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Joint *Action* News

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Meeting the needs of Massachusetts municipal utilities since 1969

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Business Leaders, Economic Development Expert Tout Benefits of MLPs

Business leaders, elected officials and municipal utilities gathered this fall to tout the economic development and affordability benefits of municipal light plant communities.

MMWEC, in partnership with the six Western Massachusetts public power utilities, including Holyoke Gas & Electric (HG&E), Chicopee Electric Light (CEL), South Hadley Electric Light Department (SHELD), Westfield Gas & Electric (WG&E), Russell Municipal Light Department (RMLD) and Chester Municipal Electric Light Department (CMELD), brought together legislators, local elected officials, local businesses and organizations for a Western Mass Public Utility Briefing in Holyoke on October 17. The day included remarks by staff from the utilities, MMWEC, the Western Mass Economic Development Council, Food Bank of Western Massachusetts in Chicopee, Jarvis Surgical in Westfield, and Massachusetts Green High Performance Computing Center. Attendees toured a HG&E hydro facility, a carbon-free renewable resource that helps the utility keep rates steady, and visited Valley Malt, a nearby business that is thriving and growing in Holyoke.

Attendees tour Valley Malt

Xiomara DeLobato of Western Mass Economic Development Council

In a time when energy affordability is front of mind for many, speakers pointed to the municipal light plants' (MLPs') significantly lower rates as compared to investor-owned utilities. MLP managers emphasized the importance of local control and local decision-making in keeping rates low, and urged legislators to keep an eye out for proposals that would impact MLPs.

"MMWEC was pleased to bring together the utilities, elected officials and business representatives to reiterate the strength of public power in Massachusetts," said MMWEC CEO Tom Barry. "The local municipal light plants are the epitome of safe, reliable, superior service. They are an asset to economic development in the region, as evidenced by the remarks from those in our local communities."

MMWEC-Lightshift Energy Storage Initiative Continues to Grow

The innovative MMWEC-Lightshift Energy initiative to bring energy storage to municipal light plant (MLP) communities is expanding.

Over the past several months, additional MLPs have signed with Lightshift to install energy storage projects in their communities. The utilities in Groton, Ashburnham, Holyoke, Princeton, Ipswich and South Hadley have all signed contracts in recent months.

Under the Lightshift partnership, up to 13 municipal utilities plan to install a total of approximately 54 megawatts (MW) of energy storage. To date, four municipal utilities have installed five battery systems with Lightshift totaling 19 MW. They include the utilities in Holden, Paxton, Groton (two systems) and Wakefield. The Wakefield Municipal Gas and Light Department (WMGLD) 5 MW Lightshift energy storage system will be part of the innovative Wakefield Energy Park, a unique initiative to provide backup power to two high schools, serve as a microgrid and provide peak shaving opportunities for the light department. The Energy Park is expected to be completed in 2026.

The recently signed contracts represent an additional 19 MW under development, with expected completion dates in 2026.

"The MMWEC/Lightshift projects have already saved participating utilities well over a million dollars in transmission-related charges, and provided key load relief to participating MLPs during the many heat waves we saw in the summer of 2025," said Jason Viadero, MMWEC Director of Engineering and Generation Assets. "Energy storage has proven its value to MMWEC members and is something we will continue to help MLPs pursue as tools to mitigate rising capacity and transmission charges."

In addition to the energy storage systems installed with Lightshift, several MMWEC members are in the process of installing battery systems with other developers. They include the West Boylston Municipal Light Plant, which is installing a 3 MW system expected to come online this winter, and Chicopee Electric Light, which is currently planning for three, 5 MW batteries to be installed in the city. Holyoke Gas & Electric, which already had two energy storage projects totaling 8 MW installed, is adding two new batteries totaling an additional 11 MW in the first quarter of 2026. ∞

Wakefield Municipal Gas & Light Named "Leading by Example" Winner

Wakefield Municipal Gas & Light Department (WMGLD) has received the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources 2025 "Leading by Example" award.

WGMLD was one of two winners in the Municipality category, along with the Town of Stow. Awards were also given in the categories of Public Entity and Individual.

The Leading by Example recognition is given to those who have expanded clean energy or sustainability, or have gone above and beyond in these areas. WGMLD was recognized for its work on its innovative Energy Park project, in collaboration with the Northeast Metropolitan Vocational High School (NEMT) and Wakefield High School (WHS).

