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MMWEC Finalizes Contract for Additional Non-Carbon Energy

MMWEC has recently finalized a contract with NextEra Energy, lead owner and operator of Seabrook Station, for additional carbon-free energy and associated environmental attributes.

The contract delivers up to 56.9 megawatts (MW) annually of firm, non-intermittent nuclear energy from Seabrook to 17 participating MMWEC Member municipal light plants (MLPs) over a 20-year period, beginning as soon as 2028. The contract includes unit specific emissions free energy credits necessary for tracking and reporting the light department's progress towards decarbonization.

MMWEC has an existing ownership of 11.59%, or 144 MW of the output of Seabrook Station, on behalf of 28 participating Massachusetts municipal light departments. This contract is expected to align the MMWEC Member MLPs with 2040 carbon emissions targets for MLPs of 75% carbon-free energy sales.

"The Seabrook opportunity further strengthens the already robust non-emitting position of our light department's power supply portfolios and further acts as an excellent hedge in anticipation of electrification," says MMWEC Director of Energy Markets Justin Connell.

Beginning in 2021, following the passage of the comprehensive climate legislation proposed by the previous state administration, MMWEC began creating power portfolio "roadmaps" for each Member MLP. These individualized plans help guide each light department towards meeting or exceeding the Commonwealth's emissions targets, in consideration of individual light department goals and system specifics. The roadmap reports, which are updated at least annually, are one tool used by MMWEC to assist the MLPs in decarbonizing their power portfolios in the near and long-term, while ensuring they continue to provide superior service at a low cost.

"MMWEC and its Members are committed to decarbonizing their power portfolios, and have been incorporating carbon-free energy for decades," says MMWEC Chief Executive Officer Ronald C. DeCurzio. "Because nuclear energy is non-intermittent, our Members can count on this firm carbon-free energy in their portfolios for years to come." ∞

MMWEC Files Comments Following June FERC Forum

MMWEC, joined by other New England public power entities, has filed comments with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) following FERC's June New England Winter Gas-Electric Forum, reiterating their position that achieving region-wide energy security will require a multi-faced set of solutions.

The comments, filed by MMWEC, Connecticut Municipal Electric Energy Cooperative (CMEEC), New Hampshire Electric Cooperative (NHEC), Vermont Public Power Supply Authority (VPPSA) and Vermont Electric Cooperative (VEC), follow discussion that the region can "manage" mild to moderate winter conditions through at least 2027, and potentially through winter 2032. However, the MMWEC-led public power coalition argues that there is no guarantee, and even through 2027, weathering low-probability, high-impact events will remain a challenge. The coalition's comments offered more detailed solutions to address New England's winter reliability problem.

A combination of the error of market rules that developed an over-reliance on gas fired generation without securing adequate fuel supplies, the need for competitively sourced transmission buildouts to diversify fuel sources used to generate electricity, prioritization of capacity market reforms to accurately value capacity during the times it is really needed (winter) including incentives to procure firm fuel, and the establishment of a regional fuel reserve are factors driving the regional grid's vulnerability during the winter, argue the coalition's submitted comments.

The public power coalition put forth the idea of a regional winter fuel reserve. This physical reserve of fuel needed to generate electricity would be available to generators during times of declared energy emergencies. This fuel reserve is designed to protect the region from low probability but high impact weather conditions that could cause energy shortages. The coalition believes that this type of a reserve would be less costly than other measures that are in place now and would be administered outside of the current wholesale market design.

Also included in the comments are the coalition's idea of changes to the wholesale market design that would include an energy reserve product. Under this concept, generators could elect to participate in the market product which would put the generating unit into a reserve that would be dispatched by ISO New England (ISO-NE) in the event of an energy emergency. To qualify for participating in the energy

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MMWEC Experiences Increase in Interconnection Requests

As the New England electric grid adds an increasing number of renewables to the system, the related transmission needed to connect new resources to the grid has led to a big increase in transmission interconnection requests. MMWEC provides interconnection study support services to its Member municipal light plants (MLPs) that are affected parties to a developers' interconnection request.

Interconnection requests are from third-party developers with generation projects that are requesting to connect to the ISO New England (ISO-NE)-administered transmission system outside of a municipal light plant (MLP) territory. There are three categories of interconnection requests: elective transmission upgrades, transmission service requests, and generator interconnection requests. Generator interconnection requests (primarily solar and battery) make up the majority of the queue and are the most likely to affect an MLP.

When a new generating facility requests to interconnect to the ISO-NE transmission system, ISO-NE identifies the affected parties impacted by the request, such as an MLP or nearby existing generating facilities. MMWEC and the Member MLP are both notified by ISO-NE of any proposed projects that impact MLPs and are invited to participate in an initial scoping meeting.

As a service, MMWEC provides technical expertise at the interconnection scoping meeting and throughout the interconnection system impact studies. MMWEC has participated in many studies on behalf and in conjunction with Member MLPs electing to have their own staff also participate. The interconnecting customer, interconnecting transmission owner, and all affected parties participate in the initial scoping meeting.

