

**MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING
BURLINGTON ELECTRIC COMMISSION**

Wednesday, September 11, 2024

The regular meeting of the Burlington Electric Commission was convened at 5:00 pm on Wednesday, September 11, 2024, at Burlington Electric Department, 585 Pine Street, Burlington, Vermont, and on Microsoft Teams.

Channel 17 was present to record this meeting.

Commissioners Lara Bonn, Michelle Hobbs, Scott Moody, Andy Vota, and Bethany Whitaker were present.

Staff members Elena Alexander, Paul Alexander, Erica Ferland, Mike Kanarick, Munir Kasti, Darren Springer, and Emily Stebbins-Wheelock were present.

Staff member James Gibbons was present via Microsoft Teams.

Agenda

Commission Chair Moody proposed revising the Agenda by moving the Commissioner's Corner (#8.) to follow the Public Forum (#3.) All members agreed.

Meeting Minutes

- Vote to approve the minutes of the July 10, 2024, Commission Meeting; 5 ayes 0 nays
- Vote to approve the minutes of the August 1, 2024, Commission Meeting; 5 ayes 0 nays
- Vote to approve the minutes of the August 22, 2024, Commission Meeting; 5 ayes 0 nays

Public Forum

No members of the public present

Commissioners' Corner

Commissioner Whitaker shared with the Commission that the rate increases are affecting small business owners, noting a corner store that has electric coolers being opened throughout the day. Even with efficiency upgrades, the store still is feeling the rate increase. Mr. Springer thanked Commissioner Whitaker for the insight and suggested small businesses reach out to BED's efficiency team to assess possible ways to save money.

Commissioner Whitaker asked if future rate increases will be smaller. Mr. Springer explained that BED's goal is to lower rate increases to less than 5.5% with the hope that the increases will get to below 3% increases in the coming years.

General Manager's Update

Mr. Springer updated the Commission on:

- **Processing Fees** – Consistent with other City Departments work on the FY25 budget process, BED will cease covering processing fees for customers who use the Paymentus payment processing system. The fee costs originally were relatively small, but have increased to approximately \$300,000 annually. Given that the payment processing system is utilized by some, but not all, customers, these fees should be paid individually, rather than be covered in rates paid by all customers. We have communicated through multiple mediums about this change, and more details are available here - <https://www.burlingtonelectric.com/avoidfee/>.
- **Energy Assistance Program (EAP) auto-enrollment** – In August, BED added 482 customers to the EAP through the new auto-enrollment provision. Previously, using the opt-in method, we had fewer than 300 total customers in the program. This new auto-enroll change approximately tripled enrollment.

Commissioner Vota asked how people know if they are eligible for these benefits and thanked BED for providing this service. Mr. Springer explained that BED is using the same existing metrics and criteria as used by CEDO's Lead Program and similar assistance programs. BED will continue to make customers aware of this benefit.

- **Net Zero Energy and Grid Reliability Revenue Bond** – The Board of Finance and City Council unanimously approved placing the bond question on the November ballot. BED has reached out to all NPAs to schedule time to discuss the bond and answer questions. We also included a column about the bond in the North Avenue News this month. We welcome Commissioners' assistance in sharing information about the bond proposal with the community.
- **Major EV charging grant** – As was shared in a press release with support from our Congressional Delegation and the Mayor, BED was pleased to be the sole Vermont recipient of funding from the Department of Transportation's latest EV charging grant round, made possible by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. We will receive \$4.89 million in federal funds, supporting (with matching funds) 200 new chargers in the City, including 47 new fast chargers. The grant has a major equity component regarding investing over 40 percent of the funds in the two census tracts considered to be disadvantaged under federal economic justice criteria (areas of the ONE, Downtown, and South End). This will be a significant benefit for our entire community and will help renters access more charging as well. BED had a talented team working across divisions and disciplines to collaborate on the grant proposal. This generational investment will support our Net Zero Energy EV adoptions goals.
<https://www.burlingtonelectric.com/burlington-electric-department-awarded-4-89-million-grant-by-u-s-department-of-transportation-to-deploy-publicly-accessible-electric-vehicle-chargers-throughout-burlington/>
- **McNeil RFPs** – The RFPs went to City Council on September 9, 2024 for consideration. Both RFPs were approved; 10 ayes 2 nays
- **Defeat the Peak** – BED celebrated two successful defeat the peak events with our non-profit partners, Scout Troop 658 (selected by our 2024 Jim Reardon Award winner Ciaran Canavan), and Cathedral Square.