Lightshift battery system

The Energy Park project will serve two purposes: it can act as a microgrid that will serve as back-up power for the two newly-constructed schools, and serve as a peak shaving resource to benefit ratepayers. This innovative project includes a 5 megawatt (MW) battery storage system through a partnership with Lightshift Energy and MMWEC. This battery achieved commercial operation in the summer of 2025. The battery system is designed primarily to reduce peak demand on the grid, which is expected to save local customers $20 million over the life of the project. It will also provide backup power to the two high schools during outages.

In addition to the benefits the schools receive from these resources, WMGLD will provide solar panels on each of the school's roofs as a renewable energy source and energy savings measure. Each school has committed to an all-electric heating and cooling design, reducing carbon emissions for years to come. The project includes a 2.5 MW natural gas generator as emergency backup.

As New England's grid faces growing stress from demand and extreme weather, the project ensures the schools can remain powered and serve as community shelters during emergencies. The battery displaces the need for diesel generators and uses peak shaving revenue to support full electrification of both buildings, enabling clean and reliable heating and cooling year-round.

"Energy storage was WGMLD's first choice when identifying a more cost-effective and renewable solution to power the schools, compared to diesel backup generators that would have cost $1.4 million per generator," said Pete Dion, WGMLD General Manager. "The energy storage project will provide cleaner, cheaper, and more reliable electricity to our schools. The Energy Park is slated to provide cost savings to WMGLD customers, environmental benefits, and educational opportunities for students at both schools." ∞

MMWEC Hosts "Electricity 101" Webinar for State Lawmakers, Staff

Ahead of the winter season, and with electric affordability a hot topic in the Commonwealth, MMWEC staff hosted a virtual briefing open to legislators and their staff this fall. The goal of the briefing was to break down the different "buckets" of charges customers see on their electric bills.

The explainer divided an electric bill into five different categories: supply, distribution, transmission, energy efficiency, and ancillary charges.

The goal was to highlight the cost structures that drive the charges people see on their bills, including the policy-driven items in the distribution and energy efficiency categories.

In addition, the presentation delineated cost drivers between investor-owned utilities and municipal light plants.

Close to 40 different legislative offices participated in the briefing. ∞

The Ludlow High School Junior Achievement Stock Market Challenge team, participating in the JA student event at Western New England University in November. MMWEC is a longtime sponsor of the event and supporter of the Ludlow team. Junior Achievement works to teach financial literacy to today's young people, preparing them to be successful in today's global economy.

Twelve MMWEC Members to Participate in Wind Power Purchase Agreements

Twelve MMWEC Member municipal light plants (MLPs) are adding wind power to their power portfolios. The utilities will participate in power purchase agreements (PPAs) MMWEC will enter into with two Maine onshore wind projects.

MMWEC's Board of Directors has authorized the organization to proceed with executing contracts for the wind energy and associated renewable energy credits (RECs) from Stetson Wind I and II, located in Danforth, Washington County, Maine.

"MMWEC is pleased to be able to facilitate these power purchase agreements, which demonstrate joint action at work."

-MMWEC CEO Tom Barry

The participating MLPs are those located in the communities of Boylston, Groton, Holyoke, Ipswich, Marblehead, Peabody, Princeton, Shrewsbury, Sterling, Templeton, Wakefield and West Boylston.

Stetson Wind I is a 38-turbine, 57-megawatt (MW) project which reached commercial operation in 2009. Stetson Wind II is a 17-turbine, 25.5 MW project which reached commercial operation in 2010. The projects are owned and operated by TerraForm Power.

The PPA is a five-year agreement, commencing in January 2026, for approximately 12 MW/42,196 megawatt hours (MWh) of capacity from Stetson Wind I and II. MMWEC's offtake represents 18.6% of Stetson I and 20% of Stetson II. The agreement provides participating MLPs with unit-specific wind power and the associated unit-specific Class I renewable energy credits. The Stetson projects are strong inland wind resources, operating at a capacity factor of approximately 40%.

"MMWEC is pleased to be able to facilitate these power purchase agreements, which demonstrate joint action at work," said MMWEC CEO Tom Barry. "MMWEC and its Project Participants are committed to pursuing opportunities to proactively decarbonize power portfolios."∞

MMWEC's Carol Martucci Joins Northeast Power Coordinating Council Board

MMWEC's Director of Financial Reporting and Corporate Technology has been appointed to the Northeast Power Coordinating Council (NPCC) Board of Directors.

