

Minutes
Town of Belmont
Belmont Municipal Light Board
Virtual meeting on Zoom
Monday, April 27, 2020
5:30pm

I-CALL TO ORDER

A meeting of the Light Board was called to order at 5:30pm by Chair Roy Epstein. Vice Chair Adam Dash and Board Member Tom Caputo were present. Belmont Light General Manger Chris Roy was present.

II-APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

- February 10, 2020: Epstein corrected a typo.
Motion: To approve the Belmont Municipal Light Board regular session minutes of February 10, 2020. (Vote passed 3-0)

III-DISCUSSION OF POSSIBLE EV CHARGING RATE FOR PUBLIC CHARGERS

Epstein had circulated a memo analyzing data from the Claflin Street EV charging station, with a view towards informing a decision on whether or not to institute a fee for use of public charging stations. He had presented the work to the Light Board Advisory Committee (LBAC) in March; LBAC had voted approval of the principal recommendation, namely, that instituting a fee for public charging stations was a desirable policy.

Epstein gave a brief presentation outlining the memo: 1] Working under the assumption that the number of EVs and chargers will increase in the coming years; within as little as five years' time, costs for installing/maintaining/providing electricity for charging stations could be significant. Principal recommendation was to initiate charging a fee of \$1 per hour to help cover associated costs and provide incentive for people to move their car once charging is complete. 2] Noticeable incidence of overstaying a complete charge was observed in the data. Still investigating the appropriate interval for pro-rating the hourly fee. 3] Epstein's personal view was that charging overnight could be allowed, in which case the fee would only apply to the amount of time required for the EV to fully charge. Such behavior was observed in the data, and since it was outside of business hours there was less urgency to promote turnover.

Epstein noted that the \$1 per hour fee could be implemented via a 1-2 page tariff form filed with the Department of Public Utilities; related adjustments to signage and parking policy in the Claflin lot was under the purview of the Select Board and coordination would be required.

Feedback from other members of the Board:

- Dash recalled the discussions and thought process of the Board from 2017/18 when the chargers were installed – the motivation at the time was largely to introduce an amenity which would promote the businesses in Belmont Center, not necessarily provide a place where people would fully charge their EVs. Dash also noted that instituting a fee would entail shifting funds from

parking revenue - which goes to the Town - to Belmont Light. (Epstein had discussed this issue with Town Treasurer / Parking Clerk Carman, who reported the parking revenue from the associated spaces was de minimis.) In terms of a more general policy, Dash suggested it may be advisable not to treat all charging stations as equivalent, e.g. charging stations in a business center were different than those that might be installed in school parking lots.

- Caputo agreed with the latter point made by Dash that different stations may need differing treatment under a policy. Caputo was supportive of instituting a fee but advocated that it be even higher. This was based on some cursory research suggesting that market rates were actually higher; additionally, a higher fee would allow for establishment of a capital fund to expand the network of chargers in the future.

It was determined that LBAC would revisit the recommended amount of the fee, taking into market rates as well as accounting for additional costs associated with operating the stations that Epstein's analysis had not included. Dash recommended that the Belmont Center Business Association be consulted about the possible change.

IV-DISCUSSION OF FY20 BUDGET REVIEW SCHEDULE

Epstein wanted to note that the Light Board would soon need to take up discussion of the FY20 budget in the context of potential impacts from COVID-19. He was recommending that LBAC take up the matter first at their upcoming meetings on May 6, following which the Board would devote a substantial portion of the next meeting to the topic.

V-GENERAL MANAGER UPDATE, INCLUDING COVID-19 RESPONSE PLAN

Roy reported on operational impacts due to COVID-19: in February, a pandemic response plan was assembled for maintaining business continuity, laying out Belmont Light's response for various scenarios depending on the severity of the outbreak (currently at level three of three); crews had been split in two groups operating independently so that they would be separate if someone were to get sick; on-call crew ordered to stay home during the surge of COVID-19 cases; physical headquarters closed to public; administrative staff equipped to work remotely; collection activities were currently suspended.

Roy emphasized the goal was for these operational changes to be invisible to the public with no impact on services provided – so far that had been the case, even in responding to a recent wind storm event. Construction projects were limited to those conducive to social distancing, e.g. street light upgrades. Work on Project C was stalled for the time being.

VI-PUBLIC COMMENTS

[None.]

VII-FUTURE MEETING DATES

- May 18 @ 5:30pm.
- June 15 @ 5:30pm.

VIII-ADJOURNMENT

Motion: To adjourn at 6:27am. (Vote passed 3-0; roll-call vote: Roy Epstein, Tom Caputo, Adam Dash)