The purpose of the meeting is to introduce and discuss the pertinent details of the project and identify the various required interconnection studies to be performed. The interconnection studies assess the project's impact on the power system's performance and reliability, identifying the facilities needed and upgrades to the existing system potentially needed to interconnect the project. As part of this service, MMWEC communicates to Members any issues or impacts to their distribution system that may result from the interconnection.

MMWEC coordinates with its Members to estimate costs to participate in the interconnection study process. MMWEC then enters into reimbursement agreements with ISO-NE to recover these costs.

MMWEC, and Massachusetts as a whole, has experienced an uptick in interconnection requests in recent years as transmission buildout has grown. The number of interconnection requests in the state increased from just eight in 2016 to 79 in 2022. MMWEC Manager of Regulatory and Market Services Daniel Murphy says he expects the number of requests to continue to grow as Massachusetts aims to reach its decarbonization goals.

"The increase in interconnection requests is directly spurred by the State and Federal clean energy climate policy that is incentivizing and driving the advancement of carbon-free generating resources," says Murphy. "Electrification and the buildout of carbon-free generating resources require the simultaneous expansion of transmission infrastructure. Interconnection requests will continue to grow as the clean energy transition and electrification advances."

There are currently 12 open interconnection requests that MMWEC is participating in which affect10 Member MLPs. ∞

Connected Homes Program Adds New Eligible Smart Devices

Connected Homes customers now have even more opportunities to get rewarded for enrolling their smart devices. New brands of thermostats, electric vehicle (EV) chargers, and residential batteries are now eligible for enrollment in Connected Homes, giving customers of participating municipal light departments more smart device options.

Emporia EV charger

Connected Homes currently offers a $5 monthly incentive for enrolled thermostats, mini-split controllers, and electric hot water heaters, a $10 monthly incentive for EV chargers, and a $30 monthly incentive for residential batteries. New devices now available for enrollment in the program are Amazon thermostats, Emporia EV chargers, and Emporia residential batteries.

"Connected Homes is a program that allows municipal light departments to achieve cost savings during energy usage peaks, which in turn supports keeping municipal rates low," said MMWEC Sustainable Energy Program and Policy Senior Manager Zoe Eckert. "We are committed to expanding the Connected Homes manufacturer devices whenever we can. The more manufacturer brands that we can work with, the more ability homeowners have to actively participate in reducing the peak load for their municipal light department."

Connected Homes is a demand-response program that leverages the technology of smart devices into cost savings for participating light departments and their customers. Customers who enroll eligible devices into Connected Homes agree to allow Connected Homes to make brief, limited adjustments to their devices during times of peak electric demand, such as temporarily turning off an electric vehicle charger during peak hours. By reducing electric use during peak demand hours, light departments are able to better manage their electric load. Customers are informed in advance of peak events and given the option to opt out. If they participate in all peak events in a month, they receive the monthly incentive.

Connected Homes currently has 14 participants including the municipal light departments located in Belmont, Groton, Holden, Holyoke, Ipswich, Mansfield, Marblehead, Peabody, Princeton, Shrewsbury, South Hadley, Sterling, Wakefield, and West Boylston. Incentive amounts may vary based on the light department. Visit www.NextZero.org to learn more. ∞

SELCO Wins National Award for Outstanding Achievement, Customer Service

Shrewsbury Electric and Cable Operations (SELCO) is one of just three public power utilities nationwide recognized by the American Public Power Association (APPA) with the 2023 E.F. Scattergood System Achievement award.

The Scattergood award honors APPA member utilities that have enhanced the prestige of public power systems through sustained achievement and customer service. The award was given out to SELCO and fellow winners CPS Energy in San Antonio, Texas and Village of Yellow Springs in Ohio at the APPA National Conference in June.

SELCO was recognized as a leader in decarbonization, electrification, and energy efficiency and for going above and beyond with its programs. SELCO not only participates in virtually all of NextZero's rebate programs, including both commercial and residential rebate offerings, but they offer additional incentives directly through their light department including no-interest loans for decarbonization projects, rebates on the purchase of pre-owned electric vehicles (EVs), commercial EV rebates, and rebates for residential solar projects.

Outside of its rebates and incentive offerings, SELCO takes an active role in its local community by hosting and participating in community events such as the local farmers market, Earth Day activities, and Drive Electric Week, and offering educational energy efficiency programs to local schools. SELCO donated induction cooktops to its local library so its customers could try the efficient technology before purchasing them for their own homes. The department also partners annually with Shrewsbury Youth and Family Services and local churches to offer the "Share the Warmth" heating assistance program to customers in need.

In addition, SELCO partnered with MMWEC's NextZero decarbonization and electrification program, and the Center for EcoTechnology (CET), NextZero's residential audit provider, to develop a carbon-based incentive model. SELCO is currently using this model to determine rebate amounts for its commercial and industrial customers through the NextZero Prescriptive HVAC Program. A report has been published so that other utilities can learn about the model to determine if they would like to implement it for their own customers.