At NPCC, Carol Martucci will represent the Marketers, Brokers, Aggregators sector. She has also been appointed to chair NPCC's Retirement Plan Investment Committee. Her term expires in December of 2027.

Northeast Power Coordinating Council is a not-for-profit corporation in the state of New York responsible for promoting and enhancing the reliability of the international, interconnected bulk power system in Northeastern North America. NPCC is one of six regional entities which, together with the North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC), make up the Electric Reliability Organization Enterprise. As a part of the ERO Enterprise, NPCC is committed to the collective vision of a highly reliable and secure North American bulk power system and shares the joint mission of assuring the effective and efficient reduction of risks to the reliability and security of the grid.

NPCC carries out this mission through the development of regional reliability standards and compliance assessment and enforcement of continent-wide and regional reliability standards, coordination of system planning, design and operations, and assessment of reliability, (collectively, "regional entity activities"); and the establishment of regionally-specific criteria, and monitoring and enforcement of compliance with such criteria (collectively, "criteria services activities"). NPCC provides the functions and services for Northeastern North America of a cross-border regional entity through its regional entity division, as well as regionally-specific criteria services for Northeastern North America through its criteria services division.

Carol Martucci

At MMWEC, Ms. Martucci manages strategic development initiatives that include reporting, automation, and dissemination of real-time information to municipal light departments across Massachusetts. These initiatives help address evolving customer needs. Through her role, Ms. Martucci helps to advance the reliability and affordability of the municipal rate base, broaden MMWEC's service offerings, and develop mission-driven programs that connect people, processes, and innovation.

Ms. Martucci also leads organizational projects that support fiscal transparency, enterprise risk management, prudent financial planning, and maximization of market value through effective market participation. She collaborates with MMWEC senior leadership to oversee power resources in the New England market, from power purchase and bi-lateral agreements to direct ownership of various fossil fuel, nuclear, hydro, solar, storage, and wind resources.

The NPCC geographic region includes the State of New York and the six New England states as well as the Canadian provinces of Ontario, Québec and the Maritime provinces of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. Overall, NPCC covers an area of nearly 1.2 million square miles, populated by more than 62 million people. ∞

NextZero to Offer New EV Ride and Drive Services

MMWEC's NextZero program will begin offering participating NextZero MLPs the opportunity to include electric vehicle (EV) event participation, enhancing customers' experiences and engagement. Following a strong uptick in requests from MLPs for NextZero participation in MLP tabling events, the NextZero team is working with car dealerships across the state to have EV specialists and EVs available for test drives at MLP events. With this service, MLP customers will have the chance to test drive the latest EVs and learn more about what it's like to drive electric. They can also discuss charging options, and have any of their EV and charger-specific questions answered.

NextZero expects this to be a popular service once the weather improves and outdoor events are scheduled, such as those the MLPs may offer as part of open houses, EV ride and drive specific events, National Drive Electric Month events, and during national Public Power Week in October.

"The NextZero team is excited to bring the electric vehicle experience directly to MLP communities," says Zoe Eckert, Sustainable Energy Program and Policy Senior Manager. "Adding EV test drives to event activities is a hands-on way for people to experience the fun of electric driving. By offering accessible test drives, we are removing a key barrier to entry and increasing residents' EV understanding." This new service is free to all MLPs participating in any MMWEC NextZero program. ∞

Happy 60th anniversary to the Northeast Public Power Association (NEPPA)! MMWEC staff attended NEPPA's 60th anniversary celebration in Littleton in November and checked out the unique custom-designed memorial bench made by an Indiana artist.

MMWEC Well Represented at Fall NEPPA DC Fly-In

MMWEC staff, including CEO Tom Barry, Director of Communications & External Affairs Kate Roy, and Jim Leydon, Senior Legislative and Regulatory Coordinator, joined by Adam Martin, Director of Operations at South Hadley Electric Light Department, put on their walking shoes for three busy days in Washington DC this fall. The group participated in the annual Northeast Public Power Association Fall "DC Fly-In," one of two annual trips MMWEC participates in in our nation's capital. The group met with approximately a dozen congressional offices representing several New England states, as well as Federal Energy Regulatory Commission commissioners and staff. The trip is a critical part of our public power advocacy work, and offers a great opportunity to discuss timely issues that are important to municipal light plants. ∞

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