FY25 July Financials

Ms. Stebbins-Wheelock presented the July FY2025 financial results.

- The Department's net income for the month of July was \$305k compared to a budgeted net income of \$655k. The variance is mainly due to a variance in budgeted vs. actual grant revenues and customer contributions to capital projects.
- Sales to customers had a positive variance of \$89k for the month. Other revenues had a negative variance of \$79k, due mostly to a variance in EEU revenues. July is not a REC delivery month; therefore, no REC revenues were received or budgeted.
- July's net power supply expense was generally on budget, with savings on fuel expense (due to McNeil running 57% less than budget) being mostly offset by unfavorable variances in purchased power expense (addition of the FirstLight contract combined with higher ISO-NE Exchange expense due to lower-than-budget wind and McNeil production) and transmission (ISO-NE peak load over budget).
- Other operations and maintenance expense had a positive variance of \$199k.
- Other income had a negative variance of \$645k, due to the timing of receiving grant and customer contributions to capital revenue.
- Operating cash at the end of July was \$7.568M compared to a budget of \$7.664M.
- Ms. Stebbins-Wheelock noted that the July credit rating metrics are subject to change pending final audited financial statements for FY2024, as the July metrics are based on a most-recent-12-months value. The debt service coverage ratio is 4.73, the adjusted debt service coverage ratio is 1.25. Ms. Stebbins-Wheelock presented days cash on hand (DCOH) at the end of July in several different ways to recognize the increase in the line of credit (LOC) from \$5M to \$10M in June 2024. July DCOH was 81 with no LOC, 113 with the previous \$5M LOC, and 146 with the current \$10M LOC.

Commissioner Vota asked if it was a concern that the capital budget was underspent for the fiscal year-to-date. Ms. Stebbins-Wheelock replied that the timing of capital

Charging & Fueling Infrastructure grant

Ms. Stebbins-Wheelock gave the Commission an update on the Charging & Fueling Infrastructure (CFI) program grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation for which BED was recently selected for award. Ms. Stebbins-Wheelock noted that she previously had briefed the Commission in September 2023 on the Department's high-level plan for locating additional public EV chargers in the city.

In June 2023, BED applied for a CFI grant and was selected for the \$4.89M grant in August 2024 as part of round 1b. The grant will provide funding for BED's EV charging plan through 2030, which would install:

- 153 Level 2s ports
- 47 DCfast chargers

Ms. Stebbins-Wheelock explained that the estimated total cost of these new chargers is \$8.881M, which would be partially offset by an estimated \$2.768M in new revenue. The remaining \$6.11M of capital expenditure would be 80 percent funded by the CFI grant (\$4.89M federal funding and 20 percent funded by BED (\$1.22M BED share).

Ms. Stebbins-Wheelock noted several of the CFI major requirements or compliance areas:

- EV installations must comply with the National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) standards
- Justice40 – 40 percent of the benefits should flow to disadvantaged communities
- Federal procurement guidelines

Ms. Stebbins-Wheelock next reviewed the Site Selection Criteria developed by the BED team and proposed in BED's CFI grant application, including accessibility to the public, proximity to amenities, housing density proximity, multimodal transportation proximity, Justice40/DAC census tracts, community preference, ability for expansion (physically and electrically), leveraging other construction work, lighting/safety, and grid capacity. Potential sites proposed in the grant application included City parking lots and structures, Parks with dedicated parking, schools, on-street parking in certain neighborhoods, and private locations where publicly available.

Ms. Stebbins-Wheelock discussed the public outreach around public EV charging that the Department has conducted and is planning, including:

- A webform for community input on charger locations has been open since June 5 with 111 Submissions as of September 3, 2024
- BED will be conducting neighborhood-specific outreach as needed, particularly in areas without many City-owned properties where chargers will have to go on-street or on private property.
- BED will continue to develop a more detailed outreach plan.

