As Determined/Needed)

Not Needed.

XI. Adjournment

Voted: on motion of Mr. Regan to adjourn the meeting at 5:48 p.m. Mr. Agnitti stepped down and seconded. So voted.

James P. Regan
Secretary