SELCO's Ashley Fuller and Rebecca Keane accept the Scattergood award at the APPA Conference in June

SELCO was nominated for the award by MMWEC with testimonials of support from Shrewsbury Youth and Family Services, CET, and Stowe Electric.

"The SELCO team is immensely proud to have received the Scattergood award this year," said SELCO General Manager Christopher Roy. "We continuously strive to be THE role model utility and this recognition is a great indication that our hard work is making a difference. SELCO's policies, projects and investments are proof that ambitious goals are achievable through creative thinking and straightforward program design."

Since the Scattergood award's inception in 1959, just two Massachusetts public power utilities have earned the recognition. SELCO is the second MMWEC Member to earn this prestigious award. Sterling Municipal Light Department received the Scattergood award in 2018. ∞

Marblehead Enrolls First Commercial Customer in Renewable Energy Program

Marblehead Municipal Light Department (MMLD) has its first commercial customer participating in its Go Green Now! renewable energy program. QBE North America, an insurance company located in Marblehead, recently became Go Green Now!'s first commercial customer.

Go Green Now! is a voluntary renewable energy program offered to MMLD customers. The program allows MMLD customers to elect to pay an extra fee on their electric bills to ensure their electricity is 100 percent carbon-free. The fee is a separate item listed on electric bills and the exact amount is dependent on electricity use. The rate is 2.2 cents per kilowatt-hour (kWh) of electricity used for both residential and commercial customers. This rate is set to drop to 2.0 cents per kWh in October.

Go Green Now! initially launched for MMLD residential customers, but when QBE North America reached out to MMLD General Manager Joseph Kowalik about enrolling in the program, Kowalik was happy to allow it.

"We started this program when a growing number of Massachusetts residents expressed interest in being a part of the climate crisis solution," says Kowalik. "As the first local business to participate in the program, QBE North America is setting an example for others to follow while helping to create a more sustainable future."

Customers enrolled in Go Green Now! must commit to a minimum of one year of participation in the program. Each quarter, MMLD uses the revenue generated from the program to retire Berkshire Wind Mass Class I Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs) that would otherwise be sold by MMLD. Additional RECs may be purchased and retired by MMLD, as needed.

MMLD customers can enroll in Go Green Now! at www.marbleheadelectric.com. ∞

WMGLD Installs New Level 3 EV Chargers

Electric vehicle (EV) drivers in Wakefield can now power up their vehicles in town even faster thanks to chargers installed by Wakefield Municipal Gas & Light Department (WMGLD).

WMGLD recently installed two Level 3 ChargePoint Express CPE250 Direct Current Fast Chargers (DCFC) on Lowell Street at Quannapowitt Parkway with each charger containing one EV parking space. Level 3 chargers are ideal for drivers on the go because of their fast charging speeds. The new Level 3 DCFC chargers can charge up to 80% of a vehicle's battery in approximately 30 minutes.

WMGLD employees at the new Level 3 charging stations

The chargers' location was chosen strategically due to their proximity to Route 128/95 at exit 58, making them easily accessible off the highway. The chargers were paid for through a grant WMGLD secured through the Massachusetts Electric Vehicle Incentive Program under the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection.

In addition to the two new Level 3 DCFC chargers, WMGLD has installed several other EV chargers in the town of Wakefield. In 2020, the department installed Level 2 chargers at Veterans Field on North Avenue and the American Civic Center on Main Street with two EV charging spaces each as well as a level 3 charger at the municipal parking lot at Lincoln and Main streets with one EV charging space.

WMGLD customers can get rewarded for driving electric through the NextZero decarbonization program. New EV drivers are eligible for a free or discounted charger in exchange for enrolling in the NextZero Scheduled Charging Program. Customers who already own EV chargers can enroll their chargers into the NextZero Connected Homes program and earn a $10 monthly incentive for participating in peak events. ∞

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reserve product, a generator would have to comply with specific requirements evidencing that they have the necessary fuel to generate.

Lastly, the coalition rejected the idea for ratepayers to bear the cost of keeping the Everett Marine Terminal (EMT) liquefied natural gas storage facility in operation. ISO-NE has studied

"MMWEC is pleased to bring together several public power entities in New England to develop these forward-thinking, innovative proposals that we will believe will bring much-needed improvements to the wholesale markets," said Matthew Ide, MMWEC's Executive Director of Special Projects. "Reliability and fuel security will continue to be top priorities for municipal utilities and the grid as a whole, as we incorporate new renewable resources and the accompanying transmission to support them in the decades to come. We believe these ideas will help enable our future decarbonized grid."

It's not clear when FERC will take action on the comments received in the docket. ∞

MMWEC Hosts Seabrook Tour

In June, MMWEC brought Participant light department staff and commissioners on a site visit to Seabrook Nuclear Power Plant in Seabrook, NH. Attendees learned more about the project, in which MMWEC has an 11.56% ownership share.

MMWEC Member Light Department employees at Seabrook

Massachusetts Municipal Wholesale Electric Company

MMWEC

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Joint Action and economies of scale for Massachusetts municipal utilities

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