Commissioner Bonn asked if BED is overlaying grid constrained areas to understand if there is a bigger benefit from places that have more flexibility. Ms. Stebbins-Wheelock confirmed that the engineering team was and will be involved in providing information regarding contributing factors from a grid perspective.

Finally, Ms. Stebbins-Wheelock reviewed the following next steps in finalizing the CFI award and planning deployment:

- Grant agreement negotiation/execution with the Department of Transportation (DOT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
- City Council's acceptance of the award
- Reviewing/scoring proposed sites
- Developing a community outreach plan
- Planning for additional charger procurements

Commissioner Whitaker asked about whether the Department is planning and considering for maintaining and operating its public EV charging infrastructure. Ms. Stebbins-Wheelock responded that the Department has recently updated roles and responsibilities, including some job descriptions, to meet the needs of operating and maintaining its current chargers and has also begun discussions about additional changes that will be needed over time as the network is expanded using the CFI funds.

Commission Chair Moody asked how BED will be funding the \$1.22M and if it is inclusive of maintenance, construction, outside vendors, and the chargers. Ms. Stebbins-Wheelock explained that the \$1.22M BED funding will come from the 2022 revenue bond and potentially the next revenue bond if approved by voters in November. The capital installation costs covered by the grant include any engineering, civil work, the charger equipment, and installation, but do not include any operational or maintenance costs.

Commissioner Hobbs inquired about how BED tracks EV adoption or the number of registered EVs around sites, and about how that will grow and change as sites are installed and what kind of things change in those environments. Ms. Stebbins-Wheelock stated that BED reports on the number of EVs registered in Burlington each year, but that this data does not include name or address of the EV owner. Therefore, BED is limited to its own customer records regarding rebates/incentives, which may not include all EV owners. Mr. Springer confirmed that there is a lack of data to narrow down EV ownership per neighborhood or area. Level 3 chargers are pulling in people who are traveling into Burlington or passing through. This makes it harder to pinpoint who is using these in comparison to Level 2 chargers.

Executive Session – Cybersecurity update

Commissioner Whitaker made the motion that premature general public knowledge regarding Burlington Electric Department's BED's Cybersecurity update would clearly place the Burlington Electric Department at a substantial disadvantage per Title 1, Section 313 (a)(1) of the Vermont Statutes; motion was seconded by Commissioner Bonn. Commission vote; 5 ayes 0 nays.

Commissioner Moody made a motion to enter into Executive Session at 5:51pm with Burlington Electric Department Staff to discuss BED's Cybersecurity update, under the provisions of Title 1, Section 313(a) (1)(A) of the Vermont Statutes; the motion was seconded by Commissioner Bonn. Commission vote; 5 ayes 0 nays.

Commission Moody made a motion to exit Executive Session at 6:31pm; the motion was seconded by Commissioner Bonn. Commission vote; 5 ayes 0 nays

Commissioner Vota asked what the difference is between Commissioners' Corner and Commissioners' Check-In. Commission Chair Moody said that the Commissioners' Corner is in the beginning of the meeting, providing a chance to ask questions and comments about items not on the Agenda. Commissioners' Check-In is at the end of the meeting, providing the Commission a chance to ask questions or comments on any of the topics that were discussed throughout the meeting.

Commissioners' Check-In

Commission Chair Moody stated that he purchased an EV and is excited about the idea of not using gas around town. He suggested that now is a good time to purchase an EV, as you can taking advantage of the all incentives and rebates.

Commissioner Vota asked if there was any discussion on electrical infrastructure on the new development in Lakeside. Mr. Springer explained that there are two steps in any new development: one being BED's engineering team working directly with the developer on the electrical service; and the other being the efficiency team working directly with the developer to propose incentives to promote the most efficient building process.

Commissioner Bonn made a motion to adjourn; the motion was seconded by Commissioner Vota, Commission vote; 5 ayes 0 nays.

The meeting of the Burlington Electric Commission adjourned at 6:36 p.m.

Attest:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E. Alexander', written over a horizontal line.

Elena Alexander, Board Clerk